

# Speaking in Tongues – What the Bible says

## Part 1 of 2

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Summary: Scores of millions claim to “speak in tongues.” This will not be a traditional explanation for or against speaking in tongues. I compare what scripture says on the subject with the teachings of both camps – those for and those against, speaking in tongues. We’ll examine the meaning of “tongue,” types of tongues described in the Bible, and issues relevant to both sides of the issue. What are “tongues of angels?” Is there a language of prayer? What languages or tongues are being described? In this part 1, you’ll be left with much to ponder on this fascinating topic.  
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Greetings again, brothers and sisters in the Messiah. Every Feast of Pentecost, which will have just passed by the time this gets posted on my website, we’re reminded of the world-changing event when Almighty God baptized 120 of His children in the Holy Spirit, amidst a mighty wind, cloven tongues of fire above each person, and then the miraculous speaking – and hearing – praising and preaching in languages that the speakers had never formally learned. The Charismatic movement – Pentecostals in particular – claim to take their name from this event in Acts 2. But is the Pentecostal movement the same thing as we will read in the New Testament? What has happened to the “gift of tongues” – is it on hold, or is still being practiced as the Bible describes it, or has it ended?

So, let’s talk about “Speaking in Tongues.” This will not be the traditional sermon on the topic pro or con, I promise you. But, I will strive to preach it straight from Scripture and that means I’m going to upset a lot of people in both camps – those pro “speaking in tongues” as well as those against “speaking in tongues.” I say that, hoping no matter where you’re starting from, that you’ll take an honest look at this topic with me today, based on what scripture has to say about it, without leaving out key parts of scripture, that I often see happening when I read what others have to say on the topic.

**Who cares? Why does this topic even matter?** First of all, it is a teaching, a doctrine, of the Bible and so we should understand any doctrine correctly. Speaking in tongues has been the cause of much rancor and debate in the pro and con camps. Glossolalia, which it is also called, has caused some to feel very inferior, if they’ve never experienced it and have been taught they must, or they don’t have the Spirit of God. So, I think it is good to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and to understand what scripture has to say on this subject. It is estimated that 10-20% of Christians claim to “speak in tongues” – so that’s 100-200 million at least. Some say there are many more than that. So, it’s a topic we should be able to explain and discuss in the light of scripture.

Remember, it was “tongues” of fire that settled on each of the 120 gathered in Acts 2. Why did they end up speaking and being heard in foreign languages that were new to the speakers?

Just before Acts 2, Jesus had told the disciples in Acts 1 that he wanted them to take His gospel message to the ends of the earth. Let's read what Yeshua (Jesus) says in Acts 1:4-8:

**Acts 1:4-8**

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me; **5** for John truly baptized with water, *but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.*" **6** Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" **7** And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. **8** But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Peter and Andrew and Matthew undoubtedly couldn't speak the myriads of dialects that would be required if they were to preach to the ends of the earth. Even with gifted translators, nuances are missed, errors are made. So, Yahweh provided the answer by pouring out with His spirit in Acts 2 a supernatural ability to speak in unlearned languages—I mean suddenly, dramatically, fluently and perfectly. When God makes a demand on us, He will also provide the way if we trust Him in faith.

I grew up in a very Pentecostal environment until age 12, when Mom and Dad separated. Though I myself have never spoken in Pentecostal-style tongues, I certainly have watched it, been part of hundreds of its services, and understand their viewpoint. My father was a missionary to the Philippines, originally sent there with some affiliation with AA Allen of Assemblies of God fame.

Every Sunday I went to my dad's church, where there would be people rolling or just lying on the floor, or dancing, all speaking in what appeared to me to be gibberish, sometimes 5, 15, 20 at a time all speaking at the same time. I was assured by others that it wasn't gibberish, but a heavenly tongue as the person was demonstrating proof he/she was, or had been, baptized in the Spirit. It was high energy, loud, and to someone not used to this scene – confusing, and probably even scary. There was also a lot of enthusiasm and just raw energy much of the time, though not all the time. Those of you who have been part of a Pentecostal meeting know what I'm talking about. They take their name from their understanding of what happened on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, but few if any Pentecostals, even keep the holyday of Pentecost.

This type of Pentecostal "speaking in tongues" is one of the fastest growing movements – even incorporating spiritual laughter. It's not just for Pentecostals anymore. I know Catholics, mainstream Protestants and so many who are into this charismatic movement.

The history of this topic is fascinating to look into. We'll discuss what appears to be Old Testament examples of it in part 2. But, aside from that, we know that there are historical records of ecstatic speech among pagans. Those are not of the true God. Even Greek philosopher Plato talked about this phenomenon among devotees of various cults. Around the world even today, one can find forms of ecstatic speech or speaking in tongues among cultures in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East and really all over the world.

In the Christian community, after 70 AD and the destruction of the Temple, almost nothing is said about people having this gift. It was around 1901 when the modern Pentecostal movement began with Charles Parham of Bethel College in Kansas. Later movements were started by Dennis Bennett in the 1960's, followed by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement of 1967. So, modern tongues speaking is a relatively new phenomenon. Pentecostals teach that speaking in tongues is the pouring out of the "latter rain" promised in Joel 2:23-24.

