

## **The topic of this Bible Study is: Why Did God Choose Tongues**

There is a story of a young man in the military. He was raised in a traditional church and dropped out of college to join the military because he felt God had something more for him. Running into problems with his flesh and with the law he began to seek God to see if He was real and could help him in the midst of his troubles. He had never before been exposed to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, but found himself in a revival meeting at an Apostolic church in the Southwest. He went forward to pray, knelt quietly in the corner and was filled with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. He spoke in other tongues and was also filled with the joy and peace of the Holy Ghost. He received deliverance that night as was changed for the rest of his life by the power of God

Though in different walks of life, circumstances and problems, Millions have experienced this same baptism in the Spirit. And wherever this message is proclaimed, the question is asked, "**Why did God choose speaking in tongues as the initial, physical evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost?**"

I may not have all the answers to this question, and perhaps we do not know them all. But several key points are apparent in this discussion.

First, we must recognize that God is not accountable to us for what He chooses to do. Isaiah asked,

*<sup>13</sup> Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has taught Him?*

*<sup>14</sup> With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, And taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, And showed Him the way of understanding?*

Isaiah 40:13-14

We have no license to question God's ways or to dispute His actions. His purposes are supreme, His promises are sure, His performances sane and sensible.

There are many other why did God Questions that we could ask?

Why did God choose blood as the basis for atonement?

Why did God choose water as the element in baptism?

Why did God choose gold as the overlaying metal for the ark of the covenant?

Why did God choose stone as the material upon which to record the Ten Commandments?

Why did God choose Jerusalem as the site for the Temple?

Why did God choose dust out of which to form mankind?

There is divine purpose behind these choices, although we may not understand all of God's reasoning. However we certainly cannot deny or disavow God's sovereign right to do as He pleases and to choose what He wishes.

Perhaps one vital reason why God chose other speaking with other tongues as the initial sign of receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is that speaking in tongues is an immediate, external evidence. There are many other evidences of the operation of the Spirit of God in a person's life, but it is a matter of time before they are manifested. For example, the fruit of the Spirit is mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23

**<sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.**

**Galatians 5:22 - 23 (NKJV)**

Like a new tree that is planted what follows in the wake of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a time of spiritual growth. The fruit of the Spirit does not necessarily appear immediately but comes after a time of growing in God and as in the natural the growth times of different people vary according to the spiritual climate they are in, their life experiences and dedication to serving God.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Acts we follow a chronicle of the Apostle Peter being called to go to the house of a gentile named Cornelius.

We find as we read the scripture that Peter and the six Jewish Christians who went with him to Caesarea knew that the Gentiles had received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, not because of longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, or temperance, or any of the fruits of the Spirit but rather because they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

Lets look at the record of the scripture:

Read Acts 10:43-46

*<sup>43</sup>To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.” <sup>44</sup>While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. <sup>45</sup>And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. <sup>46</sup>For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.*

**Acts 10:43 - 46 (NKJV)**

The record is that they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God

We find that in Acts 11:13-16 the Apostle Peter specifically pointed to this encounter with Cornelius and tells how they had received the Holy Spirit just as they did in the beginning as the irrefutable evidence that God had poured out his Spirit upon the Gentiles

*<sup>13</sup>And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, ‘Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, <sup>14</sup>who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.’ <sup>15</sup>And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. <sup>16</sup>Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’*

**Acts 11:13 - 16 (NKJV)**

They did not point to the rushing mighty wind or tongues of visible fire sitting on each of them as but they pointed to the experience of speaking with tongues.

Speaking in tongues is an outward, external evidence, instantly observable and heard. By contrast, peace, joy, righteousness, and other spiritual fruits are inward, internal results of the infilling that become evident with the passing of time.

Perhaps another reason why God chose other tongues as the initial sign of receiving the Spirit is that speaking in tongues is a uniform evidence. It applies to everyone, regardless of race, culture, or language.

Some people quote I Corinthians 12:30 in an attempt to prove that not all speak in tongues when they are filled with the Spirit: "**Do all speak with tongues?**" However, this verse refers to the *gift* of tongues, that is, speaking a public message in tongues to be interpreted for the congregation, which is a spiritual gift that a person may exercise subsequent to the infilling of the Spirit. Though both tongues

as the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and tongues as a later spiritual gift are the same in essence, **they are different in administration and operation**. For example, the regulations regarding the gift of tongues in I Corinthians 14:27-28 did not apply to the conversion accounts in Acts, where many people spoke in tongues simultaneously, without interpretation, as the sign of being filled with the Spirit.

I encourage you to view my Video Bible Study entitled “**Isn’t tongues of the 9 Gifts of the spirit**” for a more detailed discussion on this issue.

Now, some people may question this distinction between the initial evidence of tongues at the time of baptism of the Holy Spirit and the later use of tongues as a spiritual gift in a Christian's life.

