

CHARISMATIC QUESTIONS



Fellowship Bible Church

CHARISMATIC QUESTIONS

Bible Study Guide

From the leadership development ministry of

FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH MISSIONS

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Charismatic Questions #1

What about the baptism in the Holy Spirit? What about the gift of tongues? What about healings? What about binding and casting out demons?

Before moving too deeply into this study, it might be good to understand why and how the so-called charismatic movement has become such a critical issue today.

There are a number of reasons why so many Christians have been caught in the charismatic snare, but as I see it, the number one cause is the general carnal condition and spiritual barrenness of the fundamental churches. If a hungry hearted believer does not find adequate spiritual food in his church, he'll search elsewhere for it, which opens him up to all kinds of false doctrine.

Every Christian practice, tongues, etc., can and must be checked by the Word of God (Isaiah 8:20; Col. 2:8). If any Christian practice or experience is genuine, it will never conflict with the teaching of the Bible, but will always be confirmed by it. If any experience conflicts with Scripture, then it must be the experience that is wrong.

I want to begin by looking at the tongues issue and say that speaking in tongues is not limited to Christianity or even to God. It is in fact practiced by a number of pagan people groups who have never to anyone's knowledge been in contact with the Bible or Christians.

Tongues speaking has been observed in both Christian and non-Christian Eskimos, Africans, people from Tibet, Persia and China. Speaking in tongues is also accepted by the anti-Christian religion of Islam. It is also well known that ancient writers such as Plato, Virgil and others have given us detailed accounts of the same kind of thing among priests of pagan gods of their day, as well as among soothsayers and diviners. My purpose in sharing all this is to draw one very simple conclusion, and that is that tongue speaking, both past and present, has existed apart from God and the Bible.

Therefore, we can conclude that speaking in tongues proves nothing as to source or origin. (In other words, where does it come from--God or Satan?). I want to say this: only God's Word can give us the answers we need. As we look then at Scripture, there is no record of any kind of tongues speaking in the Old Testament, nor any reference to it, unless the chirping and muttering in Isaiah 8 has some meaning (Isaiah 8:17-19).

Furthermore, there is no mention of it in the Gospels even though Joseph, the Virgin Mary, the parents of John the Baptist--Anna & Simeon, were all said to be under the direct power and influence of the Holy Spirit. The same is true of John the Baptist who was filled with the Spirit from birth and also the disciples upon whom the Lord breathed the Holy Spirit (Luke 2:25 - John 20:22).

There is one simple fact that we should mention at this point, speaking in tongues is mentioned only between Acts 2 and the writing of I Corinthians; Acts 19). We're speaking here of no more than 25 to 27 years in all. Outside of that period, there is no mention of tongues anywhere in Scripture. This is even more impressive when we remember that four of the great church leaders present at Pentecost (Peter, James, John & Jude), wrote seven books of teaching for Christians and not one of them has a single reference to tongues even though they do mention the Holy Spirit and His work 27 times.

Along the same lines we should remember that Paul wrote 13/14 books in the New Testament (depending on whether we include Hebrews or not), yet in only one of them does he mention tongues. This is in one of his earliest letters (about 56-57A.D.) And was not written as church doctrine, but rather to reprove and correct. When we turn to the Bible we find only five passages dealing with the subject of tongues.

Mark 16:17 - where the gift was promised.

Acts 2; Acts 10; and Acts 19 - where the gift was given.

I Corinthians 12-14 - where the gift was misused.

This is the sum total of what Scripture has to say on the subject of tongues. In Mark 16:15-18 which is a parallel Scripture to Matthew 28:19,20, there appears to be a rather legalistic, baptismal salvation, but returning to Mark 16, notice what was to follow salvation in verses 17 and 18. In Mark 16:17 not only were tongues promised and received but also power to cast out demons, as well as power over sickness, serpents, and deadly poisons. All of these were practiced in Acts (with the exception of drinking poison and with the addition of raising the dead). It's interesting that there is no mention of any of these in the epistles later than I Corinthians. Re: healings--there are clear statements proving that later on they did not cure sickness even in the apostles themselves. (Read 2 Corinthians 12:8-9; Galatians 4:12-14; Philippians 2:25-30; I Timothy 5:23; II Timothy 4:20)

