

What Does the Bible Say About Speaking in Tongues?

- **Mark 16:17**

Context: Immediately prior to His ascension, Jesus makes several promises in connection with His commissioning of the disciples to spread the Gospel worldwide.

The point: Christ promises His disciples that they will receive miraculous spiritual gifts, among them the ability to speak in new tongues, as one means of spreading the Gospel in the early church period.

- **Acts 2:1–12; 10:46**

Context: Fifty days after Christ's sacrificial death at Passover, the Feast of Pentecost (also known as the Feast of the First Fruits or Feast of Weeks) brings devout Jews to Jerusalem from every corner of the world. A miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit manifests itself in the form of tongues of fire appearing on the heads of the apostles, giving them the immediate ability to speak with accuracy in every known language (tongue) the Gospel message, so that their testimonies are understood perfectly and carried back to the various homelands of the hearers.

The point: The Holy Spirit uses this ideal occasion to spread the truth to all the world very quickly. The gift is not employed to edify any persons but to magnify the Lord and make His name (which represents His character) prominent worldwide.

- **1 Corinthians 12; 14**

Context: As bestowed upon the new believers at Corinth, the gift of tongues functions to provide personal edification. But the gift is used for public display, and Paul finds it necessary to reprove Corinthian church members in regard to their misuse of it.

The point: As often happens among sinful, erring humankind, we have a tendency to pervert the best gifts, trying to magnify self instead of the God Who bestows the gifts for the advancement of His cause.

Some people have experiences which they call spiritual gifts and say that the Lord has placed such gifts in the church. They speak in an unintelligible gibberish that they call the unknown tongue, but which is unknown not only by man but by the Lord and all Heaven. Such gifts are manufactured by men and women, aided by the great deceiver. Fanaticism, false excitement, false talking in tongues, and noisy exercises have been considered gifts which God has placed in the church. Many have been deceived here. The fruits of all this have not been good. Jesus says, "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16). Good counsel, don't you think?

So to answer the question, What does the Bible say about speaking in tongues? we must first understand that God has very specific purposes in mind when He bestows spiritual gifts. They are meant to be used to spread the truth in the world that otherwise lies in the darkness of sin, superstition, and error. When any of these gifts are used for obtaining a personal spiritual high but don't edify anyone, we may know that they are being perverted and thus are not of God but of Satan, the archdeceiver.—Jerry A. Stevens, November 16, 2005