

THE MANIFESTATION OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES “Tongues in the Old Testament”

Introduction-

Acts 2:1-4

- 1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.
- 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.
- 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.
- 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. NIV

What teaching on tongues would be complete without a reference to the day of Pentecost? Most of us know the story. Fire came down and the apostles spoke in other tongues. Though on the day of Pentecost it was the tongues of fire that were cloven, the manifestation of speaking in tongues has been a cleaving point in the body of Christ since the close of the age of the church fathers. Much of Protestantism denies its availability or validity in this age. And if this weren't bad enough, much confusion about tongues reigns among Christian denominations that believe in their availability.

I do not expect that this short teaching series will solve the issue. I do expect the presentation of the word of God on this subject to accomplish several things. First, if you are a believer and have not manifested a prayer language, I expect that you should once you receive the word of Christ and your faith increases. Second, if you do speak in tongues, I expect that these sharings will help increase your appreciation and practice of the manifestation of speaking in tongues. Finally, I hope to show that just as hope is the bedrock of our faith, so praying in the Spirit (which in its most common form is speaking in tongues) is the bedrock of the prayer life we carry out in our understanding.

This brings us back to the day of Pentecost. Where did the apostles get the idea to open their mouths and speak in a foreign language unknown to their minds? Some would have us to believe that the Holy Spirit grabbed their jaws, tongues, and lips and made them speak. I don't believe this to be the case. Paul tells us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. What was the word of Christ on this subject?

Mark 16:15-18

- 15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.
- 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.
- 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues;
- 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." NIV

Jesus said that one of the signs that would follow believers would be that they would speak in new tongues. He put speaking in tongues right up there with driving out demons and healing the

sick. Where did He get the concept or idea that believers would speak in new tongues? Revelation, He's God, He knew. Yes, I know. But Jesus seldom if ever pulled a rabbit out of the hat. God revels in calling the end from the beginning. Fulfilling prophecy is one of the proofs that He is God. So where is the prophecy about speaking in tongues?

Well, our search seems short because Mark 16:17 happens to be the only place in the Bible where the phrase "speak in new tongues" is found! But we do have a quotation of prophecy with regard to the manifestation of speaking in tongues.

I. A Quotation-

1 Cor 14:21-22

21 In the Law it is written: "Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me," says the Lord.

22 Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers. NIV

In writing to the Corinthians, Paul quotes Isaiah to prove that tongues are a sign for those who don't believe. This is our tenuous link from the New Testament to the Old with regard to this manifestation of the Spirit of God.

Isa 28:11-12

11 Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people,
12 to whom he said, "This is the resting place, let the weary rest"; and, "This is the place of repose"-- but they would not listen. NIV

That is it. That is all we have. And yet, it is much. Though I Cor 14:21 is the only direct quote we have, it quotes the language and concept of foreign lips and strange tongues. To understand what God did on the day of Pentecost and what Jesus promised would follow His believers, we must study the concept of languages.

II. The Uttermost Parts of the Earth-

Gen 11:1-4

1 Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.

2 As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar.

4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." NIV

"Lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." This was the crux of the whole problem. The will of God wasn't for man to concentrate themselves in one place. He has always wanted the world evangelized (either by occupation and cultivation or evangelization and conversion).

Gen 8:15-17

15 Then God said to Noah,

16 "Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives.

17 Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you--the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground--so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it." NIV

Gen 9:1

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, **Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.** KJV

This command in Gen 9:1 reflects the command to Adam and Eve in Gen 1:28.

Gen 1:28

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." NIV

Adam and Eve were to fill the earth. God's plan in essence was for man to move the reality of the Garden to the expanse of the globe by means of their generations. This has always been the heart of God.

Acts 1:8

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. KJV

At some point after the exit of the ark, the people found the prospect of subduing the wilderness too scary. They decided to follow a humanistic plan instead of the sovereign will of God. So God intervened.

Gen 11:5-9

5 But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building.

6 The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.

7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."

8 So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.

9 That is why it was called Babel--because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth. NIV

This is the genesis of languages, the curse of Babel. To what purpose? That men would spread throughout the earth in obedience to the will of God. After that, mankind separated by languages, lands, nations and families.

III. Stammering Lips-

Ex 6:10-12

10 Then the LORD said to Moses,
11 "Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country."
12 But Moses said to the LORD, "If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?" NIV

Ex 6:28-30

28 Now when the LORD spoke to Moses in Egypt,
29 he said to him, "I am the LORD. Tell Pharaoh king of Egypt everything I tell you."
30 But Moses said to the LORD, "Since I speak with faltering lips, why would Pharaoh listen to me?" NIV

Moses' faltering lips are in actuality uncircumcised lips (what a mental image)! It is so rendered in the KJV. When you think of the significance of circumcision and then apply that concept to the lips, we have an apt description of the mouth of one who does not believe he can obey the Lord's command to speak.

Isa 6:5-10

5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."
6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar.
7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."
8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"
9 He said, "Go and tell this people: "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving."
10 Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." NIV

Isaiah confesses his unclean lips and they are touched by coals from the altar. This section has connection to the Lord's ministry as well as to the day of Pentecost.

Matt 13:10-17

10 The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"
11 He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them."
12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.
13 This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand."
14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving."

- 15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'
- 16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.
- 17 For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it. NIV

I find the contrast compelling. Jesus spoke to his own countrymen in their own tongue in parables to obscure the meaning for the unbelievers. Later, strange tongues are given to his apostles to reach foreign unbelievers. What can we hang on this? I don't know, but it is compelling.

In Acts, the Jews of all nations were amazed. But some mocked saying the apostles were drunk. I find it hard to believe that if you just heard a Galilean speak in your language the wonderful works of God that you would assume he was drunk. I think the natural reaction would be amazement. But if you didn't understand what he was saying, in other words, if you were a Hebrew speaker and the Galilean was speaking a foreign language ecstatically, you would be tempted to think him a blithering drunk! (Acts 2:12-14)

Isa 28:11-12

- 11 For with stammering **lips** and another tongue will he speak to this people.
- 12 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. KJV

Compare this experience with the word of the Lord to Ezekiel.

Ezek 3:5-7

- 5 You are not being sent to a people of obscure speech and difficult language, but to the house of Israel-
- 6 not to many peoples of obscure speech and difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely if I had sent you to them, they would have listened to you.
- 7 But the house of Israel is not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for the whole house of Israel is hardened and obstinate. NIV

That tongues would be a sign is evident by the theme of prophetic Scripture. We not only have Isaiah 28, we also have Isaiah 32.

Isa 32:1-4

- 1 See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice.
- 2 Each man will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.
- 3 Then the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed, and the ears of those who hear will listen.
- 4 The mind of the rash will know and understand, and the stammering tongue will be fluent and clear (OT:6703 - tsach -- dazzling, glowing, clear, bright BD&B). NIV

With this reality in mind, let us read a couple of promises in Isaiah that deal with the out pouring of the Holy Spirit and see if they would speak to us about speaking in tongues.

Isa 35:1-6

- 1 The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.
- 2 It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God.
- 3 Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.
- 4 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.
- 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
- 6 Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and **the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.** KJV

Isa 41:17-18

- 17 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their **tongue** faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.
- 18 I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. KJV

Surely our God will not allow our tongues to fail for thirst. Surely, He can make even the dumb to sing. Amen? Amen!