Back to tongues — I want to say this: Signs and miracles were always connected with Israel. The Jewish people had been told in the Old Testament to look for specific signs. I Corinthians 1:22; Hebrews 2:3,4. Read Acts 2:1-16

So in Acts 2 God gave a sign to mark this as a genuine divine work, and the sign was that untrained men communicated the message of God in languages they had not previously known or studied, but which the hearers immediately recognized and understood as their own, and the fact that they did understand is proof of the sign. Unintelligible gibberish would have proved nothing as a sign...notice that there is no hint of any ecstatic utterance for use with God, nor for communication with men.

The third reference to tongues in the New Testament in Acts 10 in the story of the conversion of the first Gentiles and their addition to the church. Read Acts 10, particularly 44-46. This Scripture indicates that the same sign was given to these first Gentiles as had been given to the Jews so that there could never be a doubt in anyone's mind, particularly

the Jews, that they had been received on equal terms. It was proved in this way, by the audible gift of tongues.

In the fourth passage (Acts 19) we have another new people group. Not just believing Jews as in Acts 2 or Gentiles as in Acts 10, but 12 men who were really similar to that of Old Testament believers. Read Acts 19:1-7.

They had heard John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets, preaching of the coming Messiah and His Kingdom; had believed the message; had accepted the baptism of repentance, but had, as they clearly state, heard nothing more about Christ or the Spirit. The Gospel is then preached to them; they believe; and receive the Holy Spirit with the same sign the Jews and Gentiles had received earlier. So we see that this same gift of tongues was given three times in Acts and always at the conversion of a new group. There is no indication that tongues speaking was a normal and continuing experience. In fact, notice Peter's remark in Acts 11:15 - (as on us in the beginning).

I want to clarify this: the same kind of tongues - gift is mentioned in each case that is a known, recognizable and understood language. There is one further fact in all of these cases that must be noticed. This is that on none of these occasions is there a hint that the gift was sought. In fact they seem to have been surprised by it. Furthermore, it was given, not because of maturity, or spirituality, but rather as we mentioned before it was given in each case at the very beginning; upon conversion.

Charismatic Questions #2

Having traced tongues through every occurrence up to the end of Acts, let's now look at it in the Epistles...

As we said before, Paul wrote 14 letters or books in the New Testament and yet in only one of these is the subject of tongues even referred to. More interesting still is the fact that this is one Scripture (I Corinthians 12, 13, 14), is far from urging the gift on the Christians, but is almost entirely in the opposite direction. (Read 14:1-9, 19, 23) Paul insists on prophecy or plain teaching in an understood language, and strongly implies that their emphasis on tongues was a symptom of immaturity rather than the reverse. (I Corinthians 14:39)

Corinthians is one of Paul's earliest letters, preceded only by Thessalonians and Galatians, written probably about the year 56-67 A.D. during his third missionary journey. This is still the transition period of Acts while the Jews were still very much in the center of the stage and the sign gifts were still in use.

For this reason tongues, healings, prophesyings were still operative (I Corinthians 12:8-10). Something to think about—even during this time, not everyone had all the gifts. (I Corinthians 12:28-30) Most if not all charismatic churches teach that everyone should speak in tongues. The whole concept of tongues in Corinthians must be considered in light of the book of Acts. There is no Biblical justification for saying that the tongues of Corinthians are a different kind of tongues from those of Acts. Surely if they were, God would have warned us and not confused us by introducing tongues which are different without saying so.

