

Biblical Answers to Critical Questions, Part 10: Why Don't We Speak in Tongues Anymore August 21, 2022

Hebrews 2: 1-4, Acts 2, 1 Cor. 12,13, & 14, Eph. 2:19-20, 1 Cor. 1: 4-9, Joel 2, Various Others

Key Point: Truth Must Always Judge Experience. There is not a singular Bible verse to explain the apostles' position of the gifts of tongues, miracles, and prophecy ending. There is absolute agreement by the generation following the apostles that the gift of tongues had ceased.

>>It is not a salvation issue in itself, but it can become one, if the Gospel is modified and changed as a result of the practice of speaking in tongues.

The Foundations: Some definitions to know:

Continuationism: a belief that the miraculous sign gifts: tongues, healings, prophecy, gifts of knowledge- that they are still in operation today. Two Main Variations: A) Those who believe the gifts have always been in operation, B) Those that believe that the sign gifts restarted in the 20th Century as the "latter rain" of Joel 2:23.

Cessationism: a belief that the sign gifts have ceased after the apostles. Those are broken into a few different groups. A) Open but Cautious movement: miraculous gifts have ceased wherever the Gospel has been established but they still occur to aid evangelism- no support in Scripture. B) Classical cessationist: the signs have ceased since the apostolic age and completion of the Biblical canon. They believe God heals but don't believe in healers who do these miraculous gifts. C) Total cessationists: both miraculous gifts and miracles have ceased- we don't hold to that. D) Complete cessationists: would believe that all gifts have ceased and God now uses people by His own pleasure and purpose – this is not Scripturally found.

>>Our church would come under Classical cessationist – God does as His pleases and so that can certainly include miracles or signs as He sees fit.

Biblical Definition of Tongues: The gift of tongues was a miraculous spiritual gift in which the speaker is able to communicate spiritual truths in a foreign, human language that he hasn't learned. Acts 2 has 15 languages. The word "tongues" in the New Testament means "languages." There is no other meaning for the word. The gift of tongues operated like the gift of prophecy without a language barrier. First occurrence of the gift of tongues in Acts 2 was through Peter and speaking a Gospel message. Paul makes it clear in 1 Cor. 14:1-5, that the gift of tongues was never intended to be the central, prestigious, spiritual gift as portrayed in the charismatic movement. God used the gift to quickly spread the Gospel as stated in Acts 17:6. Information about the Gospel was spread quickly all over the world. The gift of tongues was the reversal of the curse of the Tower of Babel from Genesis 11.

Continuationist (Charismatic) Definition of Tongues: their definition is that tongues are a devotional prayer language for personal use and available to all Christians. It is not considered to be an authentic human language and so there is no need for it to be interpreted because it is done in private. Although Acts 2 mentions 15 languages, by 1 Cor. 12-14, the definition of tongues has broadened to include spiritual and angelic languages. It accepts that the gift of tongues is different than those demonstrated in Acts 2, 10, & 19. Further, the gift of tongues is a form of prayer, it can be started and stopped at will, and can be used as a spiritual language and devotional communication with God and enjoyed by all Christians.

>>Continuationists believe that the gifts of tongues in Acts 2, 10, & 19 are expanded in 1 Cor. 12-14.

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Are these two different types of gifts in Acts and 1 Corinthians?

- In Acts -the gift of tongues is attributed to the Holy Spirit. Same as 1 Cor. 12:1,7,11.
- In Acts 2- it is a supernatural ability to speak in a foreign, human language. 1 Cor. 12 & 14:10-11: tongues are a language to be interpreted. Paul associated tongues with foreign languages.
- In Acts 2, 10, 19: The primary word for tongues is: "glossa," this is a known human language. 1 Cor 12-14, "glossa" is used 16 times which is a known human language.
- In Acts, the gift of tongues was a sign to show unbelieving Jews that the Spirit was working in Gentiles. In 1 Cor 14:21-22, tongues are a sign for unbelieving Jews.
- In Acts, tongues are associated closely with prophecy (Acts 2:16-18, 19:6). 1 Cor. 12-14 it is closely associated with prophecy.
- In Acts 2, some unbelieving, listening Jews accused the apostles of being drunk. In 1 Cor. 14:23, Paul says that someone speaking in tongues that are not being interpreted would be accused of being insane – similar to being called drunk.
- The gift of tongues in Acts are the same as described as those in 1 Cor. 12-14.
- Other reasons: Luke finished Acts after 1 Corinthians was written. It is almost certain that Luke wouldn't have used exactly the same terminology in Acts if he would have believed that something completely different was taking place in the Church of Corinth.
- 1 Cor 12:8-11, 27-31 make clear that even in the time of the apostles not everyone was given the gift of tongues, it was not for everyone.

