

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:

God baptized the disciples in the Holy Spirit to empower them to take the gospel to all the nations, or more specifically, to all peoples, tribes and tongues. As those 120 disciples spoke supernaturally in languages they had never learned, it was a sign to them of the purpose of their Spirit baptism. They knew they were speaking in languages of people somewhere in the world whom God wanted to reach. Those who speak in other tongues today must be careful not to place so much emphasis on the supernatural sign that they forget that the sign is designed to point them to a world dying without Christ.

Speaking in tongues has become, unfortunately, a divisive issue. Some believe that speaking in other tongues can be experienced by every believer. Others believe it is only for some. Still others believe it was only for the first-century Christians.

I happen to be in the first category, but I do not think that those who speak in other tongues are superior to those who do not speak in other tongues. In fact, I sometimes think the opposite! As Paul later wrote, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1). Love is much more important than speaking in other tongues. It is, in fact, the first fruit of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:22).

Notice that at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, all the believers who were present spoke in other tongues. God did not differentiate between them. Notice also that Peter told the astonished observers, "Repent...and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise [the promise he had just quoted---'I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind'] is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself" (2:38-39).

Peter believed that God wanted to pour His Spirit upon everyone who would repent. Did Peter believe that those in his audience, unlike the 120 in the upper room, would receive the Spirit without any supernatural evidence? No, he believed that the Spirit's outpouring would result in gifts of prophecy and visions and dreams (2:17-18). Certainly everyone's speaking in tongues fell under the category of prophecy, as each believer was heard "speaking of the mighty deeds of God" (2:11) in known languages. Peter believed Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled before them.

Some claim that God gave the disciples the ability to speak in foreign languages so they could preach the gospel to foreign people in their native tongues. They argue that the modern tongue-talkers do not proclaim the gospel to foreign people with their unintelligible languages. The fact is, however, that nothing is said anywhere in the book of Acts about speaking in tongues being used to proclaim the gospel. No one heard the gospel on the day of Pentecost until Peter started preaching.

Notice that during his Pentecost sermon Peter never asked anyone to "invite Jesus into his heart" or "accept Jesus as her personal Savior." His formula for receiving salvation was simple: repent and be baptized. There is no salvation without repentance. When you repent, you turn from your sin and start following Jesus, your new Lord. Your first act of faith is to be baptized in obedience to His command, as were the 3,000 new believers of which we read today (2:41).

One of the characteristics of the early Christians is that they "had all things in common," and were "selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need" (2:44-45). This was nothing more than simple obedience to what Christ told all His followers to do (see Luke 12:33). It stands in stark contrast to what is being pandered today by prosperity preachers, who tell already-rich people to gather more, while the Lord Jesus told relatively poor people to liquidate what they already had accumulated. Someday we must all give an account.