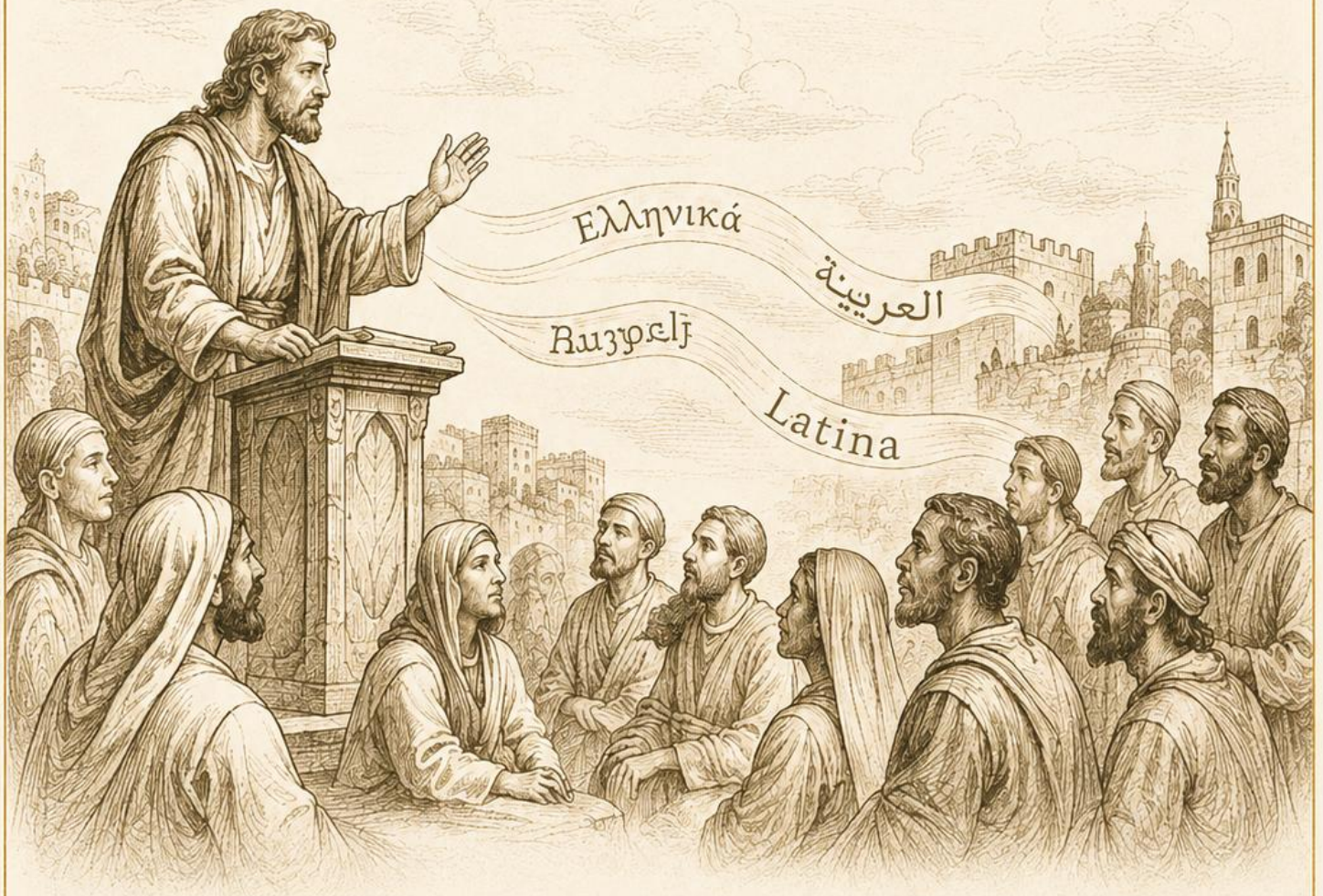


REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

Speaking in Tongues

Acts 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 12-14 KJV



by Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

www.ReasonTogether.Church

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

Speaking in Tongues

What does the Bible mean by speaking in tongues?

"And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?"

Acts 2:8 KJV

Reason Together Church

Bring your questions. Open your Bible. Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

www.ReasonTogether.Church

by Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Aloha, and welcome to Reason Together Church.

Whether you have worshipped with us many times or whether this is your first time here, we are grateful that you have joined us.

You do not have to agree with everything before you walk through the door.

You do not have to pretend that you have no questions.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let us reason together through the Word of God.

If you are visiting with us today, we are not going to ask you to stand, wave or identify yourself in front of everyone.

There is a guest card available if you would like us to stay in touch.

We ask only for your first name and email address.

We are simply glad that you are here.

Today we are going to examine a subject that has encouraged some Christians, confused other Christians and divided more than a few churches.

We are going to reason together about speaking in tongues.

Some people have witnessed what they believe was a beautiful work of the Holy Spirit.

Some have witnessed disorder, imitation or behavior that seemed designed to attract attention.

Some were taught that every Spirit-filled Christian must speak in tongues.

Others were taught that every modern claim of tongues is false.

Before we decide that everything is genuine or that everything is counterfeit, we are going to do what we should always do.

We are going to open the Bible.

Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father, we come before You with open Bibles and, we pray, open hearts.

Protect us from pride.

Protect us from gullibility.

Protect us from mocking something simply because it is unfamiliar, and protect us from accepting something merely because it appears supernatural.

Give us wisdom without arrogance.

Give us discernment without cruelty.

Let Your Word correct our traditions, our experiences and our opinions.

May Jesus Christ be honored in everything said and everything heard.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Our opening Scripture is Acts chapter 2, beginning with verse 1.

The Bible says:

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

"And 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.

"And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

"Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and 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?

"And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

"Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

"Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

"Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God."

Before we continue, let me briefly mention giving.

We do not pass a plate here, and we do not pressure anyone to give.

The church does have expenses, and we are grateful for the faithful people who help meet them.

Any donations or love gifts are greatly appreciated, but they are never required to visit this church or to download any of our free online studies.

If you are a guest, your presence honors us and is more than enough.

The gifts of God are not for sale, and neither is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now let us return to the question before us.

What does the Bible mean by speaking in tongues?

Have you ever watched something happen in a church and wondered whether you were witnessing the power of God, human emotion or someone trying to attract attention?

