

PNEUMATOLOGY (123)

(Question #4) - What is a biblical definition of the gift of tongues?

Based on the biblical data, we define tongues as **a supernatural ability given by God to an individual whereby the individual could communicate a message of God in a normal, human, actual language which was not previously known or learned by the speaker.**

Biblical tongues was the ability to communicate God's truth in a foreign language without previously learning or studying that foreign language. The gift of interpretation was a supernatural ability given by God to an individual which enabled one to hear, understand and act as a translator so the message of God could be understood by the hearer who did not speak the language being spoken. Biblical interpretation was the translation of truth into the known language.

(Question #5) - What were the biblical purposes for the gift of tongues?

Purpose #1 - The gift of tongues was a spiritual gift. I Cor. 12:10, 30-31

(Fact #1) - As a spiritual gift, it was sovereignly given by God. I Cor. 12:11, 18, 29

Every major passage that deals with the subject of spiritual gifts clearly establishes that God is the One who sovereignly determines who receives a particular gift—Rom. 12:3; I Cor. 12:11, 18, 28; Eph. 4:7; I Pet. 4:11. What this means is that the gift of tongues, like all other gifts, **does not** come as a result of begging, pleading or praying. This gift **is not** imparted to someone by someone else. When the gift of tongues was operative, it came directly from the sovereign will of God and its potential came at the moment of salvation (I Cor. 12:13).

When we compare what the Bible says to what the tongues speakers claim, we discover there is a major discrepancy. Don Basham is a modern day leader of the tongues movement and he has given instructions as to how to speak in tongues:

“Now the first thing I want to tell you is this: You can sit back and relax, for you can receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit and you can speak in tongues. It is in your power to do all you have to do. ... There is no reason why every one of you...will not receive the Holy Spirit and be praising God in a new and unknown tongue within a very few minutes. So relax and be confident. It will happen. ... Again, let me make it clear; every one of you can do this. It is within your power, once you understand what is required of you to receive the Holy Spirit and to speak in tongues. Now when the prayer for you to receive is offered (and I'm simply going to pray one single prayer aloud in behalf of all of you, asking the Lord Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit and to enable you to praise Him in a new, supernatural way), immediately after the ending of the prayer, I will ask you to do a very simple thing. I will ask you to open your mouth and breathe in or drink in a deep, full breath of air.... All right, that's the first step; 'breathing in' the Holy Spirit and having faith that He's coming in. ... Again, let me tell you, relax! You can do this. You can receive the evidence of speaking in tongues. It is in your power to do it. Let me explain what I mean. ... So when the time comes for you to speak in tongues be ready!

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After I have prayed the prayer in your behalf, and immediately after you have opened your mouth and breathed in the Holy Spirit, I'm going to tell you to let that breath out. Only, do not let it out silently; but put the sound of your voice behind it. Now when I give the word for you to open your mouth...Just babble out whatever pops into your mind and whatever you feel on your lips and tongue. And once you begin, keep it up. ... And another thing. When you start to speak, don't worry about what it sounds like. It may sound like Chinese, like Polynesian, like the notes of the musical scale, or even like baby talk" (Cited from Richard Baxter, *Charismatic Gift of Tongues*, pp. 76-78).

Does this sound like the sovereign work of God or does this sound like human manipulation of man? Does this take into account the spiritual gift truth that we do not all have the same gifts?

(Fact #2) - As a spiritual gift, not everyone will have it. I Cor. 12:4, 5, 6, 29-30

Any teaching that suggests every believer should have the gift of tongues is heretical teaching which totally contradicts the Bible. Unfortunately, tongues speakers and tongues promoters are really not interested in what the Bible does say. For example, John Sherrill, in his book *They Speak with Other Tongues*, says speaking in tongues is everyone's need and "the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is always accompanied with tongues" (John L. Sherrill, *They Speak With Other Tongues*, p. 79).

The constitution of the Assemblies of God Churches reads: "The Baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance." It further states: "We believe in speaking with other tongues...is the initial evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit" (*Ibid.*, pp. 79-80).

The assumption of such heretical doctrine is that if one does not speak in tongues, one has not been baptized with the Spirit and therefore one is not saved. Even though the key tongues speakers and churches teach this and believe this, their system is completely contrary to the Word of God. It is false teaching.

(Fact #3) - As a spiritual gift, it was a speaking gift. I Cor. 12:10; 14:4, 5

We would do well to ask the question, "What is the purpose of any speaking gift that God gives to His church?" Whether prophecy, pastor/teacher, evangelism, wisdom, knowledge or tongues, the purpose of a speaking gift is to clearly and accurately communicate the revelation of God. This is precisely what biblical tongues did—Acts 2:11. If speaking is not communicating the truth of God in an understandable language, it is not meeting the purpose of a speaking gift and it is not a true gift of God.

