

The Tongues Of Angels

Introduction. The popularity of Pentecostalism in America cannot be denied. Pentecostalism focuses on personal experiences and emotionalism in religion. Their worship services are characterized by bursts of emotion, dancing, shouting, instrumental music, and the practice of what they call "tongue speaking." All of this fits the mold of a movement which is dedicated to feeling holiness rather than perfecting it.

Pentecostal people are highly susceptible to suggestion, say those who practice hypnotism. However, they seem to be unaffected by the "suggestion" of the Bible or outright statements of truth contained in it relating to spiritual gifts. When you question the matter of tongue speaking, Pentecostals will relate their belief that what they experience is genuine and cannot be denied.

Once in a while, however, you will find a Pentecostal person who will attempt to use the scripture to justify their practice. Some Pentecostals claim that the gibberish they speak is the "tongues of men and angels" which Paul described in 1 Corinthians 13:1. And they will try to build a biblical case by citing Isaiah 28:11-12 and coupling it with 1 Corinthians 14:21 to show that Isaiah foretold the coming of men of "stammering lips and another tongue," which would supposedly refer to the Pentecostal movement.

I. *The Bible Meaning Of "Tongues"*

- A. Pentecostal people equate the senseless gibberish they speak with the "tongues" of Acts 2, 10, and 1 Corinthians 12-14.
 - 1. The so-called "tongue speaking" of modern Pentecostals consists of nothing more than meaningless jumbles of practiced syllables, pointless sounds, and meaningless jabbering.
 - 2. Anyone who hears such nonsense for the first time is right to assume that these people are out of their minds (1 Corinthians 14:23).
 - 3. Yet, Pentecostals insist that their gibberish comes from the Holy Spirit. However, this definition of "tongues" is totally at odds with the Bible.
- B. How the Old Testament used the word "tongues".
 - 1. Genesis 10:1-5 – Each nation to arise from Noah's sons would ultimately have its own distinct "tongue." The NKJV has "languages" rather than "tongues" because by metonymy, one can be substituted for the other. The languages would be confused at the tower of Babel (11:9).
 - 2. Exodus 4:10 – Moses told God that he was a poor choice for God to send to Pharaoh, because he was "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue," which means heavy or not capable of quick retort.
- C. How the New Testament uses the word "tongues".
 - 1. Acts 2:8-11 – "Every man in our own tongue" is determined by the context to be the languages of the multiple countries listed by Luke.
 - 2. Acts 21:40; 22:2 – Paul spoke in the "Hebrew tongue," which is *dialektos* or language. In the first century in Palestine, this was Aramaic.

II. *Is The "Tongues Of Angels" Argument Valid?*

- A. Pentecostals see in 1 Corinthians 13:1 the gibberish and senseless jabbering that they employ. But there are some glaring problems with this position:

1. Problem #1: You will not find any example of angels speaking to one another in some secret “angel language” in the Bible.
 - a) We have no way of knowing if they ever communicated to one another, and if they did, we cannot know what their language was like. This is pure imagination on the part of Pentecostals!
 - b) We cannot know anything about angels beyond what is written. For all we know, angels only ever communicate to men as God bids them. In fact, the only time we observe angels speaking at all, they spoke to men in the tongues of men. How would we know any different?
 2. Problem #2: Speech always has form. There are nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, tense, mood, etc. Pentecostal gibberish has none of this. One must suspend logic (which the Bible employs) to believe angel language is the freeform nonsense of the Pentecostals.
 3. Problem #3: Every Pentecostal does it differently. Like snowflakes, no “tongue speaking” of any two Pentecostals is the same. How could it qualify as a language in either the human or angel realm if there is not continuity of any kind in it?
- B. The Bible clearly teaches that angels have intelligence.
1. 2 Peter 2:4 – Angels sinned and will not be spared the judgment. This proves angels are intelligent beings, capable of choosing to obey God or to rebel.
 2. Jude 6 – That the angels “kept not their first estate” means that they were able to make the conscious decision to leave the boundaries imposed on them by God.
 3. Jude 9 – Michael the archangel disputed with the devil about the body of Moses. He declined to offer his own reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke thee.” This is proof of angel’s intelligence and speech.
 4. If Pentecostal gibberish were truly the “tongues of angels” it would actually argue against this fact.
- C. The Bible clearly defines the mission of angels as “ministering spirits” (Hebrews 1:14) and their work was to communicate the will of God to men.
1. Genesis 18:22-33 – Three “men” bargained with Abraham for the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. They were called angels in Genesis 19:1.
 2. Genesis 19:12-13 – Two angels warned Lot to get his family out of Sodom and to not look back.
 3. Revelation 14:6-7 – An angel flew through the heavens with the gospel to preach to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.
 - a) John specifically says that the angel preached to every people and tongue which had to be different languages.
 - b) Preaching can only be done in the language of people who are the target audience (cp. 1 Corinthians 14:3-6).
- D. So what is Paul actually talking about when he mentions the “tongues of men and angels” in 1 Corinthians 13:1?
1. “Tongues” in the Bible refers to the languages of men.
 2. Angels spoke to men on behalf of God. There is no evidence of angels carrying on a conversation in heavenly gibberish.

3. The “tongues of angels” are the languages of men spoken by angels when they communicate the will of God to men.
4. When Paul says one can speak with the “tongues of angels” he simply means that a man who possessed the gift of tongues had the divinely-given gift to speak to men in the same manner that angels speak to men (cp. 1 Corinthians 12:10-11).

III. Does Paul’s Comment About “Other Tongues” Support Tongue Speaking?

- A. Pentecostals cite 1 Corinthians 14:21 in an attempt to further justify their modern practice of “tongue speaking.”
 1. They are trying to couple the “other tongues” of (14:21) with the “tongues of men and angels” in (13:1) and equate the two.
 2. Also, they want to connect all of this to Isaiah 28:11-12, so as to create a preponderance of evidence from the Old Testament as well as the New.
- B. What was Isaiah talking about?
 1. Isaiah was warning Israel and Judah that they would be punished in a foreign land. The spiritual climate in Israel had become so corrupt that even the spiritual leaders, the priests and the prophets, were drunks. God’s people were a people who were spiritually corrupt and morally filthy.
 2. Furthermore, the priests were in no moral condition to teach the people anything, and so they failed miserably in their duty. As a result, when the people of God were taken to Babylon, they would be surrounded by a foreign people whose language sounded strange to their ears, like stammering.
 - a) The Assyrian and Babylonian captivities were meant as punishment to Israel and Judah.
 - b) Yet God’s people did not “hear the speech” God intended for them to hear. Israel failed to repent and ceased as a nation. Judah returned from captivity and struggled with sin and rebellion throughout their history.
- C. What is the point that Paul is making when he refers to Isaiah?
 1. He most certainly was not talking about unintelligible gibberish which characterizes Pentecostal “tongues.” To the contrary, Paul was emphasizing the fact that language is meant to be understood.
 2. Paul cited Isaiah to show that “other tongues and other lips” do not promote understanding. As the Jews would not understand the Assyrians and Babylonians without teaching or interpreters, neither would a tongue speaker be able to communicate the truth unless he spoke in the language of a people or employed an interpreter (cp. 14:6-11, 15-16, 18-19, 22-24).

Conclusion. Pentecostal people engage in their false practice of “tongue speaking” which is not tongue speaking at all. They do so without any concern for authority from God. When they are pressed to present proof of their practice as originating with God, they turn to our texts in desperation. However, it should be clear to all that the “tongues of men and angels” and the “stammering lips” of Isaiah do not support their practice.

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