

Questions and answers about tongue speaking:

Are all tongue speakers members of the Pentecostal movement? No. Some heathen have claimed to speak in tongues. In recent times tongue speakers have claimed membership in the Lutheran church, the Episcopal faith, the Presbyterian church, the Baptist faith, the Russian Orthodox religion and even Catholic churches. “The Church of the Latter-day Saints—popularly known as Mormons—was founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith in New York. Belief in gifts of the Spirit was one of its articles of faith. Some of the early Quakers also professed to speak in tongues; one of the best known was the so called “Ranters in England.”

Claims about tongue speaking have come from many different countries including the United States, Sweden, Norway, etc. Gromacki (*The Modern Tongues Movement*, p. 9) noted how some Eskimos in Greenland are said to have engaged in tongue speaking. Their “religious services are led by a medicine man or priest. The services are characterized by drum beating, singing, dancing, and nudity of both men and women.”

Claims of tongue speaking have not only been world-wide, they have sometimes involved the very young (in some cases children as young as four are said to have spoken in tongues). Tongue-speaking claims also pre-date the New Testament. One claim comes from the “Report of Wenamon,” approximately 1100 B.C. A young worshipper of “Amon” is said to have become possessed of a god and spoken in a frenzied and ecstatic language.

Why do people want to speak in tongues? There may be many reasons, but Kildahl (p. 4) noted that this “experience brings peace and joy and inner harmony. Glossolalists view it as an answer to prayer, an assurance of divine love and acceptance.”

Are people taught to speak in tongues? True tongue speaking (the divine gift from God) was not “taught.” The Holy Spirit determined who received this gift (1 Cor. 12:7-11) and Christians were automatically able to speak in tongues (languages they had never learned) without any prompting or guidance. Today, what is called *tongue speaking*, is often a “taught gift” (people are trained to “speak in tongues”).

Kildahl (p. 3) offered a specific example of how this is done. People have knelt as a group “and the leader encouraged them to try to ‘receive’ this ability. He went from one to another, laying his hands on each person’s head. Bill told me that with a prayer in tongues and with encouragement, the leader asked him to make an effort to move his lips in a free and relaxed manner. ‘Say after me what I say, and then go on speaking in the tongue that the Lord will give you.’ ‘Aish nay gum nay tayo...’ prayed the leader and waited for Bill to repeat the same sounds, and then go on in his own words. Bill tried. ‘Aish nay gum nay tayo...’ and then stopped. ‘Aish nay gum nay tayoo...Aish nay gum nay tayoo...’ The leader, keeping both of his hands on Bill’s head again prayed that Bill would open himself to receive the ‘gift of the Spirit.’”

Tongue speakers have even gone so far as to grab the chin of a non-tongue speaker and say, “I’ll move your chin; make the sounds I have made” to help someone start *speaking in tongues*. This process makes a mockery of God’s power and the true gifts. It is also contrary to what we find in the Bible (read carefully Acts 8:15-18 and Acts 19:1-6). Kildahl also noted (p. 3) how two participants in this group “tried earnestly, and the leader exhorted them, placing his hands on their heads, but the words never came.” Kildahl concluded (p. 74) that “tongue speaking is a learned phenomenon” and “is explicable in rational ways” (p. 85).

Do tongue speakers often misapply Bible passages? Yes. Pentecostal teachers have incorrectly claimed verses such as Acts 4:31 (Christians “were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word with boldness”) refer to tongue speaking. Other texts such as Rom. 8:26 (the Spirit makes intercession for Christians that cannot be uttered); Eph. 5:19 (Christians sing “spiritual songs”); Eph. 6:18 (Christians pray “in the Spirit”); 1 Thess. 5:19-20 (“quench not the spirit” and “despise not prophesying”); and 1 Pet. 4:11 (“speak as the oracles of God”) have been misconstrued to support Pentecostal claims. Because these incorrect interpretations come from people who claim to be led or directed by the Holy Spirit, their misapplication of various passages is on-going proof that people claiming to be led and directed by the Holy Spirit are not true servants of God.

Have Pentecostal believers ever “tarried” (waited) for the Holy Spirit to come upon them? Yes; in some cases people are said to have “wrestled with God” to receive Holy Spirit baptism or the “gift of tongues.” This false idea is based on Lk. 24:49, a passage where Jesus made a promise to His apostles. Heaven fulfilled this promise on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5, 8; 2:1-4). Aside from this specific promise to the apostles, no individual or group of people in the NT was ever told to “tarry for the Holy Spirit.”

Do those who speak in tongues believe tongues are always for the same purpose? No. Some regard tongues as a sign that someone has received Holy Spirit baptism and this sign may be temporary (i.e. the person may only be able to speak in tongues for a while and, then, the gift ceases). Others think tongues are given and this sign is permanent. Still others claim that tongues are for “devotional use” (i.e. this gift helps them pray, give thanks or sing). There are also those who think tongues are “congregational” (they are to be used at or during a worship service).

How strongly do tongue speakers believe in their “gift”? One man, and his opinion seems typical of tongue speakers, said: “I do not know what language I have and I don’t question it. I believe it is from God and that is good enough for me” (Kildahl, p. 7). Since members of the Pentecostal movement usually elevate their experience above what the Bible says, this is one more proof that it is not of divine origin (compare 1 Thess. 5:21 and Mt. 7:21-23).