Perhaps everyone around you appeared comfortable with what was happening, but you were not certain.

Maybe you wondered whether asking a question would make you appear unspiritual.

Let me assure you that asking a sincere Biblical question is not an act of unbelief.

It is an act of responsibility.

Unusual does not automatically mean supernatural.

At the same time, unfamiliar does not automatically mean false.

Our feelings cannot be the final test.

Our traditions cannot be the final test.

Our denomination cannot be the final test.

The Word of God must be the test.

Several years ago, I was ministering in the Philippines.

I was part of a large service attended by many pastors and a very large congregation.

There were literally thousands of people still present after the service.

People were praying.

Pastors were counseling.

Some conversations were taking place in English, but most people were speaking with the local pastors in the languages and dialects of that area.

One particular night, I was standing with a Filipino friend of mine.

He had a basic understanding of English.

I do not say that critically.

His English was certainly better than my use of his language.

I had known him for years, so I was familiar with the English words he knew and the way he normally spoke them.

An American man approached us.

I naturally assumed he wanted to speak with me.

Instead, he began speaking with my Filipino friend.

I did not pay much attention at first.

There was a great deal happening around us.

I remained mostly in the background, praying and watching.

Ten or fifteen minutes passed before I came close enough to hear their conversation clearly.

Something drew me into it.

I had heard the Gospel message delivered throughout the week.

There was nothing new about the plan of salvation being presented.

Yet something was different.

At first, I could not identify what it was.

Then I realized it.

My Filipino friend was speaking English.

He was not merely using the limited English I had heard him use before.

He was speaking fluent, proper English unlike anything I had heard from him during all the years

I had known him.

He was explaining the Gospel.

He was speaking about sin.

He was speaking about the cross.

He was speaking about Jesus Christ and salvation.

That American man accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour that night.

When I later had an opportunity to speak with my Filipino friend, he spoke before I could say anything.

He told me how amazed he was that the American man who had just been saved knew how to speak his local dialect.

I told him that from where I had been standing, the Filipino pastor had been speaking English.

He had no explanation for what I told him.

I had no explanation for what he told me.

I cannot tell you precisely what God did that night.

I cannot explain the mechanics of what happened.

I can only tell you what I heard.

I can tell you what my friend said he heard.

And I can tell you that the Gospel was communicated and a man received Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

Whenever I read the second chapter of Acts, I remember that night in the Philippines.

But I want to make an important distinction.

My experience does not define the Bible.

The Bible must evaluate my experience.

We do not begin with a testimony and make Scripture fit it.

We begin with Scripture and ask whether the testimony fits what God has revealed.

So let us return to Pentecost.

Acts 2:4 says:

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Notice who supplied the ability.

The Spirit gave them utterance.

They did not attend a class to learn how to produce the sound.

They did not repeat syllables after another person.

They did not practice until they could imitate what someone else was doing.

The Holy Ghost gave them the ability.

Now notice what the people heard.

Verse 6 says that "every man heard them speak in his own language."

Verse 8 asks:

"And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?"

These people recognized what they heard.

Luke records Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judaea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Egypt, Rome and other places.

This was not a room full of people making meaningless sounds.

These were people from different places hearing meaningful words in the languages in which they had been born.

And what were those meaningful words about?

Verse 11 says:

"We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God."

The tongue was not the message.

The tongue carried the message.

The miracle did not end with people admiring the speakers.

The miracle opened the way for people to hear about God.

Peter then stood and preached Jesus Christ.

He preached the crucifixion.

He preached the resurrection.

He called people to respond.

Acts 2:41 tells us:

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

The Holy Ghost was not drawing attention to the disciples.

The Holy Ghost was drawing people to Jesus Christ.

That gives us our first clear Biblical standard.

Biblical tongues communicate meaningful truth.

Biblical tongues glorify God.

Biblical tongues serve the hearer.

Biblical tongues do not exist so someone can appear more spiritual than everyone else.

At Pentecost, the communication was so clear that the listeners identified the languages.

That is the clearest and most detailed example of tongues in the Bible.

There are other occurrences.

Acts chapter 10 records the Holy Ghost falling upon the household of Cornelius.

The Jewish believers heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

Acts chapter 19 records certain disciples at Ephesus speaking with tongues and prophesying.

Those passages confirm that tongues occurred.

They do not give us every detail about the languages or precisely how each person heard them.

We should be firm where Scripture is clear and cautious where Scripture gives fewer details.

We do not need to add information to the Bible in order to defend the Bible.

Some people may now ask a different question.

Does every Christian speak in tongues?

Some churches teach that speaking in tongues is the necessary evidence that a person has received the Holy Spirit.

Some sincere Christians have been told that if they do not speak in tongues, something is missing from their salvation.

Let us see whether Paul teaches that.

First Corinthians chapter 12 explains that the Holy Spirit gives different gifts to different believers.

Verses 4 through 7 say:

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

"And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

"And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

There are different gifts, but the same Spirit.

There are different forms of service, but the same Lord.

The gift is given "to profit withal."

In other words, the gift is given for the benefit of others.

It is not a trophy that proves the recipient is more important.

Paul lists wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues and interpretation of tongues.

Then verse 11 says:

"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

Who decides which gift a believer receives?

The Spirit does.

He divides to every person as He wills.

Near the end of the chapter, Paul asks a series of questions:

"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?"

The expected answer to every question is no.

Not every Christian is an apostle.

Not every Christian is a teacher.

Not every Christian has the same gift.

And not every Christian speaks with tongues.

Therefore, speaking in tongues cannot be required evidence that every person is saved.

The Holy Spirit does not give every believer the same gift.

No Christian should be pressured to imitate a sound in order to prove that he or she belongs to God.

Think about the pressure that teaching can create.

A sincere person loves God.

Everyone around that person appears to be having an experience.

Someone says, "Just begin making the sound, and the Spirit will take over."

The person wants to please God.

The person wants to belong.

So the person imitates what everyone else is doing.

That does not mean the person is wicked.

It may mean the person has been placed under pressure that the Bible never places upon a believer.

If the Holy Spirit distributes gifts according to His will, why would someone need to teach another person how to imitate one?

A gift of the Spirit does not need to be manufactured by the flesh.