The Charismatic view of 1 Cor. 12, 13, & 14 continues as three types of gifts of tongues:

- a) Not given to everyone as mentioned in 1 Cor. 12.
- b) A second type is found in 1 Cor. 14:5. It is a type of tongues that everybody is supposed to have. The point Paul is making is to emphasize the overlooked gift of prophecy which is better. Does that mean that the gift of tongues is for everyone? See 1 Cor. 7:7, is Paul saying that everyone should remain single or become single as well? Paul is giving a contrast of tongues vs. prophecy. Prophecy is better because everyone can understand it. If everyone spoke in tongues it would still be better for prophecy to be spoken where everyone could understand.
- c) A third type of the charismatic view is the "tongues of angels," in 1 Cor. 13:1. This is a joke that Paul is telling to those in Corinth who are proud of their gifts, but that without love it sounds like a big gong. Every time an angel speaks in the Bible, it is a human language understood by those listening.
- d) There are numerous variations of the charismatic view in operation as varied as the churches that practice it.

Summary: There was one gift of tongues, no variations, it consisted of being able to proclaim the truth of the Gospel and the truth of Christ in a language you had never learned. Ideally, it involved translation for the whole church, not all believers had this gift, believers were not commanded to seek the gift, nor was it considered the main feature of the church, and it was never presented as a normal part of daily life. It was a unique part of a gathering of God's people.

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The Timing: Are they still in operation today as defined in Scripture alone? Heb. 2:1-4.

What is the context of Hebrews? 1) V1, "pay close attention to what we have heard," to be faithful to the Gospel. It was "attested to us" that is the second generation of Christians receiving from the first generation, primarily the apostles, it was the first generation performing these miracles to confirm the Gospel. 2) The grammatical construction of "attested to us" shows that it happened before but not now, it uses a verb that demonstrates that. 3) Context is encouraging faithfulness to the Gospel to not defect from the church. If the gifts are still continuing the author blew an opportunity to confirm that gifts were in operation today. Instead, he writes that the sign gifts (V4) bore witness to the message delivered to those who heard in the past.

In Ephesians 2:19-20, we are "members of the household of God." The household was "built" on the foundation of the apostles and prophets who received God's word. Logically, if there are no more prophets, there are no more prophecies, and no more tongues because of the connection of prophecy to tongues used for the authenticating the Gospel.

1 Cor. 13: 8-13, V8 is seen as the singular verse to support the ending of tongues. The passage demonstrates that the eternal always surpasses the temporary, or temporal. Verse 9, knowing in "part" referring to the results of the gifts in V8 – the partial in V9 can't grammatically be referring to the gifts of verse 8. The "partial" in V9 refers to the results of the gifts in V8. You can't have a partial gift of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge, but you can have incomplete knowledge that comes from those gifts. The early church got some knowledge through these means but not all. The incompleteness of the knowledge from these gifts will be done away with when the "perfect" has come.

What is the "perfect" of V10? Here are 7 Options:

- 1) Love itself. When the fullness of love comes, then those things will be done away with. It means the ceasing of revelation depends on the local church.
- 2) Completed Bible. The partial revelation is done away with when the full revelation is completed. The Bible is complete: beginning and end. In Heb. 2 the author is saying the gifts seem to be a thing of the past, but all of Scripture hasn't yet been completed at the time of the writing of Hebrews. It doesn't fully equate to the "perfect" in this passage.
- 3) Mature church. When the church arrives at maturity these things are complete. But churches haven't reached total maturity yet so this option doesn't work well.
- 4) Christians entrance into heaven, V12. Paul associates seeing the Lord with "the perfect."
- 5) Return of Christ. Strong position, but V9, the completion won't happen at the return of Christ because there will still be unbelievers on earth at His return.
- 6) Final state after the Millennium. Option 6 encompasses 4, 5, and 6 because the perfect is coming for all those who are in the final state.

Summary: Option 1 – Love itself- doesn't work. Option 2 and 3, are attractive being related to the end of the sign gifts. Our knowledge though, isn't yet completed because we don't have complete knowledge.

Paul is saying the "partial" knowledge is done away with at his death, at the full revealing of the glory of God. Options 4, 5, & 6 best fit with when the "partial" is done and the "perfect" has come.

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What does this have to do with the timing of the end of the gift of tongues? Not much. It is not the point of the passage.

Do not use 1 Cor. 13: 8-13 to prove the gifts have ceased or continued -this is not the point of the passage. Paul is saying that he is looking forward to the time when all of the subpar knowledge will be perfected. Love abides forever, pursue love.