Do tongue speakers believe they are receiving a message from God? In some cases, yes. Kildahl (p. 8) noted how one said, “God will use this gift when God wishes to give a direct message to the people.”

While all the errors associated with claims about tongue speaking are troublesome, this one is especially serious. When people believe God is still giving messages to people through their “gifts,” but the Bible says heaven’s message to man is already 100% complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3), we must either accept the claims of tongue speakers and reject what Paul and Peter said or accept the claims of the inspired apostles and reject the claims of tongue speakers. We cannot believe both New Testament teaching and Pentecostal claims. For more reasons why Pentecostalism conflicts with the Scriptures, see the commentary on 12:13b.

How intense is the tongue speaking experience? “Emotionally, the experience was one of fantastic release, comparable in intensity to sexual orgasm, or to the sense of freedom just after an intense stomach cramp subsides” (Kildahl, p. 46).

Is it fair to say that tongue speakers elevate their experience over the Bible? Yes. If a tongue speaker is feeling discouraged, “he can begin to speak in tongues and recall that God is with him, that glossolalia is a special gift from God, and that he can unload his problems through releasing his feelings in tongue-speech. Each time he speaks in tongues, he performs a physical act which he surrounds with a set of beliefs reconfirming that he is a special person, specially blessed” (Kildahl, pp. 46-47). First century tongue speakers could use their gift for personal edification (see 1 Cor. 14:28), but now edification comes through the NT (Acts 20:32).

Does Pentecostalism make other claims? Yes, and many of these claims lay great stress on what is material instead of what is spiritual. Pentecostalism has often focused on solving man’s earthly problems (healing the sick and prosperity to the poor). In some foreign countries Pentecostalism has offered protection from witchcraft and promised children to the barren. Pentecostal preachers have often stressed physical blessings instead of stressing the terribleness of sin and man’s need for salvation. While Jesus and the apostles did heal and help the poor, these acts were only tools to help people with their greatest need: Salvation.

Do people believe their “spiritual gifts” increase their spirituality? Yes. It is often claimed gifts such as tongues provides people with a new and greater level of spiritual maturity. This idea is disproven by the 1 Cor. letter. The Corinthians excelled in gifts such as tongue speaking, but they suffered from internal division, lawsuits, sexual sin, and possibly drunkenness at the Lord’s table. Also, rather than indicate maturity, as shown in the discussion on 13:10-12, spiritual gifts were a sign of spiritual infancy.

What are the basic conclusions about tongue speaking? Hoekema (p. 126) rightly quoted V. Raymond Edman who said, “there are really only three possibilities: Either glossolalia today is of the devil, or it is a genuine gift of the Spirit, or it is a phenomenon which, without being either primarily inspired by the devil or by the Spirit, has been psychologically induced.” Since modern tongue speaking is not “of the Spirit” (see the commentary on 1 Cor. 13:8-10), what is now done is either psychologically induced, a tool of Satan, or both. Let’s not forget that Satan “fashions himself into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14) and he has previously used “signs” to lead people astray (Mt. 24:24). Satan’s signs are called “lying signs” in 2 Thess. 2:9.

What Bible books refer to tongue speaking? Only three New Testament books refer to tongue speaking (Mark, Acts and First Corinthians).

Where can we find all the New Testament verses on tongue speaking? See Mk. 16:17; Acts 2:4-11; 10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1, 8; 14:2, 4, 5, 6, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28.

Are tongue speakers consistent in how they handle the Scriptures? No, and one terrific example of this is found in Mk. 16:17-18. Jesus said people would “speak with new tongues” (verse 17) and “take up serpents” (verse 18). Each of these statements is expressed exactly the same way in the Greek text (Jesus used the future indicative to describe both actions). If Mk. 16:17 means tongue speaking is for today, believers are also to handle snakes (verse 18). There is no way to say that tongue speaking can be done unless one is also willing to handle snakes. Since Pentecostal teachers do not want to handle snakes, they have been forced to re-interpret the word “snakes” to mean “enemies.”

What happens today when tongues are “interpreted?” Many times the “interpretation” is very general or people claim the tongue speaker was expressing thanksgiving to God. Kildahl (p. 63) cited an example of a young man who attended a meeting and said the words of the “Lord’s Prayer” in an African dialect he learned in his youth. There was an “interpreter of tongues” present at this meeting and the interpreter said the young man said *Jesus’ second coming was imminent!*

Do tongue speakers often rely upon a leader? Yes, and Kildahl (p. 44) said his research showed it was “vital” for tongue speakers to have a “complete sense of trust and confidence in the leader.” “It is not surprising that a profound sense of trust in a leader is necessary for beginning to speak in tongues, just as it is for the induction of hypnosis” (ibid). Kildahl also (p. 50) said: “We never met a deeply involved tongue-speaker who did not have some leader to whom he looked for guidance.”

Why do some people speak of the “Holy Ghost” and others refer to the “Holy Spirit?” Many within the Pentecostal movement seem to prefer the word “ghost” because this term more quickly stirs the emotions and passions of people. *Ghost* has an almost eerie sound to it and is useful in creating an environment that is often not “decent and orderly” (compare 1 Cor. 14:40).

While the KJV normally uses the words “Holy Ghost” instead of “Holy Spirit,” there are four places in the New Testament where the KJV says “Holy Spirit” instead of “Holy Ghost” (see Lk. 11:13; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 1 Thess. 4:8).