Now we come to the passage that requires us to be especially careful.

If Acts chapter 2 describes recognizable languages, what do we do with 1 Corinthians chapter 14?

First Corinthians 14:2 says:

"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."

At first, that may appear entirely different from Acts chapter 2.

At Pentecost, people understood.

In Corinth, Paul describes a situation in which no one present understands.

We must allow both passages to speak.

We cannot say that a tongue must always be immediately understood by someone in the congregation, because Paul addresses a tongue that is not understood without interpretation.

But we also cannot say that understanding does not matter.

Paul spends most of the chapter explaining why understanding is essential.

An unknown tongue is unknown to the hearers.

That does not mean it has no meaning.

It means the meaning is not available to the congregation unless it is interpreted.

Paul uses musical instruments to make the point.

First Corinthians 14:7 says:

"And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?"

Then he speaks about a trumpet.

If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, how will a soldier know to prepare for battle?

Sound without distinction does not communicate.

Then verse 9 says:

"So likewise ye, 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."

That question is worth hearing again.

"How shall it be known what is spoken?"

Paul is not impressed merely because a sound is being made.

He wants the church to understand what is being said.

Verse 12 gives the governing purpose:

"Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church."

To edify means to build up.

The gift is supposed to help someone.

If the congregation cannot understand the language naturally, God provides another gift.

The interpretation of tongues.

Verse 13 says:

"Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret."

The answer to a language barrier is not to abandon meaning.

The answer is interpretation.

Paul becomes even more direct in verses 27 and 28:

"If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

"But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God."

Those instructions are not suggestions.

No more than two or three.

One person at a time.

Someone must interpret.

If there is no interpreter, the speaker must remain silent in the church.

If there is no interpreter, the Biblical answer is not to speak louder.

It is not to continue longer.

It is not to become more emotional.

The Biblical instruction is silence.

That creates a serious problem for any church where many people speak at the same time and no one interprets.

Someone may say, "The Holy Spirit made me do it."

But the Holy Spirit will not require someone to disobey the Word He inspired.

God is not going to give a command in Scripture and then take control of a person in order to make that person violate the command.

Paul says in verse 32:

"And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets."

The presence of the Spirit does not eliminate self-control.

Then verse 33 says:

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

Confusion is not proof of spiritual power.

Disorder is not evidence that God has taken over.

There is another verse in this chapter that makes Paul's priority unmistakable.

Verse 19 says:

"Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

Five understandable words are more useful in the church than ten thousand words no one understands.

Paul does not despise the gift.

Paul values the hearer.

He wants the truth of God to reach another mind and another heart.

That brings us to a sincere question asked by many Christians.

What about a private prayer language?

Some believers sincerely say, "I pray in a language I do not understand, but God understands it."

We should not ridicule those people.

We should not imitate their speech to get a laugh.

We should not question their salvation simply because we disagree with their interpretation.

Sincerity deserves kindness.

Sincerity also deserves Biblical examination.

First Corinthians 14:14 and 15 say:

"For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

"What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also."

Some Christians understand this passage as allowing a private prayer language between the believer and God.

Other Christians understand Paul to be identifying unfruitful prayer and insisting that both the spirit and the understanding should be involved.

We should acknowledge that sincere Bible-believing Christians interpret this passage differently.

But we should also notice what the passage does not say.

It does not command every Christian to develop a private prayer language.

It does not say that a person without such a language lacks the Holy Spirit.

It does not allow private experience to overturn Paul's rules for the assembled church.

And Paul's stated decision is not to abandon understanding.

He says:

"I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also."

Whatever a person believes about private prayer, prayer should never become an excuse to reject truth, understanding, humility or obedience.

Our private experiences must remain subject to the written Word of God.

Someone may now ask whether an unknown tongue could be demonic.

If a person does not understand what is being said, how can that person know where it came from?

That is a reasonable concern, but we must be careful not to claim more than the Bible says.

The Bible does not teach us that a language is demonic merely because we do not recognize it.

We cannot make lack of recognition the test.

At Pentecost, the Galilaeans were speaking languages they had not naturally learned.

To the wrong listener, one of those languages might have sounded unfamiliar.

Unfamiliarity alone does not establish the source.

At the same time, the Bible does warn us that spiritual claims must be tested.

First John 4:1 says:

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

The Bible does not tell us to believe every spirit.

It tells us to test the spirits.

A strange spiritual experience may have several possible explanations.

It may be a genuine gift of God.

It may be human emotion.

It may be learned imitation.

It may come from a desire to belong.

It may come from a desire for attention.

It may involve deliberate deception.

And spiritual deception is certainly possible.

But we do not have to guess blindly.

Scripture gives us questions to ask.

Does this honor Jesus Christ?

Does it agree with the written Word of God?

Does it communicate truth?

Is there interpretation when interpretation is needed?

Does it edify the church?

Is it conducted in an orderly manner?

Is the speaker willing to obey the command to remain silent?

Is love present?

Does the attention move toward Jesus or toward the individual?

The strongest evidence that something came from the Holy Spirit is not that it was unusual.

It is that it was consistent with the Word of God.

There is a phrase in 1 Corinthians 13 that is often brought into this discussion.

Paul writes:

"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."

Some say this verse establishes a separate heavenly or angelic prayer language.

But we must read Paul's entire statement.

He says that even if he understood all mysteries and all knowledge, it would be nothing without charity.

He says that even if he had all faith so that he could remove mountains, it would be nothing without charity.

He says that even if he gave away all his possessions, it would profit nothing without charity.

Paul is using deliberately expansive language.

His purpose is not to give us a lesson in how angels communicate.

His purpose is to show that the most extraordinary ability imaginable is empty without love.

We should not construct an entire doctrine of angelic languages from one phrase when the clearest Biblical example of tongues involves meaningful human languages.

And we should not miss Paul's actual point.

Even if I could speak with the tongues of men and angels, without charity I would become noise.
Sounding brass.

A tinkling cymbal.

Noise can attract attention.

Noise can create excitement.

Noise can make a room feel active.

But noise by itself does not communicate the love of Jesus Christ.

This is why 1 Corinthians 13 belongs between chapters 12 and 14.

Chapter 12 discusses spiritual gifts.

Chapter 14 regulates spiritual gifts.

