

## TONGUES OF ANGELS

*By Allon Maxwell*

Most Pentecostals differentiate between the Gift of Tongues on the day of Pentecost and what is described by Paul in [1 Corinthians, chapters 12 through 14](#).

This of course is a necessary rationalisation to help them remain comfortable with the perplexing fact that what happened in Acts was real, recognisable languages, understood by the hearers, whilst what happens amongst them in the 20th century, is not.

Further, I have found that in their desire to reconcile the "difference", and remain comfortable with their own experience, few of them are able to cope at all with Paul's clear statement that there were false apostles, a false gospel, and a false spirit at work in the Corinthian church. ([2 Corinthians 11:3-5](#), [2 Corinthians 11:13-15](#))

What Paul was actually trying to achieve at Corinth was to eliminate the same false "gifts", which are today, still all too common amongst Pentecostals.

The rationalisation takes up Paul's words in [1 Corinthians 13:1](#), where he mentions "*tongues of men and of angels*". We are usually told that what happens now, is "tongues of angels", which of course are not meant to be understood by mere mortals ..... or by Satan, who is therefore unable to hinder the prayer made in tongues!

To suggest that the devil can hinder the prayers of God's children in this way, displays great immaturity. It makes the Devil far too big and God far too small. Brethren do not be children in your thinking! ([1 Corinthians 14:20](#)) Other claims are made that there were perhaps four distinct and separate "gifts" present in the Corinthian church, all of which, we are assured, find parallels in modern Pentecostalism.

### 1. INITIAL EVIDENCE.

Speaking in tongues is claimed to be the infallible initial evidence that the Holy Spirit has been received. (Some even go so far as to say that without this initial evidence, no one is truly born again or saved.)

This is a false gospel, offering a false sense of security. The "evidence" seems to be received indiscriminately, by Catholics and Protestants alike; with or without adequate repentance; with or without baptism for remission of sins; and (most usually) without any clear understanding of who Jesus is or what the Gospel of the Kingdom is; and, with embarrassing frequency, without obedience to the teaching of Jesus about the way of life that pleases God.

The wise will understand. ([Daniel 12:3](#))

### 2. A PRIVATE PRAYER LANGUAGE

This "gift" is claimed to be the gift of a private prayer language to be used for personal edification in private devotions.

This I will not attempt to argue, one way or the other, unless it is insisted that everyone can or must have it. That is to be rejected entirely. Paul is quite definite that NOT all speak in tongues. ([1 Corinthians 12:27-30](#))

It is possible that Paul's instruction to keep this "manifestation" out of the public meetings and use it to "speak to himself and to God", can be construed to imply that, at least for

some, this might be a valid gift. However, it is certainly not the only possible construction which can be placed on Paul's words, which are also aimed at eliminating false experience from the meetings.

Rather than argue this case either way, on insufficient evidence, I prefer Paul's easier solution. *"Forbid not to speak in tongues"*. (1 Corinthians 14:39)

However, it does also fit well with what Paul says, to encourage the one concerned to evaluate prayerfully and honestly before God, whether the "gift" does measurably edify him, or anyone else, for the good of all. The Biblical standard for evaluating the worth of this experience, is not the "gift" itself, but the fruit it produces.

Very often in such cases, without the stimulus of insistence that it MUST be practised every day, it simply disappears as the person concerned "grows up".

Any with this "gift", should be encouraged to make their mind "fruitful", by praying to interpret what they are saying to God. (1 Corinthians 14:13)

### **3. SINGING IN THE SPIRIT**

It is common to encounter what is called "Singing in the Spirit", where all "worship" together, by singing in tongues at the same time.

This is NOT a gift of the Spirit. Nor is it worship. It is simply a "musical version" of the very practice which Paul condemned as confusion and madness. It was to be eliminated from the Corinthian church, not encouraged!

(More about that in a future article, see BD28.)

### **4. INTERPRETED INSPIRED UTTERANCE**

This is the gift of inspired utterance in church, accompanied by an interpretation, about which Paul has much to say. This must also be included in what Paul meant when he said, *"forbid not to speak in tongues"*. It is however, to be honestly evaluated as to whether it is from God or not, in exactly the same way as prophecy.

Some opponents insist that it ought to be clearly a recognisable language exactly like the Day of Pentecost, before it can be accepted as the real thing.

Although this is certainly a powerful consideration, my problem is that it is not so clearly spelt out as I would like it to be, for absolute certainty.

The most I can say about that, is that despite many years of prayerful enquiry, I have never found any case at all (outside the book mentioned above) which I can personally verify.

However, I am totally unqualified to recognise more than a very few of the several thousand human languages spoken on this earth. I simply do not know whether what I hear is a real language or not. Some do seem to have the structure of language. Others do not.

However, that is not how the Bible invites us to measure it. Instead, we must rely on Paul's guidelines for measuring the validity and worth of this gift. This will also be discussed in more detail in a future article. (see BD29)

What I do know, is that when this Pentecostal "gift" is measured by Paul's standards, much of it is found to be false and therefore must be rejected.

Occasionally, however, I have heard things which pass all the Biblical tests. People were challenged in a way that I believe was unquestionably from God. When they responded, it did "edify" them.

Was it a real language *"of men or of angels"*? I do not know.

Was God speaking to us? Yes, I am sure of that. I have felt the impact of it in my own life and seen its fruit in the lives of others.

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