

# Truth about Prophets and Miracles 3



Are Miracles Always from God?  
5A. An In-depth look at 'Tongues'

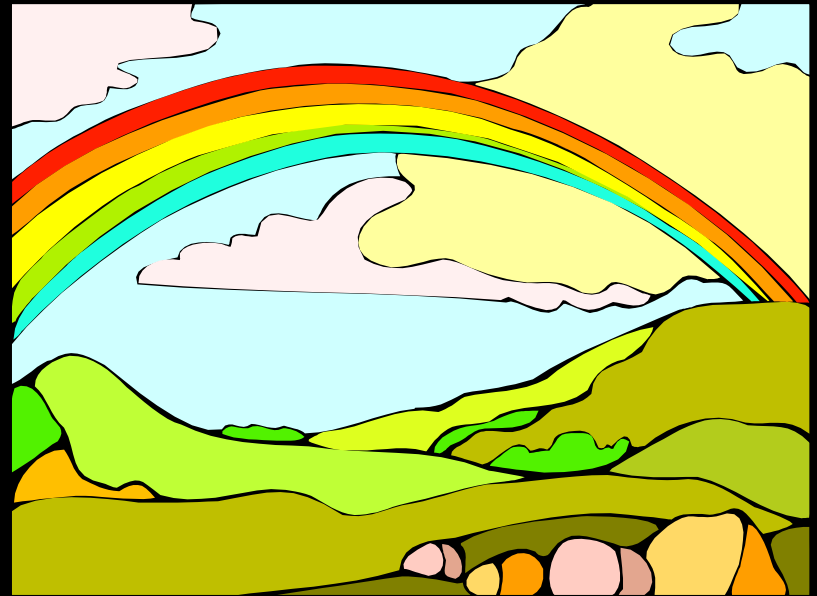
# What Are 'Tongues'?

The first biblical use of the term “tongues” is found in Genesis 10:20: “These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their *tongues*, in their countries, and in their nations.”

This verse is part of the genealogy given for the sons of Noah after the flood, showing from where the various nations came after God confused the languages. Genesis 11 tells us why the languages were confounded and the inhabitants scattered abroad:

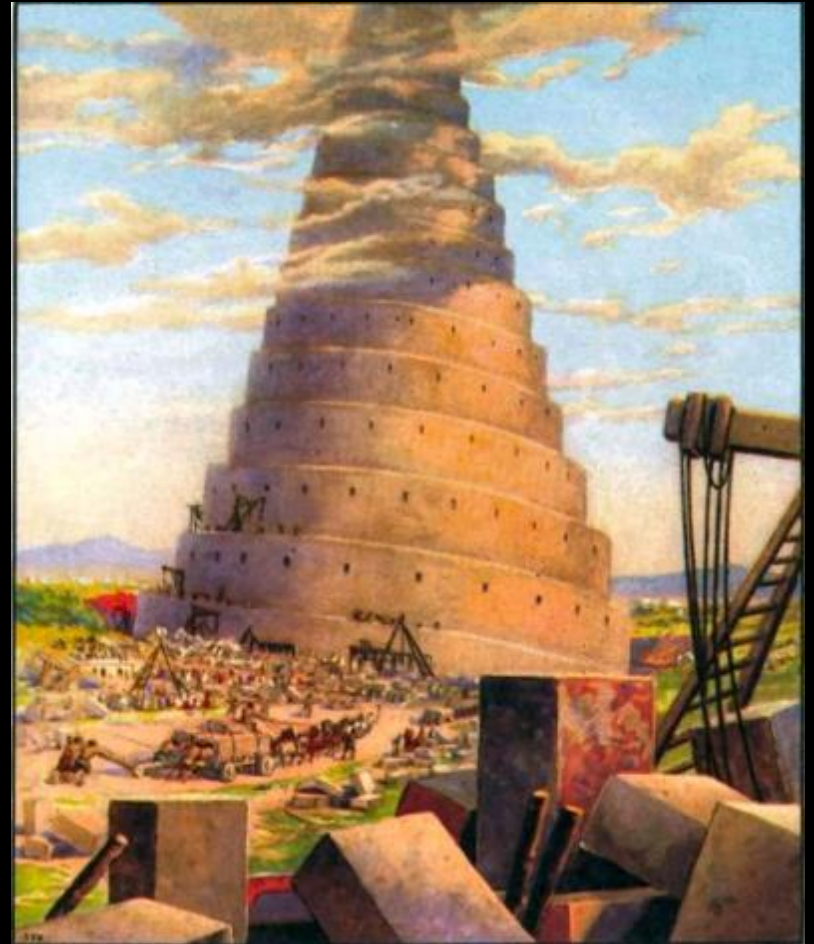
# What Are 'Tongues'?

“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.



# What Are 'Tongues'?

“And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.



# What Are 'Tongues'?



And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

# What Are 'Tongues'?

So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.”  
Genesis 11:1-9.