**But the same distinction is apparent with regard to faith!**

Think about this: To be saved, everyone must have faith (John 3:16; Romans 10:9; Ephesians 2:8). Yet 1 Corinthians 12:9 reveals that **there is a special, supernatural gift of faith that can operate in a Spirit-filled person's life over and beyond the faith necessary for salvation**. Saving faith and the spiritual gift of faith are the same in essence but different in administration and operation.

In speaking about the birth of the Spirit, Jesus emphasized the uniformity of the experience:

*<sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”* (John 3:8).

**Moreover, Jesus placed emphasis upon the accompanying sound, not on sight or feeling!** The *sound* of the wind blowing is evidence of its presence.

Some have conclude that Jesus referred only to "**the sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind**" on the Day of Pentecost. But this sound of wind is never mentioned again in the later accounts of receiving the Holy Ghost, **while speaking in tongues is**. Speaking in tongues by itself caused the Jewish Christians to recognize that the experience of the Gentiles at Caesarea was identical to theirs on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 10:44-47; 11:15-17). Hence, the important, conclusive evidence of the Spirit's manifestation at Pentecost was speaking in other tongues. The sound of wind was *impersonal*, but the speaking was *personal*.

Speaking in tongues was the first evidence of each individual infilling.

At Caesarea all who heard the Word were filled, and all who heard the Word spoke in tongues. If some of them had not spoken in tongues, would the Jewish Christians have accepted their experiences? Clearly not. All twelve men mentioned in Acts 19:6 had that same uniform experience. If ten of the twelve had spoken in tongues and the other two had not, would Paul have believed that the two had received the Holy Ghost just as the ten? Certainly not. Paul would not have accepted their experience if they have failed to exhibit the uniform evidence.

Speaking in tongues also symbolizes God's complete control of the believer. Perhaps this is one of the strongest reasons why God chose speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This symbolism becomes apparent when you study James chapter 3, which provides more information on the tongue than any other chapter in the New Testament.

Listen to the words of the writer of James 3:6 concerning the tongue:

Read James 3:6

*And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.*

James 3:6 (NKJV)

The tongue is capable of defiling the whole body. If so, is it incredible to claim that the tongue is also capable of symbolizing the sanctification of the whole body?

According to James 3:8 though the tongue is a smaller member, it has never been tamed by humanity. It is the most unruly member of the body. Then if that is true **is it not necessary for the tongue to be tamed before the whole body can be consecrated to God?** James illustrates the importance of the tongue by comparing it to the bit in a horse's mouth in James 3:3. The bit in a horse's mouth gives the rider complete control over the horse. In James 3:4 He also compares the tongue to the helm of a large ship, which gives the pilot full command of the vessel.

You see, whoever controls the tongue of a person controls him. And a person cannot tame his tongue by himself; only God can tame it for him.

According to Matthew 12:29, before someone can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, he must first bind the strong man. **The strong man of our house is the tongue.** We can tame every member of the body but this one. When God tames a person's tongue, that person comes under God's full control. He is in the hands of the Almighty. He has been conquered by Christ, endued with a spiritual force from on high, and empowered for God's service.

The tongue also provides the greatest expressions of the human spirit. Consider Music and Poetry for instance. We humans are spiritual and emotional beings, and as such we must give expression to our emotions. The ability and power to coordinate thought and tongue into intelligent speech is one of our highest prerogatives, elevating us above the beasts of the field. This ability makes us superior to the rest of God's creation on earth, and it is the most distinguishing feature of our being.

The tongue becomes the vehicle of expression for the spirit. All of the emotions--such as love, hate, anger, sorrow, joy, happiness, relief, serenity--are communicated through the tongue. The tongue is the gate way to the heart, feelings, attitudes, and spirit.

In light of these truths, it is not difficult to see why God has chosen speaking in tongues to express the greatest, most wonderful experience that we mortal humans can receive. In the baptism of the Holy Ghost, His Spirit and our spirit become one. He uses our tongue and voice to express this union. Speaking in tongues is a wonder of wonders, not chosen by humans, but by God, the sovereign ruler of the universe.

Combine all these reasons and we see at least a glimpse of why God chose tongues.

In the beginning of this study I told you the story of the young military man.

I was that young man. Up until that week I had never heard of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit but knew that I wanted it. I desperately wanted a new life. I was tired of the Sex Drugs and Rock and Roll scene of the 70's.

I read where God said I could have it I was baptized in Jesus Name and the same night received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

God honored my simple faith.

He will honor yours right now if you will let him.

If you have repented of your sins there is nothing that can stand between your faith and Gods promise.

God never said you had to understand, he said you just had to believe.

Right now if you will just lift your hands to heaven and begin to pray God can fill you with the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

After repentance it just takes simple faith for God to fill you with his spirit.

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