The word unknown (I Corinthians 14:2 & 4) in the King James Version is in italics showing that there is no such word in the original text. The word tongue here is "glossa" and means "a tongue or language," never used in Scripture in any other way. Far from tongues demonstrating spiritual maturity in the Corinthian Christians, their misuse showed them to be obviously one of the most defective and retarded groups we have any record of in the New Testament. They were divided (chapters 1-4, tolerating adultery in their fellowship (ch. 5); quarreling before pagan courts (ch. 6); feasting in idol temples (ch. 10); drunk and disorderly at the Lord's Supper (ch. 11), in heresy regarding the resurrection, and uninstructed regarding public ministry and women's part in it (chap. 14 & 15); Paul plainly calls them infantile and carnal, 3:1-3)

So whatever else tongues speaking may be a sign of, it is not an indication of spirituality or maturity, if we go by the Bible. Let's look at the use of tongues.

We are told in I Corinthians 14:22 that tongues are for a sign. Then it is immediately added that the sign is not for believers but for unbelievers. Again remember that tongues

were for a sign...(Hebrews 2:3-4; II Corinthians 12:12). Again these signs were not for believers, but to authenticate God's Word to unbelievers.

The second use of tongues was communication. At Pentecost the awestruck crowd said, we each hear them in our own language in which we were born (Acts 2:3-6), then they give a list of 13 or 14 different languages and dialects (Acts 2:7-11). Notice in verse 11B they were speaking of the mighty deeds of God. I Corinthians 14:6,11,23--look what Paul says in 14:2--God understands him and maybe he understands himself, but no useful purpose is achieved since no one else does. The third purpose is edification (I Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 4:11, 12). I want to stop and mention here three objections by charismatics.

One of the objections to the position we have is that Paul says, forbid not to speak with tongues (14:39). Tongues were obviously a valid gift and still valuable at this time when they were used for their original purpose, so it would have been wrong to forbid their use. Another objection is pointed out that 14:5 says, I would that ye all spoke with tongues, but this is answered by what we have already said. What could be more valuable in sharing the gospel in a foreign language than a gift of tongues. We learn foreign languages for this reason today. Finally, it is argued that Paul says this in I Corinthians 14:18. Remember that tongues were still in use as explained above, and if anyone could find profitable use for them it would be Paul, the great traveling teacher. Whether it was a miraculous gift or a God given ability to learn languages, is beside the point, both could have been true in his case, yet he immediately goes on to say that he did not use either gift or the ability the way they did. I Corinthians 14:18, 19

Let's now look into chapter 13:

I want to begin by saying that this chapter is not a parenthetical chapter. It is not a disconnected teaching on love as many think, but rather it is the relation of love to all the sign gifts (I Corinthians 12:31). What is the more excellent way--chapter 13 (I Corinthians 13:13).

I Corinthians 13:1-3 states that even the highest gifts with the most fanatical devotion are worse than useless if there is no love.

I want to say this: look at I Corinthians 13:5--love never seeks its own interest but desires to work for the benefit of others. This truth cuts at the very root of a self focused use of tongues which is claimed to make me feel good and do wonderful things for me, but which communicates nothing to others and has an up building effect on others of absolutely nothing.

What about the questions of tongues in private?

Let's give some thought to this. God gave the physical tongue in our mouths basically for communication, but here we are confronted with the possibility of one of God's children standing in a room by himself talking in a language which he himself does not understand but which he says God understands.

It is not a sign, for there is no one there to see or hear it. It is not communicating anything to anyone. For both reasons it is not up building the church. This would seem to be the ultimate in self-centered and unproductive futility.

TRUE LOVE - I Corinthians 13:4-7. Here is a love which is never self-focused. A love which expresses itself in giving to others.

TEMPORARY GIFTS - Then, finally, speaking of I Corinthians 13, Paul, by the Holy Spirit, says in verses 8-13 that the miraculous sign gifts on which they put so much emphasis were, in fact, not even permanent in the plan of God. Rather, they were something which when their purpose was served, would pass away. Prophecies shall fail, tongues shall cease, knowledge shall vanish. This last reference to knowledge many believe is probably connected with discerning of spirits.

So God says that tongues were to cease. The big question is when. Those who favor tongues for today say that they will only cease at the second coming of Christ which they give as the interpretation of "that which is perfect," but the English phrase, "that which is perfect" is the translation of one word in Greek, "the perfect" and being neuter cannot refer to Christ but to a thing or fact. The whole sentence simply is, "When the perfect (or complete) is come, the in part shall be done away." That which is perfect could only be the Scriptures; the completed canon of God's revelation to man.