Between them, chapter 13 tells us the spirit in which every gift must operate.

Charity suffereth long and is kind.

Charity envieth not.

Charity vaunteth not itself and is not puffed up.

Charity seeketh not her own.

If someone uses a spiritual claim to become the center of attention, something has gone wrong.

If someone uses a gift to shame Christians who do not possess it, something has gone wrong.

If someone refuses Biblical order because he wants to be seen and heard, something has gone wrong.

A gift without love has lost its purpose.

The most spiritual person in the room may not be the loudest person in the room.

It may be the person quietly praying for someone who is hurting.

It may be the person patiently opening a Bible with someone who is confused.

It may be the person serving where almost nobody notices.

It may be the person who possesses a gift but is willing to remain silent because Scripture requires it.

Spiritual maturity is not measured by volume.

It is revealed through love, truth, humility, obedience and self-control.

Now let us put together what we have discovered.

Acts chapter 2 gives us the clearest example of tongues.

The Holy Ghost enabled the disciples to communicate the wonderful works of God in languages they had not naturally learned.

The hearers recognized those languages.

First Corinthians chapter 12 tells us that tongues are one gift among many.

Not every Christian receives the same gift.

First Corinthians chapter 13 tells us that no gift has value without charity.

First Corinthians chapter 14 tells us that the assembled church must understand what is being communicated.

If the tongue is not naturally understood, it must be interpreted.

If there is no interpreter, the speaker must remain silent.

Everything must edify the church.

Everything must be done in order.

At the end of the chapter, Paul gives two instructions that must be held together.

Verse 39 says:

"Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues."

Verse 40 says:

"Let all things be done decently and in order."

We should not create a rule stricter than Scripture by forbidding what God genuinely gives.

We should not create a rule looser than Scripture by permitting what God expressly forbids.

Do not forbid what is genuine.

Do not tolerate disorder.

Test the claim.

Require understanding.

Demand Biblical order.

Keep the attention on Jesus Christ.

Let us return one final time to that night in the Philippines.

There was no stage performance taking place in that conversation.

My Filipino friend was not trying to impress me.

In fact, I was intentionally standing in the background.

The American man was not praising the pastor's unusual ability.

The Filipino pastor was not claiming to have demonstrated his superior spirituality.

Meaningful words were communicated.

The Gospel was presented.

From where I stood, I heard English.

My Filipino friend told me that he heard his local dialect.

Jesus Christ received the attention.

And a man received Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour.

Was that the Biblical gift of tongues?

I believe it may have been.

Can I prove precisely what happened?

No.

I can only tell you what I heard and what my friend told me he heard.

But I know it was not meaningless.

I know the Gospel was communicated.

I know Jesus Christ was glorified.

And I know a soul was saved.

I have also witnessed people produce sounds that left me with serious Biblical questions.

I have watched behavior that appeared to create confusion rather than understanding.

I have seen people appear to seek attention for themselves rather than direct attention toward Christ.

I will not call everything genuine simply because someone calls it spiritual.

I will not call everything false simply because I cannot explain it.

I will open my Bible and test everything by the Word of God.

Here is the discovery I want us to carry home.

Biblical tongues are not about making the speaker appear spiritual.

They are about communicating the truth of God.

When understanding is absent, interpretation is required.

When interpretation is absent, silence is required.

When love is absent, the gift has lost its purpose.

When Christ is glorified, Scripture is obeyed and the Gospel is understood, the gift has served its Biblical purpose.

But before we close, we must not become so interested in the language that we miss the message.

At Pentecost, the miracle of languages led directly to the preaching of Jesus Christ.

Peter did not tell the crowd merely to admire what had happened.

He told them about the One who had been crucified and raised from the dead.

The greatest question is not whether you have ever spoken in another tongue.

The greatest question is whether you know Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour.

The Bible tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Sin separates us from God.

We cannot remove our own sin by becoming religious, joining a church or performing a spiritual gift.

Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, died on the cross for our sins.

He was buried.

He rose again.

He offers salvation as a gift to everyone who will place faith in Him.

You do not need to speak in tongues to be saved.

You need Jesus Christ.

If you have never trusted Him as your Saviour, you can call upon Him today.

You do not need special words.

You do not need an unknown language.

You need an honest heart that recognizes your sin and places faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

If you are ready to receive Him, speak to Him from your heart.

Tell Him that you know you are a sinner.

Tell Him that you believe Jesus died for you and rose again.

Ask Him to forgive you and save you.

The language may be simple.

The Saviour understands.

Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us Your Word.

Thank You that we do not have to depend upon rumor, pressure or personal opinion to discern what is true.

Give us humility when we examine the experiences of other believers.

Keep us from mocking what we do not understand.

Keep us from accepting every claim without testing it.

Protect Your church from deception, imitation, pride and disorder.

If You give a spiritual gift, help us use it for the benefit of others and the glory of Jesus Christ.

Teach us to value understanding.

Teach us to value obedience.

Teach us to value charity above attention.

Help us carry the Gospel across every language, every culture and every barrier that stands between people and the truth.

For anyone who has not trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour, let this be the moment when that person believes.

For those who already know You, help us use every ability You have given us to make Christ known.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Before we say our final aloha, do not leave this question in this room.

Take one truth with you.

Open one Scripture again.

Share it with one person.

Sometime this week, return to Acts chapter 2 and 1 Corinthians chapter 14.

Read them without rushing.

Ask what the passage reveals about the purpose of the gift, the importance of understanding and the order God requires in His church.

A sermon should not merely give us something to think about for a few minutes on Sunday.

The Word of God should affect how we listen, how we speak and how we respond when Monday arrives.

If you hear someone make a claim about speaking in tongues this week, resist the temptation to accept it immediately or condemn it immediately.

Ask whether Jesus Christ is being glorified.

Ask whether truth is being communicated.

Ask whether the church is being edified.

Ask whether the practice agrees with the order God established in His Word.

Perhaps you know someone who has asked this same question.

You do not have to remember every verse or repeat this entire sermon.

Tell that person what you discovered.

Open the Bible together.

You can also share this free study through www.ReasonTogether.Church.

We are not trying to win arguments.

We are inviting people to bring their questions, open their Bibles and reason together through the Word of God.

If today's study raised another question for you, please stay and talk with me.

That is why we are here.

