

The coming of the Holy Ghost was the beginning of that new and wonderful era which John the Baptist had announced (*Math 3:11*). Christ had previously instructed his disciples that their special mission would be to preach repentance and remission of sins in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem; but they were to wait in that city until they were endued with power from on high (*Luke 24:47-49*); for the gospel was to be preached, not with mere human power, but "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" (*1 Peter 1:12*).

An impressive fact is the manner in which the Holy Spirit manifested his presence by the appearance of tongues as of fire, resting upon each of the disciples, and by the bestowal upon them of power to preach to all men who were gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, each in his own language. This was a significant miracle. It proclaimed in a striking way, first, that the great work of this era for which the Holy Ghost had come, was the preaching of the risen Jesus of Nazareth as both Lord and Christ (*Acts 2:32-36*); and second, that this glorious gospel was to be proclaimed to "every nation under heaven," so that all men should hear it in their native tongue.

It should be noted that in Acts 2, and wherever the word "tongue" is used in this connection in the Scriptures, it means simply a language, just as we would say "the English tongue," "the French tongue," etc. In 1 Corinthians 14, where the expression "unknown tongue" occurs, notice that the word "unknown" is in italics, showing that it does not occur in the original text. This inserted word is misleading. The expression simply means a foreign language.

This supernatural ability to address a foreigner in his own language served also the purpose—along with other miracles which abounded at that time—of attesting this new era and this new message (the gospel) as being from God. Without such manifestations of the presence and power of God working in and with those obscure Galileans, it would not have been evident to Jews and Gentiles that God was really introducing a new order of things. That the main purpose of miracles was to authenti-

cate the preaching of the "great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord," is declared in many Scriptures. God bore witness (with his preachers) by means of "signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will" (*Heb 2:3-4*).

That such extraordinary miracles were needed at the beginning of the new era is obvious. In this respect we have a parallel in the beginning of the era of the law, when God wrought wonderful signs and miracles in Egypt and in the wilderness. Those manifestations ceased when they had accomplished their purpose.

TONGUES AFTER PENTECOST

The second time the miraculous gift of tongues is mentioned is at Caesarea when Peter preached the gospel to a company of Gentiles at the home of Cornelius, a Roman Centurion. Here again "was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost, for they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God" (*Acts 10:45-46*). This was a convincing sign to Peter and the six Jewish converts who accompanied him, that God had indeed saved those Gentiles. Therefore, they (the Jews) did not dare "forbid water, that these should not be baptized," or refuse to receive them as brethren in Christ.

Moreover, when they of the circumcision, who were at Jerusalem, contended with Peter because of this, the apostle vindicated himself by saying, "The Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning" (*Acts 11:15*). The objections of the Jews were silenced and they then rejoiced in the conversion and salvation of the Gentiles, for it says, "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (*v 18*). It was no small thing for "the Gentiles" to receive the Word of God and "be saved" (*11:1,14*). Thus we have in the Bible a very clear and strong reason for the manifestation of the gift of tongues on this momentous occasion; for without it these converted Gentiles would not have been received.

It should be particularly noted that, for another occurrence of that sort, Peter had to go all the way back to the day of Pentecost, for he said, "The Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us *at the beginning*." He did not say that the Holy Ghost enabled them to speak in tongues as he does every week in the church at Jerusalem. He referred everyone back to that remarkable phenomenon of Pentecost that took place some 10 years before. The inference is plain, that in the years that had passed since Pentecost, there had been no similar manifestation of tongues-speaking to which Peter could appeal. It is, therefore, very far from the truth to suppose that all who were saved in apostolic times received the gift of tongues. It clearly appears, on the contrary, that the bestowal of the gift of tongues was reserved for occasions of unusual importance.

Then about 13 years later (23 years after Pentecost), the third and last time the gift of tongues is mentioned in Acts is chapter 19. Paul, on coming to Ephesus in Asia Minor, met with certain disciples who had a misplaced faith; they had not believed on the risen Lord Jesus Christ, but were baptized merely "unto John's baptism." They were ignorant in regard to the proper object of faith. When, however, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and Paul had laid his hands on them, then "the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied" (*Acts 19:1-6*).