But, keep in mind brethren, that scripture after scripture – such as 1 John 4:1 – warn us not to believe every spirit, but to test the spirits to see if they are of the true God. Satan is an angel of light, a great counterfeiter who becomes so successful that we're warned in the end time that even the very elect come close to being fooled by his end-time false prophet. So, just because you had an inexplicable experience of something happening as you spoke in tongues or did something unusual, don't assume that experience was necessarily from the true God. Test the spirits! Be sure what you experienced, or have heard others have experienced, corresponds to what the True God says about this topic and about how He works.

Could a wild and ecstatic experience very possibly *not* be what the Bible is referring to when it discusses "speaking in tongues?"

**I have some questions for you, which we'll discuss today and possibly into part 2, if necessary. Can you explain clearly, using Scripture:**

- \* what the Bible actually means by "speaking in tongues?" What is a "tongue?"
- \* I ask you – what does it mean to "speak in the tongues of angels," or, to speak just to God in your gift of tongue? What kinds of tongues are mentioned in the Bible and what could they mean?
- \* What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit or baptized with the Holy Spirit?
- \* Are there people who legitimately have this supernatural gift today?
- \* Is the modern phenomenon of Pentecostalism, and speaking in tongues, of God – or of the Devil?
- \* When one is filled with the Spirit of God, does he/she have to speak in tongues – or do many in fact, receive the Holy Spirit and never speak in tongues?
- \* On the other hand, is someone who claims to speak in tongues someone who is of the Devil, or is he/she a deeply filled child of God? We'll answer all this and more today.
- \* Is the real gift of tongues still evident in God's church anywhere – or has the gift of speaking in tongues ceased?

I do know that anyone who has had the experience of "speaking in tongues" – and has no way of explaining what they've just experienced – will be hard to convince that their experience is anything short of supernatural or from God. They can't, and won't, deny their experience. Neither do I. You experienced something you can't humanly explain, if indeed it was something that came

upon you. Many of you who experienced this would say you started to speak, pray or weep uncontrollably. Others describe an unseen power knocking them to the floor. Would these be from the Living God?

We need to examine all of that honestly in light of the truth of God's word. I hope those of you who have had this experience will carefully listen to what I have to say today. Some are quick to simply say those people are making up gibberish, nonsense, just making up sounds – but please understand that I've spoken to many people who know they didn't just make up a bunch of gobbled-gook. So what IS going on? And what DOES the Bible say about this matter of "speaking in tongues?"

This sermon will not convince everyone or change any opinions necessarily – but I hope you will see I'm trying to address it from the light of God's word and with honesty and openness. Most people hearing this sermon will feel I've said something wrong, because I'm not going to take the party line of any particular church on this, but just show you what Scripture honestly says. Perhaps you'll appreciate this subject more by the time we're done. I've certainly prayed a lot about this sermon and have asked Yahweh to show me His mind on this.

### **What is a Tongue; Types of "Tongues" Mentioned in Scripture**

Let's start with defining the word "tongue" used in this context in Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 12 & 1 Corinthians 14.

#### **What is a "Tongue?"**

The word "tongue" can be misleading. In the context of this sermon, it simply means "language," or it can mean the organ of speech in our mouths – the actual tongue. In Spanish, we use the word "lengua" to refer to language, and it also means tongue. Many old English would have used the word "tongue" instead of "language."

**So, in the Greek, "tongue" is primarily referring to a language.** So, I may just as well say "speaking in languages" as I might say "speaking in tongues."

**In Greek, the word that is sometimes used is "dialektos" – for dialect or language. More often, the word used in Greek is "glossa,"** from which we derive the word "glossolalia", referring to speaking in tongues. Vine's Expository Dictionary clearly states that "glossa" can refer either to the literal organ, the tongue in our mouth (Mark 7:33; Romans 3:13), or to languages (see Revelation 14:6; 17:15).

It is also clear to anyone who tries to fairly and objectively look at the topic – that the Greek word "glossa" also refers to a supernatural ability to instantly speak a foreign language perfectly without having first learned it – as expressed in Mark 16, Acts 2:4-13; Acts 10, Acts 19, 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14. One is speaking in an unlearned language, in other words.

This is where we get the word "Glossolalia" from. But most "glossolalia" is characterized by something sounding like gibberish. Is that what Scripture is discussing?

On the other hand, some of you who are dead set against “speaking in tongues” try to explain that someone who can translate into another language has this supernatural gift. But, being a translator of a language you first had to learn is not supernatural. It is not, in context, what scripture is describing. What we see in scripture is sudden, dramatic, and unlearned in schools.

Pentecostals will also say that speaking in tongues is speaking in *a heavenly language*, the language of the 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven, from where God rules. Many of them will say it also refers to *a prayer language* that may or may not be understood by the one praying. We will carefully examine all that today.