Join us in the Reason Together Café for a cup of locally grown coffee.

The coffee is free, and so are the refills on the conversations.

May the Lord bless you.

May He give you wisdom to recognize truth, humility to receive correction and courage to follow His Word.

To our first-time guests, Aloha Nui Loa.

To our entire Reason Together Church family, aloha, and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

Speaking in Tongues

RTS-028 | Acts 2:1-11 and 1 Corinthians 12-14 KJV

A reader's companion to the sermon

Reason Together Church

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

www.ReasonTogether.Church

*Bring your questions. Open your Bible.
Let's Reason Together the Word of God.*

About This Commentary

The Pastor's Commentary is a readable public companion to the sermon. It explains the principal Biblical reasoning, interpretive cautions and pastoral applications behind RTS-028. It is not a second sermon, and it is not the internal Study Vault. Readers may use it for personal study, group discussion or careful follow-up after hearing the message.

Speaking in tongues is a subject on which sincere Christians disagree. Some identify the gift entirely with human languages miraculously spoken by people who had never learned them. Others believe the New Testament also permits a spiritual prayer language understood by God and requiring interpretation when used in the assembled church. Still others believe the miraculous gift belonged to the apostolic age and is no longer given. These differences should make us more careful with Scripture, not less charitable toward one another.

The clearest narrated example is Pentecost. The speakers received utterance from the Holy Ghost, and the hearers recognized the languages in which they had been born. First Corinthians 14 then regulates speech that the congregation does not naturally understand. Paul requires interpretation, edification, self-control and order. Those controls apply even when the speaker sincerely believes the utterance is spiritual.

This Commentary therefore avoids two opposite errors. It does not dismiss every unfamiliar utterance as foolishness or demonic activity. It also does not treat intensity, sincerity or religious atmosphere as proof that an utterance came from God. The written Word supplies the test. The Spirit of God does not need disobedience to demonstrate His presence.

Commentary in Brief

At Pentecost the gift of tongues crossed an actual language barrier. Galileans spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance, and visitors from many nations heard the wonderful works of God in their own native tongues. The miracle served communication, witness and the glory of God. It did not exist to draw admiration toward the speakers.

The later accounts in Acts confirm that tongues could accompany decisive moments in the outward spread of the Gospel. Acts 10 and Acts 19 do not, however, provide enough detail to prove that every occurrence followed precisely the same hearing pattern recorded in Acts 2. The safest conclusion is that Acts 2 defines the clearest example while the other accounts confirm a genuine work of the Holy Ghost.

First Corinthians teaches that not every believer possesses the same gift. It also teaches that a tongue spoken publicly without understanding does not edify the church unless it is interpreted. If no interpreter is present, the speaker is to remain silent in the church. Whatever position a congregation takes on the nature or continuation of tongues, these instructions are not optional.

An unknown language is not automatically a demonic language. Scripture commands believers to test spiritual claims, but it does not make unfamiliarity by itself the proof of demonic origin. The

proper response is neither instant acceptance nor instant accusation. It is Biblical examination centered upon Jesus Christ, truth, intelligible meaning, edification, charity, self-control and order.

1. Begin With the Question Scripture Can Answer

The phrase speaking in tongues can carry very different meanings in modern churches. One person may mean a miraculous human language. Another may mean a private prayer language. Another may mean a public message that must be interpreted. Someone else may use the phrase for an emotional vocal pattern learned within a religious community. A useful study must separate these claims instead of assuming they are all the same experience.

The first question is not whether a practice feels powerful. It is not whether the speaker is sincere. It is not whether a congregation has done it for many years. The first question is what Scripture describes and what Scripture commands. Experience may illustrate doctrine, but experience cannot govern doctrine.

The New Testament uses the Greek word *glossa* for a tongue and, by extension, a language. It also uses *dialektos* in Acts 2 for the particular language or dialect in which people were born. Word studies alone cannot settle every disputed passage, but the narrative details in Acts 2 make the meaning there unusually clear.

2. Pentecost Was Intelligible to the Hearers

“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:4 KJV)

The speakers were Galileans. The hearers included devout Jews from many nations under heaven. When the multitude gathered, they were confounded because every man heard them speak in his own language. The hearers then asked, “how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?” (Acts 2:8 KJV). Luke follows with a long list of peoples and regions represented in Jerusalem.

That wording is decisive. The miracle was not merely that the apostles produced unfamiliar sounds. The hearers recognized native languages. They understood content: “we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:11 KJV). The event moved from Spirit-given utterance to human understanding and then to Peter’s clear proclamation of Jesus Christ.

Pentecost therefore supports the conviction that a genuine tongue can be a language unknown to the speaker but understood by the recipient. The speaker does not receive glory for linguistic ability. God receives glory because He carries His truth across a barrier the speaker could not naturally cross.

Pentecost also provides an important safeguard. The miracle did not eliminate preaching in an understood language. Peter stood and explained the event from Scripture. Spiritual utterance and Biblical exposition worked together. The sign directed attention to the Gospel rather than replacing it.

3. What Do the Other Accounts in Acts Establish?

Acts records tongues again in the house of Cornelius. Jewish believers heard Gentiles “speak with tongues, and magnify God” (Acts 10:46 KJV). The event demonstrated that the gift of the Holy Ghost had been poured out upon Gentiles also. Peter later used this evidence when explaining why he had baptized them.

Acts 19 records that when Paul laid his hands upon certain disciples at Ephesus, “the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied” (Acts 19:6 KJV). This event marked another important movement in the early church.

Neither account lists the languages or reports hearers identifying their native dialects as Acts 2 does. We should not force details into the text. These passages show that tongues were real manifestations associated with the Holy Ghost. Acts 2 remains the clearest account of how a tongue could be heard and recognized as an actual human language.

The book of Acts is selective. It records many conversions without mentioning tongues. The Ethiopian eunuch believed and was baptized without a recorded tongue. Lydia believed without one being recorded. The Philippian jailer believed without one being recorded. Tongues cannot be made a universal proof of salvation when Scripture itself does not attach the sign to every conversion account.

4. Not Every Christian Has the Same Gift

First Corinthians 12 places tongues within a larger body of spiritual gifts. The same Spirit distributes gifts while the church remains one body with many members. Diversity is not a defect. The eye is not the hand, and the ear is not the eye. No member possesses every function.