In this case, as in the two preceding, the Holy Spirit deemed it necessary that the truth proclaimed should be specially authenticated by signs and miracles. The city of Ephesus, moreover, was the place where the great temple of Diana was located, and where "curious arts" (necromancy, black magic, sorcery) were practiced (*v 19*). Therefore, "God wrought special [unusual] miracles by the hands of Paul" in that place (*vv 11,12*).

In none of these cases was the gift of tongues sought, nor was the Holy Spirit sought as is the manner of many in the present day. The Holy Spirit simply bestowed the gift when and as he deemed it needful so to do.

THE GIFT OF TONGUES IN THE CHURCH

In 1 Corinthians 12 & 14 we read of the gift of tongues "in the church." It is mentioned among the things wrought by the Spirit, "dividing to every man severally as he will" (*12:7-11*). Thus the giving or not giving this gift, or other gifts, is entirely a matter of the Divine will, which is exercised according to Divine wisdom.

A few things Paul made clear were that all believers were not to expect to have this gift (*12:4-11,28-31*), and "tongues-speakers" were to remain silent unless an interpreter was present (*14:28*). The one speaking had understanding of what he spoke in the unlearned, foreign language (it was never unintelligent gibberish) and unless he or the interpreter would make the message or prayer known to the rest of the church, his understanding would be "unfruitful" (unprofitable) with respect to the edification of the rest of the church (*14:4-6, 12-17; see 12:7*). Also, men were to have the leadership in the church and the women were to submit to their Spirit-enabled ministry; no woman was to speak in tongues in the churches (*1 Tim 2:11-12; 1 Cor 14:34*). These scriptural guidelines are completely disregarded by today's "tongues" speakers.

Paul's questions, "Have all the gift of healing? Do all speak in tongues?" (*12:30*) make it clear beyond all doubt that only some of the saints possessed those gifts. Indeed these questions are asked for the very purpose of enforcing the argument that, as in the human body there are many members, each with its own special function, to be exercised for the benefit of all, so in the church there are different gifts and duties assigned to the several members; yet, inasmuch as all belong to one and the same body, the gifts all pertain to that one body, regardless of what members have them. Paul's reasoning is clear—it would be as absurd to expect every member of the church to speak in tongues as to expect every member of the human body to be a tongue endowed with power to speak (*v 17*).

In chapter 14 Paul shows that the gift of prophecy is far more to be desired than that

of tongues, because prophesying (ministering the Word of God) edifies the church; and this is the work of love, because “love edifieth” (8:1), whereas speaking in tongues may be but the vain display of a gift. Paul makes the contrast very strong, saying, “I speak with tongues more than ye all; yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an (unknown) tongue” (14:18,19). So the relative value is as five to ten thousand.

He then bids the Corinthians to “be not children in understanding,” and explains to them that the gift of tongues was a fulfillment of Isaiah 28:11,12, where God, in foretelling judgments upon Israel in connection with their rejection of his Word, which had always been spoken to them in Hebrew, said, “For with stammering lips and another tongue will I speak unto this people” (the Jews). Therefore, at Pentecost God began to speak to the Jews in “another language.” This was a “sign” to that unbelieving people.

And this is precisely what Paul declares in the next verse, where he says: “Wherefore, tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not; but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe” (1 Cor 14:22). Thus the gift of prophecy is incomparably greater than that of speaking in tongues. It follows that to say the gift of tongues is a sign to believers that the one so gifted has received the Holy Spirit, is simply to turn the Scriptures upside down.

THE SPIRIT GIVEN TO THEM THAT BELIEVE

The Lord Jesus declared that “they which believe on him should receive” the Holy Spirit (John 7:39). On the day of Pentecost, Peter said that all who would repent and be baptized should “receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Again he said, speaking of the Holy Ghost, “Whom God hath given to them that obey him” (Acts 5:32), that is, who obey the gospel by believing in Jesus Christ. In Galatians 3:1-3 Paul bases his entire argument on the fact that the

Galatians had “received the Spirit by the hearing of faith.”

