

# What The Bible Says About...

## SPEAKING IN TONGUES

### I- WHAT IS "SPEAKING IN TONGUES?"

(derived from two Greek words: "glossa" - tongue; "lalia" - to speak. Thus, "glossalalia" - tongue speaking)

A. Mentioned in 7 chapters in the New Testament:

- [Mark 16:17](#); [Acts 2, 10, 19](#); [I Corinthians 12,13,14](#)

B. How is it used in the New Testament?

- First appears in [Acts 2](#)

- Notice [v11](#)- "... our own **language** ("glossa")

- Point- The word is most commonly used to denote "an understandable/comprehensible language."

**NOTE:** There is no indication that the word ever meant "ecstatic language."

- Some paraphrase Bibles have **interpreted** (rather than **translated**) :

- TEV (Today's English Version) - "strange tongues/strange sounds"

- NEB (New English Bible)- "language of ecstasy"

- The Greek language has a word for "ecstasy" - "ekstasis"- This word is never used in the Bible in connection with "glossa."

- The ASV (American Standard Version) and RSV (Revised Standard Version) consistently translate "glossa" as "tongues."

- Unfortunately, the KJV (King James Version) translators added the word "unknown" in [I Corinthians 14:2](#) and subsequent verses (notice the italics). This has created unnecessary confusion.

C. The words "speaking in tongues" is used in the New Testament to describe one of the miraculous gifts received through the Holy Spirit- namely, the ability to speak a known language that the speaker was previously unable to speak.

### II- WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE FOR "SPEAKING IN TONGUES?"

A. PRIMARY PURPOSE:

- [Mark 16:15-20](#); [Hebrews 2:1-4](#) - "To confirm that the message being revealed was from God"

- Example- [Acts 10:42-48](#) - Cornelius' household (same purpose as [Acts 2](#))

- Why was this needed? In N.T. times, while the gospel was first being presented, there were false prophets preaching a false message ([Galatians 1:8-9](#)). How were the hearers to know which message was truly from God?

- If the speaker performed an obvious/undeniable miracle (healing sick, raising dead, etc.), that provided proof.

- Example- [Acts 28:3-6](#)- Paul unaffected when bitten by a poisonous snake

- Note the response of the island's native inhabitants. (Refer to [Mark 16:18](#))

- Note that "tongues" were a sign for the Unbeliever. - [I Corinthians 14:22](#)

B. SECONDARY PURPOSE:

- Edifying the church... ONLY when accompanied by an interpreter- [I Corinthians 14:4-5](#); [12-13](#); [27-28](#)

**Observation:** In New Testament times, speaking in tongues was used to prove the validity of the message; today, the message is used to try to prove the validity of the speaking in tongues!

### III- WAS "SPEAKING IN TONGUES" INTENDED TO BE A PERMANENT GIFT? ... NO. Three proofs:

A. THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFTS WAS FULFILLED.

1. Gospel has been "once for all delivered"

- [Jude 3](#); [Hebrews 1:1-2](#); [II Timothy 3:16-17](#); [II Peter 1:3](#)

2. Real issue- "Is revelation complete?" Answer- "Yes."

3. Therefore, the purpose of the miraculous gifts (including tongues) has been fulfilled.

4. Question for consideration: If that [temporary] gift has not ceased, where are the other gifts today (i.e. miraculous healings, drinking deadly poison, etc.)?

B. THE MEANS FOR OBTAINING MIRACULOUS GIFTS IS NO LONGER AVAILABLE.

- The New Testament speaks of only 2 ways these gifts could be obtained:

- First- The direct operation of God called “baptism of the Holy Spirit”

- Second- The “lay on of apostles’ hands”

1. “Baptism of Holy spirit”

a. Only have two occurrences in New Testament:

- [Acts 2](#) & [Acts 10](#)

b. The “baptism of the Holy Spirit” accompanied by the miraculous signs such as speaking in tongues was not “in order to be saved.” Neither was it a “sign of salvation.”

- [I Corinthians 12:27-30](#)- not all Corinthian CHRISTIANS spoke in tongues!

c. It was a sign to show God’s sanction upon the activities and message of men when the gospel was first revealed to the Jews & Gentiles - [Acts 2](#) - Jews; [Acts 10](#) - Gentiles

NOTE- The Jews would have never accepted the Gentiles as brothers in Christ if God had not demonstrated, in an undeniable way, that this was His plan! Therefore, the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” was necessary to make the gospel available to the Jews and also necessary to make the gospel available to the Gentiles.