Paul closes the chapter with rhetorical questions: “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 KJV). The expected answer is no.

This rules out the teaching that every saved person must speak in tongues or that a believer without this gift has failed to receive the Holy Ghost. The Spirit’s presence is not measured by possession of one selected gift. The body needs many gifts, and the Spirit distributes them according to His will.

It also corrects spiritual competition. A gift is not a medal proving that one Christian is closer to God than another. Gifts are given “to profit withal” (1 Corinthians 12:7 KJV). Their purpose is service. A gift used to elevate the speaker over the body contradicts the very chapter that names it.

5. What About the Tongues of Angels?

“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.” (1 Corinthians 13:1 KJV)

Some readers understand this verse as proof that believers may speak an angelic language unknown to all human hearers. The phrase should be handled carefully. Paul is making a series of sweeping statements: understanding all mysteries, possessing all knowledge, having faith that could remove mountains, giving away all possessions and surrendering the body. His purpose is to exalt charity above the most impressive imaginable accomplishments.

The verse may refer rhetorically to the highest conceivable speech, whether human or angelic. It does not describe a congregation speaking an angelic language, explain its grammar or command Christians to seek it. A doctrine of private angelic speech should not rest upon this phrase alone.

The force of the passage is actually a warning. Even the most astonishing utterance is empty without charity. Sound can be religious, dramatic and impressive while producing no spiritual good. The first question is not how extraordinary the sound appears. The question is whether the life and use of the gift are governed by Christlike love.

6. First Corinthians 14 Addresses Unrecognized Speech

“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 KJV)

The word unknown in the King James Version is printed to supply the sense. The issue in the passage is that the congregation does not understand what is being said. That situation differs from Acts 2, where the hearers immediately recognized their native languages. It does not follow that the speech is meaningless. Paul says that languages in the world have significance, but without knowing the meaning the speaker and hearer become foreigners to one another.

Paul's solution is not to celebrate permanent unintelligibility. It is to make meaning available. The speaker should pray to interpret. Public use is limited to two or at most three, each in turn, with one interpreting. If there is no interpreter, the speaker is to keep silence in the church and speak to himself and to God.

These rules permit us to say that a genuine tongue may not be naturally understood by anyone present. They do not permit us to say that public unintelligibility is spiritually superior. Paul repeatedly asks what will edify the church. Five understandable words can serve others better than ten thousand words in an untranslated tongue.

This is the needed qualification to a simple known-language-only position. Acts 2 clearly records recognized human languages. First Corinthians 14 clearly contemplates speech that the gathered church does not naturally understand. The text resolves that problem through interpretation, not through admiration of the mystery.

7. Does the Bible Teach a Private Prayer Language?

Sincere Christians read First Corinthians 14 differently. Some believe Paul describes a private spiritual prayer language when he speaks of praying with the spirit, speaking to God and speaking

to oneself when no interpreter is present. Others believe he is still discussing the same gift of languages, now used privately because public use would not edify without interpretation.

Paul writes, “For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful” (1 Corinthians 14:14 KJV). He immediately answers, “I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also” (verse 15). Whatever one concludes about the private setting, Paul refuses to make unfruitful understanding the final goal.

The passage permits a believer to speak to himself and to God when no interpreter is present. It does not command every Christian to develop a private prayer language. It does not make such prayer the required evidence of salvation, maturity or fullness of the Spirit. First Corinthians 12 has already denied that all possess the same gifts.

A church may therefore acknowledge the responsible disagreement without surrendering the clear commands. A person who believes he or she prays privately in a tongue should remain humble, test the experience by Scripture and never pressure another believer to imitate it. A person who rejects the private-prayer-language interpretation should not casually accuse a sincere Christian of demonic activity merely because the experience is unfamiliar.

8. Interpretation Is Not an Optional Decoration

In modern conversation, interpretation is sometimes treated as an impressive addition after a public tongue. In First Corinthians 14 it is the condition that makes public use edifying. The congregation must be able to receive meaning, agree with truth and respond with understanding.

Paul compares untranslated speech to musical instruments that produce no distinction in their sounds and to a trumpet that gives an uncertain signal. The problem is not lack of emotion. The problem is lack of communicable meaning. If words cannot be understood, the hearer does not know what is spoken.

An interpretation should therefore communicate coherent truth that can be judged by Scripture. A vague religious sentence attached to a long utterance is not automatically validated by the atmosphere of the moment. The church has both the right and responsibility to weigh what is said. “Let the other judge” (1 Corinthians 14:29 KJV) establishes a culture of discernment rather than unquestioning acceptance.

The command to interpret also protects the dignity of the congregation. Worship is not a stage on which one individual displays a private experience while everyone else watches. The gifts are placed within the body so that others may be strengthened.

9. Order and Self-Control Remain Spiritual

“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” (1 Corinthians 14:33 KJV)

Paul limits public speakers, requires them to speak by course and commands silence when the stated conditions are absent. He then explains that “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (1 Corinthians 14:32 KJV). Spiritual activity does not erase self-control.

A speaker cannot excuse disobedience by saying the Spirit forced him or her to interrupt, compete or ignore the absence of interpretation. The same Spirit who gives gifts inspired the instructions governing their use. The Spirit does not contradict Himself.

Emotional intensity is not automatically wrong. Tears, joy, trembling or a raised voice may accompany sincere worship. Yet emotion is not the standard by which doctrine is tested. A quiet service can be spiritually dead, and a loud service can be spiritually disordered. The Biblical tests are truth, charity, edification, peace and obedience.

Church leaders have a pastoral duty to provide clear boundaries before a problem occurs. Correcting disorder after it becomes a public spectacle can humiliate sincere people. Teaching the passage patiently allows believers to understand that a request for interpretation or silence is not hostility toward the Holy Ghost. It is submission to His Word.

10. Could an Unknown Utterance Be Demonic?

The concern behind this question is understandable. If a person does not know what he or she is saying, how can the person be certain of the source or meaning? Scripture does warn that not every spiritual claim comes from God. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1 KJV).

The Bible does not, however, identify unfamiliarity itself as proof of a demonic language. When demons speak in the Gospels, their words are commonly intelligible. A sound does not become holy because it is unknown, and it does not become demonic merely because it is unknown. Unfamiliarity creates a need for testing, not permission for an unsupported accusation.

