

The Gift of Tongues

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One of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit was the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 12:10, 30; 19:6; 14:2; et al.). What were these tongues in which some of the early saints were empowered to speak?

The first reference to this gift is in Acts 2:4, which describes an effect of the apostles' baptism in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The context clearly states that the tongues in which they miraculously spoke on that day were simply identifiable, recognizable, foreign languages. The amazed multitude said concerning the tongues in which the apostles spoke: "And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" (vv. 7-8), and "...we hear them speaking in our tongues..." (v. 11).

The second and third occurrences recorded in the New Testament merely state that certain ones spoke "with tongues" (10: 46; 19:6). Nothing in these two cases indicates that the tongues thus described were anything other than various identifiable human languages, just as those on Pentecost were defined.

We next read of the gift of tongues in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. He lists "kinds of tongues" and "interpretation of tongues" among the nine spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 30). Paul declared that these miraculous tongues would cease when God completed His revelation (13:8), which He long ago did (Jude 3). In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul discussed the abuse, purpose, and correct use of tongues, referring to them fifteen times.

Were the tongues described in 1 Corinthians 12-14 different from those described in Acts, which, as already noted, were various human languages? If we allow the Bible to define its own terms, there is no reason to assume that the tongues in 1 Corinthians are anything else. Unfortunately, many assume they are something different. The KJV translators curiously (and inexplicably) supplied the word *unknown* before *tongues* six times in 1 Corinthians 14. Various later Bible versions have gone further, inexcusably substituting their **subjective interpretations** for actual translation of the word for "tongues" (e.g., *ecstatic utterances*, *ecstatic speakings*, *language of ecstasy*, *speaks ecstatically*, et al.). **Uninspired** men have thus tampered with the **inspired** text. The modern concept of the gift of tongues came from men rather than from the Holy Spirit. The gibberish nonsense of modern "tongues" – often little more than monosyllabic baby talk – is an insult to the Holy Spirit. If the Biblical gift of tongues were still available, missionaries would no longer have to go to language school to learn foreign languages. Be not deceived: The Bible knows nothing of "ecstatic utterances."

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