

Speaking in Tongues And other Spirit Issues

Must Spirit-filled Christians Speak in Tongues?

The baptism of John was a baptism of repentance (Mt. 3:6). John is counted as pre-Kingdom of Christ (Lk. 11:28; Mt. 11:11). The baptism of John was not that of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' own baptism was characterized by the presence of the Spirit (Mt. 3:16). Every Christian has the Spirit. If not, the person is not a Christian (Rom. 8:9). Every Christian has the Holy Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit are a manifestation of that presence. In some lesser manner, Christ gave the Spirit to His apostles (John 20:22), but the regular indwelling was reserved to begin at Pentecost, according to Jesus' promise (Acts 1:4-5).

Of course, the fulfillment of Jesus' promise of Acts 1:4-5 occurred at Acts 2:4 (cf. 2:17), "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." (NIV used). I believe that the glossolalia—speaking in tongues, accompanied the giving of the Spirit simply to show very demonstrably that something unique in time had happened. Formerly the Spirit had been given to prophets and kings and judges, but never upon all the people—even women and the lowly, such as happened at Pentecost.

Now, how could anyone know that the Spirit had come upon "all people," except for the miracle of "tongues" as attested to by Joel 2:28-29. This served the purpose by announcing the coming of the Spirit to men "from every nation under heaven" by the miraculous use of their very own languages--"tongues."

Let me pause to say that I believe that there are two kinds of tongues (1 clearly a spoken language understood by anyone with that languages' grammar and dictionary (Acts 2:11) (2 a language NOT understood naturally either by the speaker or human hearers (1 Cor. 14:2,14). However by another spiritual gift of interpretation, humans can understand this second kind of tongues (1 Cor. 12:10; 14:27-28). Without an interpreter, there should be no public speaking in tongues (there was no need for this at Acts 2).

Now the question arises as to whether or not the giving of the Spirit is always accompanied by the speaking in "tongues." I believe not. One gift is NOT given to all Christians, in fact, Paul asked the question: "Do all speak in tongues?" The answer obviously is negative, in the flow of his argument at 1 Cor. 12:27-31—that each member of the Body of Christ functions differently for the benefit of the entire Body. If everyone had the same gift(s), we wouldn't need each other, as does the body need its various parts.

So here we have a dilemma for those who say that the baptism of the Holy Spirit equals possessing the gift of tongues: all Christians have the Spirit—all Christians don't have the gift of tongues—both taught by Paul. No mention is made of those who received the Spirit at Acts 2:38 speaking in tongues. This is an argument from silence, but it seems

strange that at the very same moment in history no mention is made of the repetition of the gift of tongues so remarkably falling earlier that day. No mention is given of speaking in tongues at the baptisms of Acts 8:12, Acts 8:17 and 8:38. Nor at Acts 16:15, or at Acts 18:8 or 22:16.

Interestingly, the Holy Spirit was given by the laying on of the apostles' hands in Acts 8:17, and *before* baptism at Acts 10:47-48.

However, we do have the coming of the Spirit connected with the gift of tongues at Acts 10:44-46. Why? I think this is easily explained. A miracle was needed to attest to the fact that the Spirit came upon *all* the Jewish Christians in Acts 2:4. But another miracle that everyone could verify was needed to demonstrate that God was now offering salvation not only to Jews, but to Gentiles. Peter needed visions to compel him even to go to speak the Gospel to Gentiles (Acts 10:9-20), and he later was ashamed of Gentiles (Gal. 2:11-12) before his Jewish friends. Again, tongues became an irrefutable sign of the Spirit's indwelling, particularly as the association between tongues and the Spirit was made at Acts 2 (cf. Acts 11:15). No Jew could refute God's gift of the Spirit to Gentiles. Interestingly also, Peter was the one God used to preach the Gospel first to the Jews at Pentecost and then to Cornelius, representative of the Gentiles. The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26ff.) was likely a "God-fearer"—a Jewish convert, although not a full Jew.

