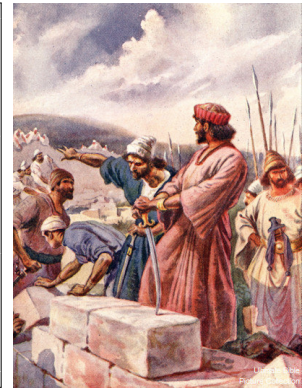


The Sword and The Trowel

They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded (Nehemiah 4:17-18)

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Some Thoughts On Tongues

There are numbers of folks who believe that speaking in tongues is for today. We were once, before Jenny was born, acquainted with a family who adopted this view. A man I once worked with (and whose company I enjoyed a lot) also took the same view. Sooner or later those who advocate this view will affirm that the tongue speaking cannot be known (“unknown,” they will say). This, of course, eliminates the possibility that these tongues could be used to educate anyone in the word of God. If they cannot be known, they cannot educate anyone. This leaves one wondering what the point of these tongues would be other than some supposed evidence of a greater spirituality. “What saith the Scriptures?”

There is little question that tongue speaking occurred in New Testament times. It happened on Pentecost (Acts 2:6, 8, 11) and was prevalent in the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 12-14). Could this spiritual gift be misused or abused? Absolutely. 1 Corinthians 14 is all about the control of spiritual gifts, especially tongues. One factor fits our study. If the tongue spoken is unknown to the hearer, and there is no interpreter of that tongue available, then the tongue speaker is to be silent (1 Cor. 14:26-27). Contrast what is said there with what transpires today. Today if there is no understanding of the tongue there is no attempt to interpret. Modern day tongue speakers just keep going! How different this is from what we read in the New Testament. “*So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air*” (1 Cor. 14:9).

I would like for us to consider, at this

time, this business of tongues being unknown to the hearer. Where do we find a case in the Bible of tongues being spoken with no one recognizing the speech and freely admitting that it is not a known language? Notice the words that are used in Acts 2. We find two key words—“*language*” and “*tongue(s)*” (KJV has “*tongue*” in v. 8 and NKJV has “*language*”). This is because there are two different words used in the original language. *Dialektos* (language) means, “primarily a conversation, discourse..., came to denote the language or dialect of a country or district” (Vine, p. 649). *Glossa* (tongue) is used to indicate “the spiritual gift of speaking in another language without its having been learnt” (Vine, p. 1165). Did you notice that both words imply a known language? In other words, a language that is spoken somewhere by someone. It does not mean that it is a language that no one knows at all! People had come from all over the known world to be in Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 2:9-11). Notice the reaction to what they heard—“*we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.*” This means they recognized these as known languages even if they did not necessarily understand the language itself. What do I mean? I have never learned French, but I can recognize it when I hear it. This is parallel to what was happening on Pentecost. The tongues that day were known languages.

However, someone will say what of the unknown tongues in 1 Corinthians 14? The word “*unknown*” is found six times in 1 Corinthians 14 in the KJV (it is not found one time in the NKJV). Each time it is found in the KJV it is in italics. What is the significance of the italics? I have a Nelson KJV that says this: “Some have supposed, mistakenly, that these words were printed in this fashion for emphasis. This is not the

case. The explanation, really, is simple. The words in italics are words which do not have any equivalents in the Hebrew or Greek text. They are words which have been supplied by the translators in order to make the meaning of the sentence clearer, or in order to make the passage read more smoothly in English” In my opinion, the translators were trying to emphasize that the tongue was unknown (or unlearned) to the speaker and not to the hearer.

Jesus said that there would be those who “...*will speak with new tongues*” (Mk. 16:17). What would the “old tongues” have been? Were the “old tongues” understood? Yes. What of the “new tongues?” Someone would know them even if the speaker did not.

Tongues were given so the gospel could be preached and taught orally (Acts 2) and that different languages would not be a barrier. When the gospel was finally recorded, this barrier would no longer exist. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 tells us that tongues would cease with the completion of the New Testament. The Bible is printed in multiplied languages today. People are being taught the gospel and the spiritual gift of tongues are unnecessary. Thus, there is no need for them today and they are not available.