From this time forward there would be many different languages or tongues on the face of the earth.

Tongues are languages; plain and simple!  
In fact, on the inside of the *Authorized King James Version*, where the use of the term “tongues” to describe other languages originates, we read: “Translated out of the original *tongues*...” It is self evident that the translators meant ‘languages’ by the word ‘tongues’.

# Tongues In The Christian Church

The ability to speak in tongues is a spiritual gift. Paul lists some of the gifts of the Spirit thusly:

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” 1 Corinthians 12:28.



# Tongues In The Christian Church

What purpose are these gifts of the Spirit for? Paul tells us exactly why they were given: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the *perfecting of the saints*, for the *work of the ministry*, for the *edifying of the body of Christ*. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Ephesians 4:11-13.

# Gifts of the Spirit

The gifts of the Spirit are given to build up and strengthen God's church. The first mention of these Spiritual Gifts in the Christian church is found in Acts 2:



# Gifts of the Spirit

“ . . .suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with *other* tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” vs. 2-4.



# Gifts of the Spirit

Were these tongues some “mystical language” of the Spirit? No! They were different languages previously unknown to the disciples. It is the ability to speak in a foreign language, previously unknown to the present speaker, that comprises the true gift of tongues. It is given to enable a believer to give the Gospel where there would have been a language barrier. Notice that in verse 4 it is other languages that are called ***other tongues.***

# Gifts of the Spirit

The people gathered at Jerusalem “were confounded, because that every man heard them speak *in his own language*. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?”  
Acts 2:6-7.



“Galilaeans” were easily recognized and generally held in contempt by other people, because they were considered unlearned, compulsive, violent and disorderly people. The people of Galilee were ***especially noted for errors in grammar!*** They were known for absurd pronunciation errors, therefore making ridiculous mistakes; thus Peter was easily detected as one of Christ’s disciples.



With this in mind, it is easy to imagine the great surprise of the multitudes. Since the Galilaeans couldn't even speak their own language very well, "how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born." Acts 2:8.

Then verses 9-11 tell us what kind of people were there that spoke in other “tongues”: Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Judaeans, Asians, Egyptians, Libyans, Romans, etc.

That these Galilaeans could fluently speak other languages seemed so impossible that some thought they must be drunk! (vs. 13).



God gave the disciples the ability to speak in tongues for the purpose of spreading the Gospel. By using the “ignorant” men of Galilee, He was able to confound the wise. It made a great impression upon the multitudes and resulted in many conversions of people from every part of the known world, thus taking the Gospel to many different regions.

I have read various tracts by different authors claiming that there was a twofold miracle going on at Pentecost, one of speaking in tongues and one of hearing. This is not substantiated by the biblical account, for there is no mention of “ears of fire!” also it says the gift came on the Disciples, it does not say it came on all the people.



There are only three examples of speaking in tongues recorded in the Bible: Acts chapters 2, 10, and 19. In all three instances, the gift was bestowed upon the believers to promote the Gospel message only when there was a group of people present that spoke different languages!



Proof of this is found in Acts 4. In this chapter there is a repeat of all the events that took place in chapter 2, but because the people there spoke the same language, the gift of tongues was absent.



Acts 4:31 says,

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”

God does not just pour out the gifts of the Spirit, tongues or otherwise, where it is not necessary!

# Unknown Tongues?

The word *unknown* found in the King James version of the Bible is a “supplied word;” it is not found in the original texts. The translators added this word to help us to understand the verse. Unfortunately, it seems to have brought about some confusion as well.

# Unknown Tongues?

Once again, before the day of Pentecost the men of Galilee spoke only their native language (Very poorly at that!). At the outpouring of the Holy Spirit they gained the ability to speak new languages. These new languages were *unknown to them* before this time; however, they were known languages in other areas of the world. To many of us here, Russian is an unknown tongue, but not to a person living in Russia.

# A Desired Gift

After Pentecost, tongues had become a much coveted gift to many; a proof of their high calling; and as such it was an abused gift. By the tone of Paul's counsel concerning the proper use of this gift, it was used for outward show to gain the admiration of other people.

This temporarily became a problem in the early Corinthian church. The fact that Paul does not mention it in his second epistle to the Corinthians indicates that the problem was most likely remedied by the admonition in his first epistle.



# A Desired Gift



Paul said to the Corinthians: “He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth himself. . .” 1 Corinthians 14:4. To speak in a language that no one else understands is no help to the cause of Christ!

# A Desired Gift

For this reason Paul warns:

“except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air . . . . Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.” 1 Corinthians 14:9 and 11.

Why would a servant of Christ want to become as a babbling barbarian!? We must give the Gospel in clarity so that he who hears may take it elsewhere!

# **A Special Language to Talk With God?**

Many will quote the following verse to prove that there is a special language that we need to speak to God: “For he that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.” 1 Corinthians. 14:2.

