

Speaking In Tongues?

By Ron Boatwright

Many in the religious world today are obsessed with "speaking in tongues". According to the Bible, one of the miracles of the first century was the miraculous speaking in understandable foreign languages, which the speaker had never learned. In Acts chapter 2, on the Day of Pentecost only the twelve apostles could miraculously and intelligibly speak the 16 different foreign languages listed there in Acts 2:9-11 as they communicated with the Jews at Jerusalem who had come there from all over the known world. Many of these Jews only spoke the language of the country from which they came. Acts 2:6 says the people "were confused because everyone heard them **speak in his own language**". This was not the "jibberish" that is passed off today as "speaking in tongues". The Jews knew that the twelve apostles were not very learned because they said in Acts 2:7, "Look are not all these who speak Galileans?" The people were amazed because the twelve unlearned Galilean apostles could fluently speak in all these different foreign languages which they had never learned. This was a miracle.

One of the purposes of miraculously speaking in these various foreign languages is the apostles were charged by the Lord in Mark 16:15 to "**Go into all the world** and preach the gospel to every creature" and in Matthew 28:18 to "Go therefore and make disciples of **all nations**". How were they to teach the gospel to people in these various foreign lands since they did not know their languages? They would have had to spend at least two years in a language school to be able to fluently speak even one language. But on the day of Pentecost, the twelve unlearned apostles could fluently speak at least 16 different foreign languages. God gave them this miraculous power to help them accomplish what He had charged them to do.

The purpose of miracles (including speaking in tongues) was to confirm the word of God. We read in Mark 16:20 concerning the apostles in carrying out the Lord's great commission "they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and **confirming the word through the accompanying signs**." Since the word of God was confirmed in the first century A.D., miracles are no longer needed today to confirm God's word, the New Testament.

The twelve apostles were given the power to miraculously speak in these various foreign languages. Certain other Christians in the first century were also given this miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. But how did these other

Christians receive this power? In Acts 6:5-6 Philip along with six other men were chosen "whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them". "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did...But when they believed Philip...both men and women were baptized" (Acts 8:5-6, 12). Philip could do miracles because the hands of the apostles had been laid on him. But Philip was not an apostle and could not lay his hands on other people to pass on this miraculous power. So the apostles Peter and John were sent to them so "that through the **laying on of the apostles hands** the Holy Spirit was given" (Acts 8:18). It took the laying on of the apostles' hands to pass on this miraculous power. In Acts 19:1-7 the apostle Paul baptized twelve men and we read in verse 6, "And **when Paul had laid hands on them**, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with other tongues and prophesied." Also the apostle Paul had passed on to Timothy a miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit when he charged Timothy "to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the **laying on of my hands**" (2 Timothy 1:6). There are no apostles living on the earth today.

The only other time the Lord gave people in the first century the power to miraculously speak in foreign languages ("tongues"), without the laying on of the apostles hands, was Cornelius and his household in Acts chapters 10 & 11. The purpose of this miracle was to convince Peter and the six other Jewish brethren who accompanied him that "God has also granted the Gentiles repentance to life" (Acts 11:18). When Peter and the six Jewish brethren returned to Jerusalem, they had to defend their actions to Jewish members of the church there (Acts 11:2-18). It was unlawful for a Jew to go into the house of a Gentile (Acts 10:28). After Peter explained all of the things that happened as to why he went into the house of a Gentile, he replied "who was I that I could withstand God? When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God" (Acts 11:17-18). It took a miracle, the miraculous speaking in foreign languages by the Gentiles, to convince the Jews that God had also accepted the Gentiles into the church.

Miracles of the first century were only temporary: until God's word could be confirmed, congregations of the Lord's church could be established throughout the known world, and the New Testament could be written as a guide for Christians. God's word says that there would come a time that tongues would cease "when that which is perfect is come". 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 says, "But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease, whether there is knowledge, it will vanish

away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. **But when that which is perfect is come**, then that which is in part will be **done away**." That which is perfect did come and that which is in part (including "tongues") was done away. God's word says, "But he who looks into **the perfect law of liberty** and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25). Since "the perfect law of liberty", the New Testament has been written, we now have the "**perfect will of God**" (Romans 12:2). When the New Testament was confirmed and completed then "tongues" and other miracles ceased.

This miraculous power of the Holy Spirit ceased at the death of the apostles and the death of those on whom the apostles had laid their hands. Today, if anyone is able to "speak in tongues", that is in foreign languages, it is because they have studied and learned them. Modern day "tongues speakers" have made a mockery out of the word of God. When they stand before the Lord on the Day of Judgment, they will have to "give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12) for what they have done. Today the "jibberish" which is falsely called "tongue speaking" is nothing more than "nonsensical babblings" designed to deceive people. It is done by men "boasting himself to be somebody" (Acts 5:36). Today the hoax of speaking in tongues is designed to lead people away from the truth of God's word. And because of this Jesus says, "And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15:14). We are also warned, "Beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked" (2 Peter 3:17). Paul says that people would be deceived, "According to the working of Satan with all power, signs, and lying wonders and with unrighteous deception among those who perish" (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). Let's not be led away by the error of Satan's power, signs, lying wonders, and deception and lose our own souls in Hell.