The Timing Continued: What about the proof text of using 1 Cor. 1:4-9 on the side of continuationism. It seems that the sign gifts continue to the end. From V7, what is the word "gift?" 1 Cor. 12, 13, 14 -the word "gift" occurs with the word "spiritual." This word in V7 is a general gift. V8, the context of the gift is God's ability to help us persevere to the end of our lives.

Acts 2:1-4, who is the "they" of V1-4? It is the 11 apostles and Matthias of chapter 1 verse 26. The apostles were demonstrating these gifts, see also 2:7 & 14. In Acts 2:5, the apostles were speaking in the languages of those listening, 15 human languages in V8-12. Peter then begins speaking from Joel 2 in verse Acts 2:17-21. Peter proclaims the pouring out of the Spirit of God. >>Is Peter giving an illustration, a dual or partial fulfillment with a fuller fulfillment to come, or total fulfillment that all is fulfilled in the church age. The problem with a total fulfillment is that the pouring on all flesh hasn't happened nor the terrifying events of V19-20.

The book of Acts is a transitional time in the church. You also can't steal an OT prophecy and use it for the church in the NT. Peter is showing that this is a partial pouring out of the Spirit and God is showing that He is continuing His redemptive plan toward the actual point indicated in Joel and this is a small part of what it will look like in the future. It is an illustration of the of the future pouring out.

What about the "latter rain" of Joel 2:23? Is that for today? In the text of Joel 2, this event is started by an alarm in Jerusalem V1. V11, this is the return of the Lord to judge. V10-11, the return of Jesus to defend His people. V12-13, a call to Israel to repent and come to Christ. V18-21, this is a return of the Lord to send help to the land. V28-29, Peter is referring to the normalcy that will come when we will hear the voice of the Lord and dream His dreams. >>**V28, ALL of this outpouring comes to pass AFTER the return of Christ.**

The "latter rain" is simply water during the spring time to water the ground and feed the livestock, V23. See also Jeremiah 5:24. There is no evidence from Scripture anywhere that somehow during the church age that believers will have this resurgence in miracle working power - it is never indicated.

Conclusion of the Timing of the Gift of Tongues: Is there evidence for the continuation of the gift as it was in the early church? There is **NO** evidence for it. The evidence for the ceasing of the gift is overwhelming.

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The Purpose of the Gifts:

- 1) Authentication of God's message and messengers, Jn. 2:11. We don't need to authenticate it anymore. The Gospel authentication now is that sinners are turned into worshippers by hearing the Gospel proclaimed.
- 2) Revelation – Jesus promised more revelation beyond the OT was coming. Promised in John 14:26, 16:13. The apostles recognized their writings were Scripture in 2 Peter 3:15-16 and 1 Thess. 2:13 “the Word of God.” There is no need now for prophetic revelation. Jude 3, revelation was delivered “once for all” to the saints. Revelation 22:18-19 says that nothing should be added to God's Word.
- 3) Edification: 1 Cor. 12:7, the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good of all. Are we still being built up by the miracles and signs of the early church? Yes, we are. We are through reading the words penned by those who healed the sick and raised the dead.
 - Continuationists argue the gifts are self-edifying. That wasn't the purpose of the gifts, the spiritual gifts were for others.

The Dangers of Continuationist View of Tongues and the Gifts:

- 1) Opens door to a new Gnosticism. Some have higher knowledge than others. Some know God more than others and have more revelation than others.
- 2) It eclipses the Gospel of Christ. Every church that believes in speaking in tongues takes away from the Gospel.
- 3) Attributes to the Holy Spirit something that the Holy Spirit is not doing. In Acts 2 it was instant and complete, not learned in a class or by practice.
- 4) Highlighted the Holy Spirit in a way the Holy Spirit never intended. The HS regenerates and points the way to Christ, that is what the HS proclaims His role to be.
- 5) Associated with a dissatisfaction of the Bible. It is associated with an amateur and self-centered hermeneutic of the worst kind. The gifts of the Spirit become all about me.
- 6) Opens the door to believing that anyone can be saved regardless of what they believe. If you speak in tongues then they must be saved.
- 7) Shifts the church from proclaiming the Gospel to having an emotional experience.
- 8) It creates an arrogant attitude in a whole church. Is a church spirit filled? Do we speak in tongues?

There is a concern for those who believe they have the key to super spirituality because they speak in tongues. There is little to be said to these people because they are more interested in what they know rather than in what Scripture says.

There is a concern for the other group who feel burdened because they are unable to speak in tongues but see the “life” in other churches. We find our emotion in a love for the Scriptures we have been given. **Ps. 119:18. In the law are the Wondrous things of God.**

Further Discussion and Application

How does this message put our perspective on the Gospel message we have been given to proclaim to those in darkness with the Scriptures we have been entrusted? How should we view the words of God given to us? What is the power of the truth in John 17:17?