The test begins with Jesus Christ. First John 4 directs attention to the confession of Christ. First Corinthians 12:3 also places the lordship of Jesus at the center of spiritual speech. The test then includes agreement with written Scripture, intelligible truth when addressed to the church, edification, charity, self-control and order.

Spiritual deception remains possible. So do emotional suggestion, learned behavior, imitation and a sincere misunderstanding of one’s own experience. These possibilities should be considered without pretending to read a person’s heart. Pastors should protect the church firmly while treating individuals with dignity.

If an utterance cannot be interpreted, it should not be presented publicly to the congregation. That single Biblical instruction removes much of the danger. The church does not need to identify the unknown speech as demonic before requiring silence. It only needs to obey the rule God has already supplied.

11. What About Babbling, Attention and Learned Behavior?

Some public practices called tongues consist of repeated syllables, simultaneous vocalizing or behavior encouraged by a leader until participants reproduce similar sounds. A concerned observer may reasonably ask whether the practice reflects the New Testament gift. The question should be answered from the text rather than from ridicule.

Jesus warned against “vain repetitions” in prayer (Matthew 6:7 KJV). That warning is not a technical definition of every repeated sound, but it does reject the idea that many words or repeated phrases make prayer more effective. First Corinthians 14 likewise rejects speech that cannot edify the church because meaning is unavailable.

Attention-seeking is possible in any ministry. A preacher, singer, teacher or giver can seek human praise. Tongues should not be singled out as the only gift vulnerable to pride. First Corinthians 13 places every gift under charity, and First Corinthians 14 repeatedly redirects attention from the speaker's experience to the church's edification.

We should be honest about observable conduct while cautious about hidden motives. It is fair to say that a practice violates the public rules when everyone speaks at once, no interpretation is present or leaders pressure everyone to participate. It is not fair to declare that every participant consciously seeks attention. Some may be sincere, confused, imitating trusted leaders or afraid that refusing will make them appear unspiritual.

Pastoral correction should therefore be clear and compassionate. The goal is not to win an argument against a movement. The goal is to bring every believer under the freedom and safety of the Word of God.

12. The Philippines Testimony

Several years ago I was ministering in the Philippines during a service attended by many pastors and a very large congregation. A Filipino friend was with me. He had a basic understanding of English, certainly better than my ability in his language, but I had never heard him speak the kind of fluent, proper English I would hear that night.

After the service, an American man approached us. I naturally assumed he wanted to speak with me, but he began speaking with my Filipino friend. Thousands of people were still present, many conversations were taking place and I remained in the background praying and watching. Their conversation continued for approximately ten to fifteen minutes before something drew my attention to it.

I heard my Filipino friend presenting the Gospel in clear English unlike his normal speech. The American man accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior that night. When I later spoke with another pastor, he said he was amazed that the man who had just been saved knew how to speak his local dialect. I explained that I had heard the conversation in English. He had no explanation, and neither did I.

The event resembles the pattern of Acts 2 in an important respect. A language barrier appeared to be crossed so that a person could understand the Gospel. The result directed attention to Jesus Christ rather than to the speaker. For me, it remains a powerful personal example of what speaking in tongues may look like.

The testimony must still be calibrated carefully. I can state what I heard. The other pastor could state what he believed he heard. We can state that the American trusted Christ. We cannot reconstruct the exact miracle, determine what occurred in each hearer's perception or prove from memory alone which language was physically produced. Personal testimony can illustrate Biblical truth without becoming a new source of doctrine.

That restraint does not empty the event of meaning. It preserves its honesty. Something happened that the witnesses could not naturally explain, and the Gospel was understood. We can thank God for the result while allowing the precise mechanics to remain with Him.

13. A Biblical Framework for Testing Tongues

A congregation does not need to choose between gullibility and mockery. Scripture supplies a practical framework for discernment.

- Christ: Does the message honor and truthfully confess Jesus Christ as Lord?
- Scripture: Does the practice obey the written instructions of 1 Corinthians 12-14?
- Meaning: Is understandable truth communicated to the intended hearers?
- Interpretation: When the congregation does not understand naturally, is a genuine interpretation supplied?
- Edification: Is the church strengthened rather than merely impressed?
- Charity: Does the practice display humility, patience and concern for others?
- Order: Are the number of speakers and sequence of speech governed by the apostolic instructions?
- Self-control: Will the speaker remain silent when Scripture requires silence?
- Fruit: Does the broader life and ministry point people toward truth, holiness and the Gospel?

No single emotional impression replaces these questions. A claimed interpretation should be evaluated like any other spiritual message. It must not add doctrine that contradicts Scripture, manipulate vulnerable people or grant the speaker unquestioned authority.

Leaders should explain the process gently before inviting any public exercise of the gift. If interpretation is absent, the instruction is simple: keep silence in the church. That is not unbelief. It is Biblical obedience.

14. Tongues Must Serve the Gospel

At Pentecost the languages carried “the wonderful works of God” to people from many nations. Peter then preached the death, resurrection and lordship of Jesus Christ. The event concluded with a call to repent and with thousands receiving the word.

This gives the gift its proper destination. Tongues are not the Gospel. Jesus Christ crucified and risen is the Gospel. A sign may remove a barrier, arrest attention or confirm the Spirit’s work, but salvation comes through faith in Christ.

The church should therefore be more concerned that people understand the Gospel than that they witness an impressive spiritual display. If a visitor leaves amazed by the speaker but unclear about Jesus, the ministry has missed the direction of Pentecost.

God is still able to cross language barriers. He may do so through miraculous utterance. He also does so through faithful translators, patient missionaries, bilingual believers, written Scripture and ordinary Christians who labor to make the truth clear. The method belongs to God. The message must remain Jesus Christ.

The Final Answer

What does the Bible mean by speaking in tongues? At Pentecost it clearly means Spirit-given speech in languages unknown to the speakers but recognized and understood by the hearers. The other occurrences in Acts confirm a real manifestation of the Holy Ghost without supplying all the same details.

First Corinthians 12-14 teaches that not every believer has the gift. It also regulates tongues that the assembled church does not naturally understand. Such speech must be interpreted if used publicly, must edify the church and must remain under charity, self-control and order. Without an interpreter, the speaker must remain silent in the church.