How about the word “*unknown*” that is so often a part of the phrase? *The King James Version translates it as “unknown tongue.” Almost every other translation leaves the word “unknown” out of their translations because “unknown” is not in the Greek.* It was added by the KJV translators. This is an example of the KJV dropping the ball. Some of you practically worship the KJV, but it has its many flaws too. You’ll notice it is italicized in the KJV which always means it was added by the translators in an attempt to make the meaning clearer, but it is a word that was not in the original Greek. And, in this case, it doesn’t make the meaning clearer, but clouds the meaning.

Scripture does refer to “new tongues” (**Mark 16:17**)—but as we’ll clearly see as we go through this, for the most part Scripture makes it clear that the “new” tongue was new to the speaker. It did not mean a language that had never been spoken before on the earth.

So, I will not be using the phrase “unknown tongue” because that is not in the original Greek. The word “tongue” simply means “language,” so I will say “language” much of the time. That is what Scripture means, in any case.

### **Genuine, Biblical “Speaking in Tongues” is Not a Bad Thing!**

Brethren, we must accept this from our Savior: whatever is meant by speaking in languages, Messiah thought it was a good thing, a good gift to have according to Mark 16:17. Correctly speaking in tongues the way Scripture means it, is not a bad thing, in other words – it’s a good thing.

Paul claimed to speak in tongues more than they all (1 Corinthians 14:18) but, he said he’d rather speak something that could be understood! There are rules and guidelines and explanations in scripture, which we will cover, but for now I just want to read 1 Corinthians 14:4-5. But, before we read it, since I’m trying to give the full counsel of God, I have to say that pro-Pentecostal writers don’t often quote the whole verse, just the first phrase or so. It is not honest for any teacher of God’s word to knowingly leave out phrases in a verse they are quoting, to tilt its meaning to what their bias is. We should use all the scripture, and always in context.

#### **1 Corinthians 14:4-5**

**<sup>4</sup> He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.**

**5** *I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues*, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

Now, before commenting, let me say that the way a pro-Pentecostal minister wrote about these 2 verses went like this (I'm quoting him now, along with his dot-dot-dot at least):

“The apostle Paul writes, “He who speaks in tongues [not “a tongue”] edifies himself...I would like every one of you to speak in tongues.”

***Do you see the difference? Do you see what he left out? Do you see how that changes the context and emphasis quite a bit?***

However, having said that, it is still clear that Paul does say, “I wish you all spoke with tongues.” And he also says, “...do not forbid the speaking in tongues” (1 Corinthians 14:39). New Century Version: “do not stop people from using the gift of speaking in different kinds of languages.” He wouldn't have said that if it was such a dangerous or bad thing. On the other hand, Paul is inspired by God to lay down some rules later in the chapter, which we will get to in part 2 of this sermon. I need to say again, we should not discourage the speaking in tongues when it is the scriptural version of speaking in unlearned languages, and following the rules set down for speaking this way – as we'll cover in part 2.

### **Will the Gift of Tongues Last Forever?**

Were these signs to be there to the end of the age? To our time, guaranteed? This is where the discussion falls. Let's read one clear scripture that might give us some insight – 1 Corinthians 13:8.

#### **1 Corinthians 13:8**

“Love never fails. But whether prophecies, they will fail; *whether tongues, they will cease*; whether knowledge, it will vanish away.”

God tells us very clearly, as we'll spend time on during Part 2 that love is the important quality and gift which will endure. The revelation of prophecies, the ability to supernaturally speak in new, unlearned languages, as well as revealed knowledge will someday all come to an end. That's what scripture says. So, has the gift of tongues ceased already? Ponder that. They will, but I'm not personally convinced that we necessarily have seen the end of true supernatural tongues speaking.

There are some who feel that after the apostolic age and after the Scriptures were completed, the gift of tongues stopped, ceased. The early Christians and church writers in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries never write about this phenomenon of “speaking in tongues” to the best of my knowledge, so if it was continuing, we certainly don't read of it anywhere after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD.

So, that's food for thought too. But it's not the only divine gift that seems in scant supply right now. Has God lost His ability to gift His people – or is it our fault? Are we perhaps so distant from Yahweh that the Living God has decided not to pour out His gifts the way He did in the days of Peter and Paul? We certainly see very little real gift of accurate prophecy (in the meaning of foretelling) going on, though many attempt their hand at it. How many have seen a verifiable gift

of healing, where even one's shadow would heal people? Is this lack of these kinds of gifts a commentary on the state of the church?

Others believe the gift of tongues is to continue even in our time. I certainly don't know of any time, any where, claimed by any one – where there has been a repeat of what we read in Acts 2 in modern times, where let's say Kenyans are hearing Americans speak fluent Swahili which they had never learned. Or of Americans hearing Kenyans who can't speak English, speaking perfect English as they glorify Yahweh and confirm Jesus is the Messiah. In any case, I hope by the time we're done, you'll be able to come to a clearer personal opinion about it.

We do know, that 1 Corinthians 13:8 tells us without doubt – “tongues will cease.”