- The “baptism of the Holy Spirit” was only for that purpose and is no longer in existence today. Christians receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit when they are baptized and become God’s child. - [Acts 2:38-39](#)

d. The “baptism of the Holy Spirit” was solely for that purpose and is no longer available today.

2. “Laying on of Apostles’ hands”

- [Acts 19:6](#)- Paul laid his hands on 12 men at Ephesus after they had been “properly baptized” and they received the miraculous gifts of speaking in tongues and prophesying.

- [II Timothy 1:6](#)- Paul laid hands on Timothy in order that he might receive a “*gift of God.*”

- [Acts 6:6](#)- Philip the evangelist received the “laying on of apostles hands” and was able to work miracles - [Acts 8:6](#)

- However, he was unable to transfer this power of working signs to others - [Acts 8:14-17](#)

- This was understood by those who witnessed the signs - [Acts 8:18](#) - “*When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands...*”

- There are no apostles alive today to bestow these miraculous gifts.

- Therefore, since the MEANS of obtaining these gifts has ceased, the conclusion is evident- There can be no genuine gift of “speaking in tongues” today!

C. PAUL FORETOLD OF THE TIME WHEN THE MIRACULOUS GIFTS WOULD BE DONE AWAY- [I Corinthians 13:8-10](#)

SUMMARY:

1. The PURPOSE of the gifts has been fulfilled.

2. The MEANS OF OBTAINING these gifts has ceased.

3. An INSPIRED WRITER PREDICTED that the time would come when the gifts would cease.

- Any one of these points is sufficient to demonstrate that the “tongue speaking gift” today cannot be the same as that of the New Testament time.

CONCL.

A. The first century miraculous gift of “tongue speaking” served a very practical purpose. It enabled “unschooled fisherman” to speak foreign languages to communicate and confirm the gospel at its inception.

- These temporary miraculous gifts accomplished God’s intended purpose.

B. In the context of the church maturing to the point that it no longer needed these temporary gifts- [immaturity (“childishness”) versus maturity (“becoming a man”)]- Paul says, “*When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.*” - [I Corinthians 13:11](#)

## **ADDENDUM:**

### **Some thoughts on “modern-day ‘Tongue-Speaking’”**

There are numerous religious groups which practice [what they believe to be] the miraculous gift of speaking in tongues.

- Some take the position that “If you have not spoken in tongues, you are not saved;” while others maintain a more liberal attitude that “It might happen or not happen to you.”

A. An objective study of the New Testament scriptures addressing this gift will point up some serious contrasts between modern tongue-speaking and tongue-speaking in the early church. Some of these contrasts are:

1. [Acts 2](#)- It was a recognizable language
2. [I Corinthians 14:32-33](#)- It was not uncontrollable
3. [I Corinthians 14:22](#) - Tongues were intended for the unbeliever
4. [I Corinthians 12:27-30](#) - Not all Christians spoke in tongues

B. Historically, in the Greek society, one of the prominent features of worshippers of Apollo and Dionysus was “ecstatic speech.”

- Accounts of such phenomenon are recorded as far back as Babylonian culture (1100 B.C.)
- Ecstatic speech has been documented in most non-Christian religions throughout history.
- Moslem religion (Islam) claims miraculous gifts (including the gift of “speaking in tongues”)- yet, they do not accept Jesus Christ as God’s son.

C. The modern tongue-speaker claims that the presence of this “gift” evidences God’s approval and confirms the correctness of his faith and doctrine.

D. Why is it so popular?

- Deadness of some “established religions” encourages people to try “experiential religion.”
- Peer pressure and the desire for acceptance into a devout community.
- It is often associated with stressful life situations, crises, and/or desperation to feel more spiritually secure.
- In reality, the euphoric experience may preclude adherence to biblical teaching since it is believed to be the “ultimate proof of salvation.”

E. It must not be assumed that those who claim to speak in tongues today are insincere. Often, exactly the opposite is true.

- It is generally true that when someone is convinced they have “had a religious experience,” they hold to that feeling as security and refuse to question this experience.
- It is easier to be guided by feelings than to submit to the Bible’s teaching and adjust your mind and life accordingly.
- One often hears such statements as, “You can’t tell me what I felt wasn’t real!”

From very early days, God has admonished his followers to “love [him] with all our heart and mind....”

- That would be our emotions and our understanding.
- It is always a mistake to omit either of these avenues required to acceptably serve our God.