The Bible does not command every Christian to possess a private prayer language. Responsible believers disagree about whether First Corinthians 14 permits one. The Bible also does not teach that every unfamiliar utterance is demonic. Spiritual claims must be tested, and unfamiliar public speech must not be accepted without interpretation merely because it is sincere or dramatic.

The clearest Biblical purpose is not self-display. It is communication that glorifies God, builds others and points people to Jesus Christ. A genuine gift of the Spirit will not require the church to disobey the Word the Spirit inspired.

Questions for Personal or Group Reflection

1. What details in Acts 2 establish that the hearers recognized actual native languages?
2. What do Acts 10 and Acts 19 establish, and what details do they leave unstated?
3. How does 1 Corinthians 12 correct the claim that every believer must speak in tongues?

4. Why is 1 Corinthians 13:1 insufficient by itself to establish a doctrine of angelic prayer speech?
5. How does interpretation change an unknown tongue from a private utterance into something that can edify the church?
6. What does Paul's command to remain silent teach about spiritual self-control?
7. Why is unfamiliarity neither proof of divine origin nor proof of demonic origin?
8. Which parts of the Philippines testimony are direct observations, and which conclusions remain personal belief?
9. How can a pastor correct disorder without humiliating sincere believers?
10. Does the practice under consideration leave people more impressed with a speaker or more certain about Jesus Christ?

Interpretive Cautions

- Do not reduce Acts 2 to meaningless sound. The hearers recognized the languages in which they were born.
- Do not require every Christian to speak in tongues. First Corinthians 12 denies that all believers possess the same gift.
- Do not make the phrase tongues of angels carry more doctrinal weight than its rhetorical context can bear.
- Do not ignore 1 Corinthians 14 when evaluating public practice. Interpretation, edification, order and silence without an interpreter are explicit commands.
- Do not call every unfamiliar utterance demonic. Test spiritual claims without pretending that unfamiliarity settles the source.
- Do not assume sincerity proves divine origin. Sincere people can misunderstand an experience or imitate trusted leaders.
- Do not judge hidden motives when observable conduct is enough to evaluate whether the Biblical rules are being obeyed.
- Do not use the Philippines testimony as proof of a mechanism that the witnesses could not establish.
- Do not let debate about the sign overshadow the Gospel message the sign is meant to serve.

A Personal Invitation to Christ

The greatest need in every language is the same. We have sinned against a holy God. Religious experiences, spiritual gifts and emotional moments cannot remove our guilt. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23 KJV).

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived without sin. He died upon the cross for our sins, was buried and rose again the third day. The wonderful works of God proclaimed at Pentecost lead us to Him. Salvation is not received by learning a spiritual vocabulary. It is received by trusting the Savior.

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Romans 10:9 KJV)

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Romans 10:13 KJV)

Call upon Jesus Christ in the language you understand. Admit your sin, believe that He died and rose again and trust Him as your personal Savior. If you have trusted Christ, tell a mature believer and begin following Him in the fellowship of a faithful church.

Pastoral Note

This topic often carries personal history. Some believers remember a beautiful experience of prayer or worship. Others remember pressure, confusion or a public performance that left them uncomfortable. A faithful church should make room for both kinds of stories without allowing either experience to replace the authority of Scripture.

A person should not be mocked for asking whether an utterance is Biblical. A person should not be condemned merely for believing that he or she has prayed privately in a tongue. At the same time, kindness does not require a church to permit practices that violate the stated rules for public worship.

The safest place is not at either emotional extreme. It is under the written Word. We can remain open to everything God truly does while refusing to credit Him with what contradicts His instructions. That posture is neither cold skepticism nor uncontrolled enthusiasm. It is reverence.

Selected Scripture and Interpretive Resources

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

- Acts 2:1-41. Pentecost, recognized native languages and Peter's Gospel proclamation.
- Acts 10:34-48; 11:1-18. Tongues in the house of Cornelius and the reception of Gentile believers.
- Acts 19:1-7. Tongues and prophecy among the disciples at Ephesus.
- 1 Corinthians 12-14. Diversity of gifts, the supremacy of charity and the regulation of tongues in the church.
- Matthew 6:7; 7:15-20. Vain repetitions and the importance of spiritual fruit.
- 1 John 4:1-3. The command to test spiritual claims and confess Jesus Christ truthfully.
- Romans 3:23; 10:9, 13. Human sin and the invitation to salvation through Jesus Christ.
- Frederick William Danker, editor, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. Lexical background for glossa and dialektos.
- F. F. Bruce, The Book of the Acts, New International Commentary on the New Testament.
- Craig S. Keener, Acts: An Exegetical Commentary.
- Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, New International Commentary on the New Testament.
- David E. Garland, 1 Corinthians, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.
- Anthony C. Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, New International Greek Testament Commentary.

A Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for giving us Your Word and for sending the Holy Ghost to glorify Jesus Christ. Give us humility where sincere believers disagree and courage where Your instructions are clear. Protect Your church from pride, confusion, deception and the desire to draw attention to ourselves. Keep us from mocking what we do not understand, and keep us from accepting every spiritual claim without testing it. Let every gift serve charity, edification and the truth of the Gospel. Help us speak of Your wonderful works in ways people can understand. Thank You for Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and rose again in victory. In Jesus' name, amen.

Carry This Study Into the Week

Reopen Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 12-14 during the coming week. Read the passages without beginning from a church tradition or a personal reaction. Mark every statement about understanding, interpretation, charity, edification, order and silence. Ask whether each belief you hold can be supported by the words on the page.

Then share the central conclusion with someone kindly: the Holy Ghost never needs confusion to prove His presence. At Pentecost He crossed a language barrier so people could hear the wonderful works of God. In Corinth He required gifts to build the church. Let the conversation move toward the most important message in every language, that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again.

Until We Reason Together Again

The lasting question is not whether a sound is impressive. It is whether Jesus Christ is glorified, the Word of God is obeyed and another person can understand the truth. God may work beyond our natural ability, but He never asks His church to abandon Biblical discernment.

"Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Corinthians 14:40 KJV)

Bring your questions. Open your Bible.
Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

Reason Together Church

www.ReasonTogether.Church