*I'm personally not of the opinion that we've yet seen the end of true, Godly, Biblical “speaking in tongues.”*

But, if you believe that gift has ceased, it will have ceased for you because that is your belief. Belief is faith and if we don't believe in a gift, we're certainly not going to see it. Ponder deeply on that one. Your faith – or lack of it -- will be your reality.

### **What tongues are discussed in the Bible?**

#### **“Unknown Tongue”**

First of all, as I've already said, when the KJV uses the word “unknown tongue” in the New Testament, **be aware that the word “unknown” is not in the original Greek.** So, for starters, let's **get rid of the notion that this is talking about unknown tongues.** It's simply not Biblical to add the word “unknown”. As we'll shortly see in Acts 2, the audience heard the speakers talking in very well known languages of their day.

#### **A new Tongue?**

Some Pentecostals say that when Mark 16:17 says some believers will “speak with new tongues,” it must mean a language that has never before been spoken. But, I am sure, in a few more minutes as we discuss Acts 2, you will see that in fact they instantly spoke with well known languages that they hadn't learned, but were understood by many onlookers. So, in context, to be fair, when Yeshua (Jesus) says they will speak with “new” languages, He had to mean “new to the disciples.” If you disagree with me, hear me out – with your Bible in front of you.

It is very clear that Yahweh gave the sudden ability to speak in unlearned languages as a spiritual gift and as *one* of the signs of the Holy Spirit. The signs listed in Mark 16 were not just for the apostles, but could be for “those who believe,” after hearing the apostles. It simply cannot mean that every single believer would personally experience all of these signs – but that amongst believers, these signs would be evident here and there.

#### **Mark 16:15-18**

“And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. **16** He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. **17** And *these signs will follow those who believe:* In My name they will cast out demons; **they will speak with new tongues;** **18** they\* will take up serpents; and if

they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

I state again: The signs in Mark 16 were not just for the apostles, but "those who believe." Peter and Paul and others healed people. Paul and others cast out demons. I've cast out demons and God has used my hands to heal – though I'd never claim to have the "gift" of healing.

**But, I'll pose the question: is it possible that we are not seeing as much healing, and power to cast out demons, and speak supernaturally in foreign languages – because we make excuses for God, and *don't believe He still gives these gifts?*** It's just a question to ponder. *I'm* pondering it, taking the Christ at His word. In the Greek, it is stated in very powerful, dogmatic terms – "they *will* speak in new languages."

Now let's read 1 Corinthians 13:1, two kinds of languages are clearly mentioned.

### **1 Corinthians 13:1**

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

### **Tongues of men, and of angels.**

There's an unfortunate translation here in 1 Corinthians 13:1. Most translations say "if" or "Even if" instead of "though." "Though" can imply Paul could speak with tongues of men and of angels, but that's not his point. His point is "Even if I could...but had no love, I'd be nothing more than someone making a lot of noise." Check other translations and you'll see what I mean. The Greek word is *ean*, which is translated "if" in over 90% of the other times it is used. The word "though" is used repeatedly in 1 Corinthians 13, but Paul is not claiming here that he could speak in tongues of angels. He is saying "If I could." We know that, because he also says "though I give my body to be burned" – but Paul was not burned, but beheaded. Once again, he is not saying "though;" he is saying "if" – which is the better translation, and the one chosen by the majority of other translations.

### **"Tongues of Men"**

In the case of Acts 2, the speaking in tongues was clearly a matter of speaking, and being heard, in known languages of their day. We'll explore that fully in about 20 minutes, so hang on for now. Tongues of men simply means known languages of the world.

### **"...or of ANGELS" 1 Corinthians 13:1**

It is clear that angels speak and have their own language or languages. I know many believe Hebrew is the heavenly tongue. I don't know that anyone can prove that. Yahweh can speak Hebrew, for sure, but is that the "tongues of angels?" And, notice it is plural: "tongues." Perhaps angels speak many heavenly languages. Or can you prove there is only one language in heaven? Why else would it say "tongues" (or languages) in the plural?

But, remember, 1 Corinthians 13:8 says tongues will cease. If these are angelic tongues, how could or would they cease? Would the angels have to quit speaking? It must primarily mean something else.

Or, as some claim, is it possible that sometimes when people in Scripture “spoke in tongues” that in some cases they were not speaking a human language, but a language of angels – a heavenly tongue, if you will? Some – not all -- **modern Pentecostals are quick to claim this language of angels. They claim they pray in this heavenly language**, which truly would be an unknown tongue here on earth, and that they speak they speak in “tongues of angels.” But, frankly it sounds like gibberish and there is no certified translator except self-appointed ones who could be making up what they want that gibberish to mean.

Some claim to speak in angelic languages, and they use 2 Corinthians 12 to make their case. Let’s look at it.

**2 Corinthians 12:2-4**

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago — whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows — such a one was caught up to the third heaven. <sup>3</sup> And I know such a man — whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows — <sup>4</sup> how he was caught up into Paradise *and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

Paul may possibly have had that experience of hearing angelic languages that he even understood, though the phrase “heard inexpressible words..” could be understood a number of different ways. Did Paul hear and understand things in heaven, but words he was not allowed to repeat – or did he hear words no man could understand or repeat because they were in languages he did not understand? I think the wording allows the possibility for both ideas.