At Acts 19:4-7, a dozen converts of John's baptism did receive the gift of tongues. I think this is so because of their total ignorance of even the existence of the Person of the Holy Spirit (19:2). *They* needed a miraculous sign to understand that not only was there indeed the Spirit, but that the Spirit would indwell *them*. So the gift of tongues was associated with the baptism of the Holy Spirit in three of ten instances of baptism in Acts, and the three that were connected with speaking in tongues in my estimate were because a miracle was needed in the particular case.

Finally, we are not to scorn tongues (1 Cor. 14:39), but they should be accompanied in the church by those with the gift of interpreting tongues. I would also equate the baptism of the Spirit with receiving of the Spirit at regeneration (Titus 3:5; Rom. 8:9; 11:29).

Many fine men of God attest to a second experience of God's power in their life. Men such as D.L. Moody, Hudson Taylor, George Finney, C.H. Spurgeon, A.B. Simpson and Jonathan Goforth and no doubt others have experienced this. Some might call it the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I can't argue with anyone's personal experience, nor pass judgment upon it.

Anointing

When we become a Christian, God, through Christ, gives us one or more spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:7). This is different from the "anointing" of the Holy Spirit. The common charismatic/Pentecostal use of anointing is found at Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is

on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.” This anointing is a divine enablement.

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is mentioned again in the New Testament at 1 John 2. This supernatural gift is discernment from the Spirit to know the truth (1 Jn. 2:20, 27). Therefore, the most untaught Christian has the ability to detect spiritual error. This supplements, but does not displace the gift of teaching (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7), and gives the ability to test even “teachers.” I think that confusion arises based upon the OT concept of anointing of certain individuals for particular tasks (priesthood—Ex. 28:41, 30:30; 40:15; kingship—I Sam. 15:1; 16:12; 1 Chron. 29:22, for example). God set apart by anointing certain men to fulfill His commission in this way, although this isn’t the only way God’s servants are set apart (Jer. 1:4-10; Is. 6:8ff.).

I believe that we come to understand our spiritual gifts by the affirmation in those supernatural ministry gifts by the Body of Christ. How does the Body affirm your ministry to her?

Freedom in Worship

I think the Psalms give us an idea of worship, especially 148-150. This is exuberant worship, with many different kinds of instruments and much praise. The clearest description of worship is at 1CO 14:26 What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. But another paradigm is found at Acts 2:42—teaching, fellowship, sacrament and prayer.

My own theory is that people of similar educational background, ethnic origin, temperament (I think a good case can be made for a “national” and even an “ethnic” personality, probably through socialization) and socio-economic status, among other variables, tend to coalesce together in various denominations. These denominations aren’t “static,” but seem to rise up the socio-economic ladder, with newer and more effective “denominations” and movements filling in at the “bottom.” These various people categories have similar tastes in music (a very big issue), leadership style, prayer, emotionality, and time orientation (“event” orientation—reaching a certain emotional peak or catharsis, versus the “1 hour” value). There are no doubt other categories, such as church polity and the effects of racism leading to the formation of various black denominations, for example. I think that because God loves variety, He doesn’t mind these flavors, insofar as biblical principles aren’t transgressed. I recommend going where you are “comfortable” with the style, where you are taught and challenged by the Word of God, where love is evident, where biblical discipline is exercised (indicating that the Word of God is taken seriously), and where the leaders are interested in God’s kingdom, not their own. Other indicators for me are the level of giving and the level of serious prayer and commitment to evangelism and global mission. But the perfect church we won’t find.

There are those who believe that we should do in worship only, and no more, what Scripture says is normative for worship. I find these people excluding various

passages, such as Ps. 150, in what is allowed. Personally I think that God will appreciate the fruits of worship in spirit in various manifestations, decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40).

Jim Sutherland, Ph.D.