Never is there such a thing as a believer in Christ who has not received the Holy Spirit, or one who has received him otherwise than through believing the gospel. Paul said, “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal 3:14,22). Believers are not to be taught to tarry for or seek the “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” The Bible clearly teaches that all believers have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13) and that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ are not his at all (Rom 8:9).

As regards the strange and modern idea that speaking in tongues is to be sought as the “Bible sign” of having received the Holy Spirit, we would point out that faith does not seek after a sign, but rests upon the simple Word of God. Paul said, “the Jews require a sign” (1 Cor 1:22), and it was natural for them to do so; but not for those who are “justified by faith.”

The Lord Jesus said: “This is an evil generation, they seek a sign” (Luke 11:29); and again, “Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe” (John 4:48). The spirit of the Jews was manifested in the question, “What sign showest thou, that we may see and believe thee?” (John 6:30). These Scriptures surely do not encourage God’s saints to seek after a sign. Moreover, the Lord did not say concerning his people that “by their signs ye shall know them,” but expressly “by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt 7:20). And again, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). If those who have received the Holy Spirit are seen walking after the Spirit, manifesting the love of the Spirit, and bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit, there will be no need of any “signs” whereby they may be distinguished.

SIGNS FOLLOWING

Appeal is frequently made to the words of Mark 16:17-18, as if they contained the promise that all that believe should be endowed with the gift of tongues. But the words will bear no such interpretation.

They declare that certain signs, of which speaking with new tongues was one, should follow them that believe. The Lord no more promised that all believers should speak with tongues than he promised that all should cast out devils, take up serpents, and drink poison without receiving hurt. Speaking with tongues, therefore, is no more the “Bible sign” of having received the Holy Spirit than is the casting out of devils, or the taking up of serpents.

Moreover, we have only to read the 20th verse of the chapter to find the complete fulfillment of the promise of verses 17 & 18: “And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.” “Pentecostal” doctrine is refuted here, for it speaks of “them that believe” (v 17); whereas, according to that doctrine, speaking in tongues is not a sign of “believing,” but of “receiving the Spirit,” which the Pentecostals hold as a distinct thing.

A DANGEROUS DELUSION

We believe that the so-called “speaking in tongues” of today is a dangerous error in these last days. Many true, earnest, and zealous children of God have been deluded by it. The appeal it makes is very attractive to saints who groan and sigh for something different than the sham of dead formalism in religious Christendom. We have had it under observation from the start. Its phenomena—ecstasies, transports, prostrations, yielding to “the power,” displaced personality, etc.—are the very same as we had already become familiar with in our previous investigations of hypnotism, spiritism, and other psychic and occult phenomena. We know by personal observation some of the terrible havoc—moral and spiritual—it has wrought. Most earnestly, therefore, do we warn the people of God against it. □

—Adapted from the writings of Philip Mauro

Speaking in TONGUES

The gift of tongues was bestowed upon men for the first time on the day of Pentecost. It was a miraculous endowment which enabled those who received it to speak in languages unfamiliar to themselves, languages they had never learned. Thereby they were empowered to declare the glad tidings to those with whom they would not have been able otherwise to communicate.

The record found in Acts 2 gives a clear description of the nature of this gift. We read that there were in Jerusalem at that season devout men “out of every nation under heaven,” and that when the multitude came together, they were confounded, “because that every man heard them speak in his own language” (Acts 2:5,6). So the prominent and essential characteristic of the pentecostal gift of tongues was that it enabled the disciples to address those foreigners, “every man in his own language.”

And it says “they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these that speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?”—16 countries being named—“we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God” (vv 7-11).

The pentecostal gift of tongues is stated here three times to be a miraculous gift whereby those who received it were able to speak to foreigners in their own language. Therefore, when we encounter today that which calls itself the apostolic and pentecostal gift of tongues, the first thing to find out is whether the person has the supernatural ability to speak to strangers in their own language. If the supposed gift does not pass that test, it may safely, and without further question, be regarded as false.