So, we know that men with this gift could speak in tongues of men -- and possibly of angels.

So, what we have so far:

\* The word “unknown” in “unknown tongue” is an added word, not in the original Greek

\* There are tongues of men and tongues of angels

**Speaking unto God**

Scripture discusses another possibility: when there is no translator, a person speaks “unto God” in the gift of tongues that he has been given. You can read that in 1 Corinthians 14:2, and 28. Those against the idea of speaking in tongues often ignore these verses. I’m not going to ignore them.

**1 Corinthians 14:2**

For he who speaks in a tongue *does not speak to men but to God, for NO one understands him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

**1 Corinthians 14:28**

But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and *let him speak to himself and to God.*

I think these verses are very interesting. Obviously in 1 Corinthians 14:28, it is referring to someone who is speaking a language no one else understands, and therefore he can’t edify anyone else. And, since there is no interpreter, Paul says let him just speak to himself and to God.

I have friends who claim this gift of praying or speaking in a language no one else understands. One of my friends will confess that at times it is very frustrating, because he feels something special going on as he prays in this “heavenly language,” but gets frustrated because he himself doesn’t know what he’s saying. Imagine that. We’ll see what Paul says about that in just a minute. I have to ask: how edifying is it really, to others or to yourself, if you don’t even know what you yourself are saying?

But, then again, **Romans 8:26-27** makes it very clear that whatever our understanding of tongues is, God’s Spirit is purifying and making sense out of our groanings and yearnings when our prayer gets delivered to our dear Father in heaven. I’m not convinced personally though that Romans 8:26-27 is at all talking about “speaking in tongues,” though some will try to make that leap.

### **Language of prayer?**

So many charismatics talk about “speaking in tongues” as being a “prayer language.” This is taken from a passage in 1 Corinthians 14 we’ll address shortly. Let me for now just make this observation about prayer language:

- When Yeshua (Jesus) taught his disciples to pray, it was in plain understandable language
- *Every* single recorded prayer in Scripture is an orderly prayer with clear, and easy to understand words – including the prayers of Jesus, Paul, Elijah, Moses, Solomon and so many others. How about the prayer of the publican vs. the Pharisee at the temple?
- The Eternal God inspired Paul to say that God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33)
- How could people say “amen” to a prayer they didn’t understand – including their own?

I hope those of you who are staunch believers in speaking in tongues will admit that I’m being very fair so far with Scripture – at least the ones we’ve looked at so far. I’m at least addressing the issues.

Now, let’s look closely at the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, from which most of this discussion hinges.

### **The Day of Pentecost and Speaking in Tongues (Languages)**

Please be turning now to Acts 1 and 2. We must not confuse Pentecostalism with the events of the holyday of Pentecost in Acts 2. And clearly the events of the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 are of the true God, not Satan. But, as we now study Acts 1 and 2, I think we’ll see some clear differences between what happened in Acts 2 and what we see in 21<sup>st</sup> century “Pentecostalism.”

After Yeshua’s resurrection, He tells His followers:

#### **Acts 1:4-8**

<sup>4</sup> And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard

from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water, but **you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now."

6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

8 But you shall receive **power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you**; and you shall be **witnesses** to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Because Jesus tells them to wait, to tarry, in Jerusalem, there are those today who believe in "tarry meetings," which are supposed to result in them receiving the Spirit as well. But Yeshua here is telling them to be of one mind, in a meeting on the holyday – Feast of Pentecost – and power from on High will be given them, so they can be witnesses of Him throughout the world. He is already giving a hint to them that this witnessing will be to all nations. How would they be able to get the word out, if they can't fluently speak foreign languages?

So, why was the Eternal going to give this gift? It was because Yahweh was making it clear that they had to start thinking beyond just preaching to Jews – but to the whole world. It was a way to speak to all nations, a way to confirm – by a clearly visible miracle – that Yeshua, Jesus – was the promised Messiah and that the apostles themselves were for real. It was for witnessing, as we shall see again in 1 Corinthians 14 and other places.

One Pentecostal preacher says – **when asked why one would speak in tongues** – "I speak in tongues to edify myself (1 Corinthians 14:4)...I need a charging up at times." He continues: "One of the ways to charge your spirit is through speaking in tongues."

But, when we go through 1 Corinthians 14, you'll see that verse 4 is actually a bit of a put-down, implying a very selfish reason for speaking in tongues. The gift of tongues **was not so much for edifying yourself but was a sign to unbelievers** that you were the real thing, as you glorified God and Christ – and put the spotlight on Messiah, not on yourself. In God's services, "...let everything be done for edification" (1 Corinthians 14:26) – implying for edification of everyone else.

The New Century Version, end of 1 Corinthians 14:26: "the purpose of all these things should be to help *the church* grow strong." New International Version: "all of these things must be done for the strengthening of the church."

The gift of languages was a gift *to help others* come to the Messiah—not a gift to show off a supernatural power you had been given as a great toy to amuse yourself with or to impress others with. But, since "the Jews require a sign" (1 Corinthians 1:22), God gave them this awesome sign they could not ignore on Pentecost.