(Fact #4) - As a spiritual gift, it was a temporal gift. I Cor. 13:8

The gift of tongues cannot possibly be classified as an abiding gift, but must be classified as a temporal gift because of direct revelation from God concerning this gift.

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The verb “they will cease” is a middle voice verb. What this means is that God built into the gift of tongues, in and of itself, the ability for tongues to cease. To state the point simply, God put an automatic shut-off valve on this gift of tongues. He designed it in such a way that it would automatically stop in and of itself.

Now we specifically know from the context of I Corinthians 13 that the ceasing is connected to “when the perfect comes” (I Cor. 13:10). When something perfect was completed, we can expect that tongues, in and of themselves, would cease. In previous studies, we have already concluded that the perfect refers to the completion of the perfect Word of God, or Scriptures. We may also observe that the promise of tongues ceasing is in the context of the church and Church Age, so when the Scriptures were completed in the Church Age, tongues would shut down automatically. To suggest that tongues are still operative now is a stretch of truth, of Pauline teaching and of the revelation of God.

Many of the newer treadmills have an automatic shut-off. If you in any way remove your weight from the machine, it automatically stops. Once you get to the point where you are fatigued, if you slip or fall or just can’t keep going, the machine senses it and shuts itself down. That is how tongues worked. Once it had reached its objective, it shut itself down. God designed tongues so “they will cease.”

(Fact #5) - As a spiritual gift, it was an apostolic gift.

Although this gift cannot be limited to just the apostles, there can be no question that it was an Apostolic Age gift. It was definitely connected to the apostles (Acts 1:26-2:14; 10:44-48; 19:1-6; Mark 16:14-20). Furthermore, when the apostles weren’t present, it was a gift that was to be highly regulated (I Cor. 14:18-19, 27).

(Fact #6) - As a spiritual gift, it was a revelatory gift. I Cor. 14:26, 27, 30

Passages like Acts 2:11 make it very clear that biblical tongues revealed messages from God. Biblical tongues were actually the communication of a message from God in a language not previously known by the speaker. It is very important to realize this because Revelation 22:18 makes it very clear that after the completion of Scriptures, it is dangerous to say one receives direct revelation. Any person today who claims he or she has the gift of tongues is one who claims he or she is getting direct revelatory information from God. Such a person is heading to serious judgment.

(Fact #7) - As a spiritual gift, it was a regulated gift. I Cor. 14:27-40

Never did Paul nor God allow tongues in the early church to be a free-for-all experience in which people are all participating in some out-of-mind, ecstatic foolishness. Biblical tongues was to be very systematically regulated by decree of God.

There were at least four specific regulations:

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1) Biblical tongues was to have an interpreter . I Cor. 14:27-28

Someone was to be able to translate for the people or there was to be no tongues speaking. Once again, we point out that this proves tongues was an actual human language, for interpreters are needed to translate from one human language into another.

2) Biblical tongues was to have a limit . I Cor. 14:27b

At the most, three could speak in a service and that is all.

3) Biblical tongues was to have an order . I Cor. 14:27c

Each person was to take a turn . They were not all to speak at the same time. More than one person has observed that it is not uncommon to have seven or eight or even more moving their lips and babbling at the same time in today's tongues movement, which proves it is not biblical tongues.

4) Biblical tongues was to have a gender . I Cor. 14:34-35

No married woman was to be allowed to speak in the service. As one commentator said, if you take the married women out of the tongues movement, you won't have a tongues movement. For the most part, it is married women who really get all excited about speaking in tongues, which is clearly a violation of God's Word.

These four regulations were to be followed when biblical tongues was operative and when these are observed in light of today's tongues movement, we may dogmatically say that today's tongues movement is not biblical and not of God.

(Fact #8) - As a spiritual gift, it was not the preeminent gift. I Cor. 12:28; 14:5

The elevation of the gift of tongues **is not** a biblical elevation. Whenever a church elevates the gift of tongues, it is a Corinth-type church, which means that it is a church that features a great deal of carnality and ignorance .

These are the biblical facts about the spiritual gift of tongues and it is certainly clear that when a comparison between these facts and the modern-day tongues movement is undertaken, there is no question that today's tongues movement is not of God!

Purpose #2 - The gift of tongues was an evangelistic gift. Acts 2:11; I Cor. 14:26

Biblical tongues had an evangelistic element to it in that it was designed to communicate God's truth to unsaved people of a different language so they could be saved (Acts 2:11). The purpose of tongues was to reveal truth from God to people in another language. It was a missionary gift in that it communicated the truth of Jesus Christ to people who spoke a different language.