# A Special Language to Talk With God?



The first thing to remember is a common sense point: God understands all languages - He invented them! There is no need of a special language to talk with Him.

# **A Special Language to Talk With God?**

This statement from Paul was a rebuke to those engaging in this activity of vanity! Paul warned those people that unless they were to give the Gospel message in the local language so that people could understand, they would speak in vain, and it would accomplish nothing for the cause of Christ.

# A Special Language to Talk With God?

Speaking French to an English audience is useless. “When thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?” v. 16.



# Tongues of Angels?

Many will say, “but Paul says he spoke with tongues of angels!” Is this true? NO!

Let’s look at the passage in 1 Corinthians 13:1. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”

# Tongues of Angels?

If read in context, one quickly realizes that Paul is saying that the gift of tongues is far inferior to love (charity). It is quite clear that the term “though” means “even if.” In verse 3 Paul said, “Though I give my body to be burned . . .” Paul was beheaded! Therefore, he clearly means “even if I give my body to be burned.”



# Are Tongues “The” Sign Or Test Of The Indwelling Spirit?

Many of our charismatic friends put tongues at the top of the list when it comes to “proof” of a man’s calling, but this is directly opposite of what the Bible teaches.

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” <sup>1</sup>

Corinthians 12:28. In this list, tongues is last, in fact, he goes on to say, “greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues.”

<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:5.

# **Are Tongues “The” Sign Or Test Of The Indwelling Spirit?**

Why then do so many consider tongues to be so important? According to Paul, a teacher is also greater! If it is so important, why does the Bible say that not all are given this gift:

“Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?” 1 Corinthians 12:29-30.

# **Are Tongues “The” Sign Or Test Of The Indwelling Spirit?**

The clear, obvious answer to these questions is: NO! The gift of tongues *is not* the ultimate test of your Christianity! The Bible says, “the fruit (test) of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” Galatians 5:22, 23.

# Are Tongues “The” Sign Or Test Of The Indwelling Spirit?

Another observation that makes it obvious that tongues is not the only or most important fruit of the Spirit is that, of the more than fifty times the Bible mentions someone being filled with the Spirit, tongues is connected with only three instances!



# Are Tongues “The” Sign Or Test Of The Indwelling Spirit?



Consider this admonition from Christ: “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.” Matthew 15:8.

***God reads the heart –  
talk is cheap in any tongue!***

John tells us of a much better way in which we can discern a true follower of Christ from a merely professed follower.

“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 2:3-4.

***God reads the heart –  
talk is cheap in any tongue!***

Keeping God's commandments of love, the ten commandments, is the ultimate test of true Christianity. Tongues is not mentioned as a requirement for the saints. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness and temperance, are an evidence of patience born of the Spirit, giving us the ability and desire to keep God's commandments, "and his commandments are not grievous," because we love the Lord and our fellow man. 1 John 5:3.

"Here is the patience of the saints, here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ." Revelation 14:12.

# **God will never force His way into a human life.**

Raymond Frame, a former missionary, justly warns: "Evil spirits can easily find opportunity to operate in the believer's emotional life—especially when the believer is persuaded to suspend all intellectual activity and to yield his will over to an invisible intelligence (whom the Christian, of course, is persuaded to regard as being the Holy Spirit Himself).



# God will never force His way into a human life.

For this reason the child of God who becomes preoccupied with that least of all gifts, tongues, places himself in a particularly vulnerable position in relation to the danger of demon depression, obsession, or actual possession."—Raymond Frame, "Something Unusual," *His*, December, 1963, p. 26.



# **God will never force His way into a human life.**

To this view every true Christian will agree: God will never force His way into a human life; but Satan, seeing a void mind eagerly begging for a manifestation of the supernatural, will gladly move in and create within him a counterfeit experience, reputedly caused by the Holy Spirit. Would it be presumptuous to think that Satan might direct tempting power to those who are eagerly reaching beyond Christ for a "shortcut" to salvation?

# **God will never force His way into a human life.**

It is interesting also that these folk who are in groups that seek to speak in tongues use many methods to try and make the phenomenon happen. IF this were truly a gift that God would send to edify the church, the receiver would not have to work so hard to get it to come. Also, we are told that the Holy Spirit decides which gift He will give to the believer—so insisting on the one manifestation, even if it were genuine, is not biblical.

# **God will never force His way into a human life.**

Then we have the instances where people just start falling down or rolling around with uncontrolled laughter or animal sounds; you can read the Bible from cover to cover and there is not one instance of such a thing recorded. Also again we must repeat that God never imposes on a person in any such way. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD:” Isaiah 1:18. God wants calm reasoning, not mindless confusion.

# A Challenge for the Honest of Heart

The Charismatics and Pentecostals claim the event at Pentecost as their foundation, but is this so? The evidence given previously speaks loudly against this belief, as the Apostles spoke in languages that other men understood, not in ecstatic utterances.