It goes on in Acts 1 to show that some of the 120 disciples included **women. (Acts 1:14)**. Be aware too, that when the Bible speaks of "brothers" or "brethren" or even "men" – there were often women in the midst of "brethren." It doesn't mean there are no women present. It is just the way people spoke back then before modern female liberation in our language and culture. But all 120 – including the women – were given the Holy Spirit, and all 120 spoke. We know that is so because Peter himself commented twice in his sermon about why they were seeing women speak in this miraculous way as well, at least on this day.

Later, in 1 Corinthians 14 and elsewhere, Paul lays down some rules that women were to remain silent in the churches and not to teach men. We hardly see that being observed in charismatic meetings, where in fact women often speak in Pentecostal-type tongues more than men.

**Acts 2:1-12**

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one sat upon each of them* [male and female disciples.... Each of them]

[As far as I know, this experience as described up to this point, is not being duplicated in Pentecostal movements today]

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. [Notice ALL of them, including the women disciples]

5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from *every nation under heaven*. 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. 7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 8 **And how is it that we hear, each in our own language ["proper dialect"; Greek *dialektos*] in which we were born?** 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs -- *we hear them speaking in our own tongues [Greek "*glossa*" – language] the wonderful works of God.*" 12 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"

Now, as we read verses 4, 5, 8, 11 again – **is it not clearly referring to onlookers being able to simultaneously hear the disciples in different languages, at the same time?** It seems that way. Verse 4 says they spoke in different languages, and verses 6, 8 clearly says everyone heard them speak in his own language, perhaps simultaneously. As I've already said, later – in 1 Corinthians 14 – Paul lays out clear rules that no more than one should be speaking at a time.

***What I'm saying is that Scripture is clear they spoke perfectly in different languages and dialects, and were heard in these various languages at the same time as they spoke. On this day of Pentecost, it seems clear that there was a unique miracle both in the speaking as well as the hearing.***

**Here in Acts 2, no interpreters were needed.** But I don't know if we can say every single one heard them clearly in his dialect, for some in fact thought the speakers must be drunk (v. 13-15), so much so that Peter had to deny that anyone there had even a sip of alcohol that early in the day (v. 15).

Was this kind of service ever repeated? We'll see shortly that in fact parts of this service were repeated.

So, in Acts 2, the miracle was both in the speaking and the hearing and no interpreter was needed. It was instant, perfect, and fluent foreign languages. They did not have to learn how to speak in tongues, as some modern Pentecostals try to coach their members on how to speak in tongues. Nothing like that is going on here in Acts 2.

*By 1 Corinthians 14, some could speak in foreign languages, but the miracle of hearing their own language wasn't happening, and interpreters were needed. Do you see the difference?*

**See 1 Corinthians 14:2, 9, 13, 27-28.** So much so, that Paul says, if there are no interpreters, the ones with the gift of speaking in tongues need to hold their tongue and remain quiet, or speak to themselves and God. Very different situation from what we read in Acts 2.

**Let me talk about the word “utterance” in verse 4.** Acts 2:4 says ‘...began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.’ Some Pentecostals use this word to indicate this is what some of them are doing as they quietly mutter unintelligible words. But, once again, that is not what the Greek is saying.

The word for “utterance” does not mean quiet mutterings. Not at all. In fact, it has more the meaning of loud, bold speaking. The Greek #669 means to “speak plainly, to declare.” Look it up for yourself in an interlinear. It is the exact opposite to unintelligible gibberish! In fact, it's the same Greek word used in Acts 2:14, where Peter “lifted up his voice and said (uttered)...”

Are you getting the clear distinction between what really happened in Acts 2 and how different it was from modern Pentecostalism?

My father was Pentecostal. I'm not attacking Pentecostalism, though it may seem that way. I'm just teaching what Scripture clearly says.

**When get into Part 2 of this sermon, we'll discuss the rules laid down for speaking in tongues.** I just want to say at this point, in Acts 2, we don't sense a gathering of confusion, of anyone rolling in the aisles, running amok, weeping or speaking uncontrollably in this meeting. In fact, scripture is clear:

A properly run church service glorifies God, and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets and the church service is run decently and in order. We'll cover all that in much more detail later.

**In modern Pentecostal and charismatic meetings, there is no mighty wind; there are no cloven tongues of fire that visibly light on people.** Nor do we normally hear foreigners claiming to hear the speaker speak their own home language fluently (though some few have claimed this has happened.) Nor do we have a meeting being conducted in an orderly way, as Scripture insists. God is not the author of confusion but of order. If you see a meeting that is not done in an orderly way, it is not of God. “God is not the author of confusion” (1 Corinthians 14:33) and “Let everything be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40) – both in context of “speaking in tongues”, by the way.

A properly run church service will bring people to glorify God, not to be scared, and not to think everyone is out of their minds! We'll read that also in 1 Corinthians 14.

