

Tongue Speaking: What Does the Bible Say?

Many religious groups claim to speak in tongues. They describe their movement with the terms *glossolalia* and *charismatic*. Members of many churches have claimed the gift of tongue speaking. Do people speak in tongues in the Biblical way in the present world?

The New Testament gives examples of people who spoke in tongues in Acts 2:1-4; Mk. 16:17-20; Acts 10:44-48; Acts 19:1-7; 1 Cor. 12:30. The gift of tongues is one of the spiritual gifts possessed by the early church and listed in 1 Cor. 12:4-11. The *glossolalia*, as it is now called, was not ecstatic speech, but was the ability to speak in foreign languages understood by those who listened. 1 Cor. 14:22-27; Acts 2:6.

The ability to speak in tongues (understandable languages) or foreign languages was a gift possessed by the church in the first century. The church of today does not possess this gift. The Bible tells of three principles that make it impossible for people of today to have the power to speak in tongues.

First, there is no Holy Spirit baptism given today. God promised in Joel 2:28 to pour out His Spirit on all flesh. In the Bible sense, there are two kinds of flesh, Jew and Gentile. The promise was fulfilled to the Jews in Acts 2 and to the Gentiles in Acts 10. In Acts 10:47, Peter took special notice of just how unique this happening was when he said, "Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?"

Second, there is no speaking in tongues today because there are no apostles to lay hands on people. Only the apostles by the laying on of their hands had the power to impart spiritual gifts. This truth is clearly set forward in Acts 8:4-17. When the last apostle died, so did the power to pass on spiritual gifts, including the speaking in tongues.

Third, Paul said the miraculous gifts would cease when the New Testament was completed (1 Cor. 13:8-10). God gave spiritual gifts for a period when the church was young, and God's revelation to man was not yet complete. These gifts were to help his infant church. Paul summarized this teaching in 1 Cor 13:9-10: "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." When that which was perfect, the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25), was come, the miraculous gifts were no longer needed.

People today do not speak in tongues in the Biblical way.