Tongue Speaking And The New Birth

I decided to do some research on tongue speaking and what people believe about it today. Now, where would I go to easily obtain this information? I decided the Internet was the place. So, I took off “web surfing” and was completely overwhelmed by the volume of information. I finally settled on one particular web site that epitomizes all the others. It is located at <http://pcjon-line.org>. It is for the Pentecostal Church

of Jesus Christ, 401 Elm St., Peoria, IL 61604. On a page titled "Doctrine", I found the following sentence. "We believe you must repent and be Baptized in Water, by immersion in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sin, and receive the Baptism of Holy Ghost, speaking in other tongues as the Spirit of God gives utterance. This constitutes the 'New Birth'". I would like for you to go back and read that last sentence very carefully. Make no doubt about it, this group believes that you must speak in other tongues or you are not saved.

Notice that the sentence refers to several things which it says constitute the new birth:

1. Repent.
2. Baptism in water.
3. Baptism of the Holy Spirit.
4. Speaking in other tongues.

Let me add that these are all prefaced by saying "You must..." If it is a "must," then it is not something that is optional. It is something that is required.

Now, can you be saved without experiencing the new birth? Let us see what Jesus had to say about this. "*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" "*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*" "*Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'*" (Jn. 3:3, 5, 7). Folks, it sure seems to me that you must be born again in order to be saved. Now, if speaking in other tongues is necessary to experience the new birth, you are not saved unless you can speak in these other tongues. Please let me know if you think I have misrepresented their position. That is not my intent. Neither do I have any desire to erect a "straw man" for the purpose of tearing him down. I am only interested in examining what the Bible says. If what is said on that web site is what is said in the Bible, then I will accept that wholeheartedly. However, if what is on that web site is not what is said in the Bible, then I do not want any part of it.

I will agree that repentance and baptism in water are necessary in order to be born again. This is what happened on Pentecost when the gospel was preached for the first time after the death of Christ. Men were told what to

do, to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). Those acts are mentioned on the Pentecostal website. Yet where did those who were baptized speak in tongues in Acts 2? What! There was tongue speaking in Acts 2! Yes, there was. It was the apostles who did so and they did it *before* the repentance and baptism of Acts 2:38. We can read how they began speaking in tongues in Acts 2:4-13. Anyone can tell that, according to Pentecostal doctrine, this is out of sequence. According to Pentecostal doctrine, this should have happened *after* the baptism, not before. However the speaking in tongues preceded the baptism, didn't it? Furthermore, where is the tongue speaking after those in Acts 2:38 were baptized? It can't be found. Apparently those nearly three thousand people did not experience the new birth. Who can believe it? Also, the apostles, who did speak in tongue in Acts 2, were not the ones who were baptized in Acts 2:38! The Pentecostal description of what constitutes the new birth collapses when one examines the description in the light of the Scriptures.

My personal opinion is that this doctrine has been concocted by Pentecostals in order to emphasize their view about speaking in tongues. They have determined that tongue speaking is the cardinal point in the New Testament. Verily they believe it to be the gift of gifts. Thus, they have made it a necessary ingredient in the new birth. Folks, that makes tongue speaking a matter of salvation. That is *not* taught in the Scriptures.

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Who Has The Right To Change It?

Hebrews 1:1-2 makes it clear that God speaks through chosen agents. Today He speaks to us through Jesus Christ. Jesus made several remarks about serving in this capacity. One such remark is found in John 7:16, "*Jesus answered them and said, 'My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.'*" This tells us that Jesus was appointed by God to this end. It also shows us that Jesus was not given the authority to "adjust" what He received from God.

This assures us that what Jesus taught was precisely what He received from God.

We should also consider the Holy Spirit at this time. The Holy Spirit had a role at delivering what was the will of God. This was done through the agency of inspiration. John 16:13 tells us about this, "*However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.*" Notice that the Spirit does not speak on His own authority. He speaks what he hears. From whom does He hear what He will speak? He hears it from God. Like Jesus, the Holy Spirit did not have leave to "adjust" what He delivered. This also strengthens the concept of accuracy of delivery.

Let us think on this for a moment. Jesus did not have the right to deliver anything except what God said. The Holy Spirit did not have such a right either. There is absolutely no evidence that they ever did so! Since the delivery of the word of God, there have been multiplied cases of men and their attempts to either change or alter its meaning. When these attempts are made there is a natural question that follows. Where did man get the authority to change what Jesus and the Holy Spirit did not have the authority to change?

Man seems to maintain, throughout several generations, a propensity to be presumptuous. Man presumes that he knows more than he actually knows. When attempting to change or alter the word of God, man presumes that he has the authority to do so. Once again, that would be more authority than God gave to Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Well, God didn't give man that authority and it would be better if he stopping presuming that he has it.

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