Let's continue with what did happen in the original New Testament Pentecost and speaking in other unlearned languages – Acts 2:14 -- and we see Peter take the floor and be the sole speaker at that point:

**Acts 2:14-18**

**14** But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. **15** For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only* the third hour of the day. **16** But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

**17** *'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,  
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;  
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
Your young men shall see visions,  
Your old men shall dream dreams.*

**18** *And on My menservants and on My maidservants  
I will pour out My Spirit in those days;  
And they shall prophesy.*

So, whatever became the rules in the church later on, on this day of Pentecost, all 120 disciples received the Holy Spirit miraculously and all 120, and I think including the women, spoke – or were heard -- in other languages. I suspect they spoke to small groups of 5-10 people each, until Peter took the floor and spoke to all of them. I know what I just said will upset some of you – but this is what scripture says! We have to deal with it. We have to be honest with scripture.

Now one more thought: at the end of Acts 2, three thousand are baptized. Peter had earlier said in Acts 2:38- “repent, and be baptized, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” So these are those being saved, and who also received the Spirit that day, but there is not even a hint that *any* of them spoke in tongues later that day – and yet they received the Holy Spirit also. (The Holy Spirit is God’s spirit and I do not use the term Holy Ghost. That is not the meaning from the Greek, in any case).

### **The Three Recorded Incidences of a Group Receiving the Gift of Tongues**

Some people feel that every time God gave His Spirit that He also gave the gift of languages - - to every one, every time. The reason I bring this up is because some Pentecostals insinuate that if you don’t speak in tongues, somehow you’re a 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizen spiritually or have not received the full baptism of the Spirit. This is not officially taught by all, but it is often implied. Is there any validity to this?

There are 3 incidences where the entire group received the gift of tongues. Acts 2 – we’ve already read how the original 120 were gifted with tongues, but nothing is said of the 3,000 who were later baptized and given the Holy Spirit.

There are 2 more group incidences, but only two other group incidences. I bring this up because some feel that every person, every time, who experiences the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” is going to speak in tongues. That is simply unscriptural as I’ll show you and also in part 2 of this message.

**Luke 1:15 says John the Baptist would be filled with the Holy spirit, even from birth, but he never spoke in unlearned foreign languages. Nor did he do any miracle, and yet he was called one of the greatest born of women!**

John's parents were said to be filled with the spirit (Luke 1:41, 67), but again, no indication of speaking in tongues. ***My point is: one can be filled with the spirit without speaking with the gift of tongues.***

***For that matter, Jesus the Christ Himself – full of the spirit without measure – was never depicted as speaking in foreign unlearned languages.*** Never. He undoubtedly could speak Hebrew and Aramaic, for we have instances of that. He may have also been able to speak Greek and Latin, but we have no instances of Him suddenly speaking and being heard in many foreign languages.

***In Acts 6:5, Stephen is described as being full of the spirit – but no indication of tongues.***

In Acts 8, Philip went to Gentile Samaria and preached the gospel there – and many were baptized. It was only later though, when Peter and John followed up and laid hands on each of them, and as they did, they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:13-17). ***Please read it. They received the Holy Spirit. However there is no report here that any of them spoke in tongues.*** It's not even hinted at. But it IS clear that they received the Holy Spirit. Now perhaps they did speak in tongues, and it just didn't get recorded. But when it happened, it seemed to be a big event and got recorded.

In Acts 9, Saul – who is later called Paul – is converted, is baptized and receives the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17) Again, at *that* moment at least, Paul is not recorded as speaking in unlearned languages as he preaches the Christ in the synagogues. To be fair though, Paul DOES later say he spoke in tongues more than anyone (1 Cor.14:18).

The next episode of receiving the Spirit was with the group, the household of Gentile centurion **Cornelius in Acts 10**. If you read the story carefully, you'll see how Peter first had a vision of unclean creatures being lowered in a sheet, and was commanded to eat them. Later, after the whole story of Cornelius' conversion as a gentile, Peter understands that the vision of the sheet of unclean animals was not to teach him to eat unclean animals so much as to accept Gentiles, whom the Jews actually called dogs, and regarded as unclean.

Acts 10:28- "God has shown me that I should call no *man* unclean." That was the point. Peter was being shown that God was serious about giving His Spirit to all flesh, all humans, not just to the Jews. So Peter preaches the gospel to them, Acts 10:34-44 – most of which in this sermon, as in Acts 2 sermon, was about Jesus the Christ, and how God had sent Him and how He was crucified and resurrected the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. Let's pick up now in verse 44. This is about 3 yrs after Acts 2.

#### **Acts 10:44-48**

While Peter was still speaking these words, *the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.* 45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, *because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.* 46 *For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.*

Then Peter answered, 47 "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

**The Eternal God was making it clear to the Jews that He was now also extending His Spirit to Gentiles** – and the clear, instant proof of it was the very visible gift of speaking in unlearned languages. Though the mighty wind and the cloven tongues of fire are not mentioned here, there is something interesting mentioned by Peter in the next chapter, when he was recounting this experience (Acts 11:1-15). In Acts 11:15 Peter clearly says, “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon *them just as upon us* at the beginning” (New American Standard Bible). (the word “he” is not in the original Greek).