Think back a moment--before the completion of the Word of God prophets were necessary to give oral messages from God, and sign gifts were there to authenticate the oral messages of the preachers. I would like to mention one fact regarding speaking in tongues. It is a historical fact which can easily verified, that from the beginning of the modern tongues movement in Britain until today it has left a trail of division and wreckage behind it.

Charismatic Questions # 3

Having said all this about tongues, I thought it might be good to briefly look at several other charismatic errors. Baptism in (by) the Spirit. Second blessing. Demonism. Healing, I think we have pretty much covered.

The Baptism not in but by the Spirit. The key to understanding the Baptism by the Spirit is that it is a positional truth. It is not an experience, and has nothing to do with feelings. Also it is an instantaneous work of God at the moment of salvation. The only condition for receiving the Baptism is to believe. I want to make this comment--the believer is not baptized into the Spirit, as the charismatics teach. The Holy Spirit is the Baptizer (I Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27).

The filling with the Spirit--on the other hand has to do with the believer's condition; his walk. While we find no command in Scripture to be baptized by the Spirit, the Word very definitely does command us to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

The present tense of the verb filled indicates a continuous filling--a walk in dependence upon the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the Spirit. There is a condition for filling with the Spirit and that is faith or dependence upon the Spirit rather than dependence upon the flesh (Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:2-6 & 11-13). No second blessing--the Scripture that is so often used to justify the charismatic second blessing is Acts 8:15-17.

Remember Acts 2--Jews--Acts 10--Gentiles. Here in chapter 8 we have the Samaritans, being half Jewish and half Gentile; logically the next group to be added to the body of Christ. Acts 1:8, the witness was to be first in Jerusalem, then in all Judea and then in Samaria.

After Philip preached the Gospel there was a lapse of time between the water baptism and the baptism by the Holy Spirit, and if we stop and think a minute, there is a good reason for that. The Jews and Samaritans were age old bitter enemies. Peter, as custodian of the "keys of the Kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:19) had preached the Gospel to the Jews at Pentecost and the church was born. In order to maintain the unity of the church, Peter was sent to Samaria to lay hands on the new believers to demonstrate their oneness with the Jerusalem Christians. Then they received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17).

Such a space of time between believing and receiving the Holy Spirit is never again found in Scripture. Look with me at a rather interesting verse (Acts 10:34). This was a big step for Peter to acknowledge the "half breed" Samaritans as members of the body. In fact, I believe the Lord used this as a stepping stone in preparing him for his ministry to the Gentile Cornelius here in Acts 10. Skim through the chapter, and then Acts 10:44-46.

Many believe that this sign of tongues was used by God for the benefit of Peter and his companions, so that they could clearly see that the Gentile believers were one with them in Christ. All members or one body, the church (Col. 3:11).

I would like to mention one more error that seems to be running rampant; that of attributing to Satan/demons the works of the flesh.

Today we hear questionable stories often time embellished reports concerning demon activity. We often hear reports of someone casting out evil spirits and holding conversations with depression demons, sickness demons, pouting demons, crying demons or laughing demons. The fact is that there is no Scripture nor evidence to support such tales. Give some thought to this--Satan has never made a move that has not been under the full control of our sovereign God (Job 1 & 2; Matt. 8:28-32; Col. 2:10).

As believers we are indwelt by God Himself (Holy Spirit) and we are in no way subject to defeated demons, including Satan.

Safely "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3) we must learn to effortlessly and silently have faith and resist the devil on the basis of his defeat at Calvary (James 4:7; I Peter 5:8,9; Ephesians 6:10).

To resist or to stand merely means to maintain (by faith) the position in which we have been placed. I want to leave you with one last thought:

Satan's power is not natural but permitted (Romans 13:1). His power is not unlimited but controlled (Job 1:12, 26). He is not assured of success but surely doomed (Revelation 20:2, 3). It may be foolish to underestimate the enemy, but it is fatal to overestimate him.