I would find it fascinating if it could be shown that Acts 10 happened around or on Pentecost again. I haven't delved into that deeply enough to say one way or another, **but it sounds to me that Peter is saying he saw a virtual repeat of what we saw in Acts 2** now going on with the group with Cornelius. In any case, they spoke in other unlearned languages just as they had in Acts 2. Again, a very clear manifestation that Yahweh wanted the apostles to open the door to all the Gentiles now too – and so something very dramatic had to happen.

I emphasize: no one had to teach them the use of this gift. I've heard messages and seen books that coach, even teach, aspiring tongues-speakers on how to speak in tongues. That is simply not the biblical experience.

For the 3<sup>rd</sup> group example (there are only 3 that I know of), please be turning to Acts 19. Paul has landed at Ephesus, a large Gentile Cosmo polis of its day where also many Jews resided. He comes upon 12 new disciples. If one would read only these three passages – Acts 2, 10, 19 -- you could get the impression that speaking in tongues is the only sure-fire way of knowing you have received the baptism of the Spirit. But let's read it and then continue studying – and I'll certainly cover it in much more depth in part 2.

**Acts 19:3-7**

3 And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?"

So they said, "Into John's baptism."

4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."

5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 *And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.* 7 Now the men were about twelve in all.

**So this is the final and only time I know of where all in the group were given the same gift of speaking in tongues. It was visible, it was impressive, and it was beyond dispute.** But, next time we'll get into far more detail about the other gifts, greater gifts, of the Holy Spirit.

I think I'm going to leave it there for today, and wrap up the subject in Part 2 of Speaking in Tongues. I hope this first message has given you some food for thought. And I hope you'll share it with friends who have questions about this topic, or people who have begun to immerse themselves in the charismatic or Pentecostal movements.

What we've covered so far:

- Glossolalia is a widespread, worldwide phenomenon. We need to understand the difference between Biblical miraculous speaking of unlearned languages and the common practice of “speaking in tongues” seen today.

- Biblical speaking in unschooled foreign languages is a gift that is not to be forbidden. It is a good thing, not a bad thing, when used as our Father intended.
- Speaking in unlearned languages was a definite and clear-cut gift of the Holy Spirit, engaged in by numerous people in the early New Testament. Paul spoke in tongues more than most did and said not to forbid it. Therefore I think it is wrong to just blast the idea of speaking in tongues. I will blast fake or unbiblical speaking in tongues, but there is a true and legitimate gift of God that causes one to speak in an unlearned language suddenly, fluently, and without having learned it.
- Acts 2 was both a miracle of the speaking and the hearing. There was no apparent need for translators at that occasion. All 120, including the women, in that particular meeting were gifted with this ability to speak in other unlearned languages, and all 120 used that gift.
- There were 3 recorded episodes of entire groups “speaking in tongues”: Acts 2, Acts 10 Cornelius’ family, Acts 19 – the 12 disciples in Ephesus. We should NOT surmise from those three group examples that every spirit-filled disciple everywhere, every time, spoke in tongues. That will be made crystal clear in part 2, and in this sermon we remarked how Jesus Himself was filled with the Spirit, as was John the Baptist, and they never are recorded as speaking in unlearned foreign languages.
- Tongues just means known languages of the day.
- Scripture does speak of “tongues of men and of angels.” It also speaks of “new tongues,” i.e., new to the speaker, but very well known languages around the world.
- Tongues shall cease... we covered that too. Scripture does not say when.
- The gift of speaking in unlearned languages was to primarily edify the church and to glorify God, not yourself. Sometimes it was to be a sign for unbelievers. Though one could be edified himself by speaking in other languages, the main focus was to be that of edifying the church.
- We are not to forbid the genuine speaking in tongues – but I’ll say now – so long as it also fits within the rules laid down by Scripture when speaking in unlearned languages.

Next time, we’ll cover:

- Does one have to speak in tongues in order to prove he has received the Holy Spirit, as many hard-lined Pentecostals believe – either openly or secretly?
- How CAN one tell if he/she has been given the Holy Spirit? Is it by speaking in tongues? The plain answer of Scripture is beautiful, but may disappoint some of you. Is speaking in tongues the greatest gift of the Spirit?
- Are there similar examples of speaking in tongues, or something akin to it, in the Old Testament?
- What are the most important gifts of the Spirit? Is speaking in tongues one of them? What is “the greatest gift” we should aspire to?

- What are the rules laid down in Scripture when people wish to speak in unlearned languages? Are there rules? You better believe there are rules, and we'll cover them.
- What does Scripture say to do when you feel you can speak in an unlearned or heavenly language, but there is no interpreter?
- What can we expect to see in future on this subject of speaking in unlearned languages, supernaturally? Will we see many spirit-filled brethren once again in future suddenly and unexpectedly being able to speak fluently in other languages, though not having learned them?

I hope you'll join me for the conclusion of this topic next time.

Until next time, this is Philip Shields, a servant in Christ Jesus, Yeshua our Messiah.