



ASSOCIATED BIBLE STUDENTS

“WEEPING MAY ENDURE FOR A NIGHT, BUT JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING.” PSALMS 30:5

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Fall 2007

So you Want to... Speak in Tongues!

“As Pentecostalism advances across the world, winning converts faster than any other Christian denomination and siphoning believers from more established faiths, it is also suffering its own slow leak: young people who are falling away from the faith.”
New York Times, Jan. 16, 2007

Many earnest and sincere Christians—disappointed today with the formalism and hollow emptiness of their Churches—are looking to be spirit filled. They are particularly looking for the “latter rain” pouring of the holy Spirit they expect in the last days before Jesus returns. Certainly at Pentecost the Apostle Peter, quoting the prophecy in Joel, spoke of the outpouring of the holy Spirit not only on God’s “servants” and “handmaids”—but “in the last days... upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17, 18; Joel 2:28, 29).

Largest Growing Family of Protestants

What is it that draws 250,000 people to the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Korea on any given Sunday? (*Britannica.com*) The Pentecostal explosion is by far the largest and most far-reaching religious movement to originate in the United States. In 1901 with only a handful of students at a Bible School in Topeka, Kansas—it was ignited in 1906 by the itinerant black preacher William J. Seymour in Los Angeles. For over three years, the Azusa Street “Apostolic Faith mission” conducted three services a day, seven days a week, where thousands of spirit seekers sought the baptism of tongues. Once sneered at as “holy rollers,” Pentecostal numbers increased steadily throughout the world during the Twentieth Century until by 1993 they had become the largest family of Protestants in the world (“The Origins of the Pentecostal Movement,” V. Synan, Ph.D).

In addition to these “Classical Denominational Pentecostals,” there were over 200 million “Charismatic” Pentecostals in the mainline denominations and independent charismatic churches. In both Catholic and Protestant

churches, the number of Pentecostals and Charismatics topped well over 420 million persons by 1993.

These two major groups—Pentecostals and Charismatics—considered together are sometimes called “renewalists.” Their common belief is in the spiritually renewed gifts of the holy Spirit. (*Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*, “Preface,” Oct. ‘06) Today there are more than 500 million renewalists or “revivalists” in the world that make up about a quarter of the world’s Christian population—compared with just 6% only thirty years ago. (“Christianity Reborn,” *The Economist*, Dec. 19, 2006)

The Latter Rain Comes First

Yes, according to the Scriptures, there are two outpourings of the holy Spirit. At Pentecost, the Apostle Peter quotes the Prophet Joel who prophesied that the holy Spirit would be poured out twice.

Joel 2:23	Joel 2:28, 29	Acts 2:17
“Former Rain”	[1] “All flesh”	“In the last days...upon all flesh”
“Latter rain in the first month”	[2] “The Servants and upon the Handmaids in those days ”	“On my Servants and Handmaidens... in those days ”

It is interesting to note that Joel's prophecy of the "latter rain" actually is first—"in the first month." The holy Spirit was indeed first poured out at Pentecost on Jesus' little company of disciples, his "servants and handmaidens." Of course, Cornelius and his family, the first Gentiles, also received a baptism of the holy Spirit, a clear confirmation of the opening of "The Way" to Gentiles. Peter, who had both "keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:18,19; Acts 2:14, 37, 38; 10) was the leading Apostle on outpourings of that "latter rain." But there is to be a time when God's holy Spirit will be poured out not just on Christians—but as the "former rain" on "all flesh."

Holy Spirit Poured on All Flesh After Armageddon

Despite the growing enthusiasm for "tongues speaking" as an evidence of the holy Spirit's indwelling—500 million can hardly be called "all flesh" of today's population of over 6 billion. Is "all flesh" an exaggeration? Actually after the Armageddon "tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world" (Matthew 24:22), God plans to pour out His holy Spirit on "all flesh." Despite the doomsday views of such groups as "Jehovah's Witnesses," there is hope after Armageddon! How do we know? The prophet Zephaniah says (3:8, 9) after the nations are gathered for Armageddon and His wrath is poured out, God is going to give the people the "pure language" of Truth. The "fire" cannot be literal because there would be none left to benefit by a pure language turned to them! Yes, the "fire" of anarchy would bring an end to this present order—but afterwards people would serve God "with one consent." The Hebrew text says they will serve, "shoulder to shoulder"—the exact opposite of anarchy! That would be the time when the people of earth—"all flesh"—would "call upon the name of the LORD" because His holy Spirit is poured out upon them!

Zephaniah 3:8-9

"Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent [shoulder to shoulder]."

But doesn't Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of the holy Spirit on "all flesh" occur in the "last days"? Yes, of course. Often the expression the "last days" refers to the "end times" before the setting up of Christ's Kingdom (2 Tim. 3:1; James 5:3; 2 Peter 3:3). But in two key prophecies describing Christ's Kingdom we are told that the nations will beat their swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks—and nobody will be at war. That time is described as, "In the last days..." (See Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-4) The time when the

whole world will be at peace in Christ's Kingdom is when "all flesh" will have God's holy Spirit poured upon them! It is the time for which Christians are praying, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven..." So, to state it plainly, when God's will is done on earth, it will be because the holy Spirit has been poured out on "all flesh." But not until then.

Tongues in Early Church for Unbelievers

When the holy Spirit was first poured out at Pentecost, the disciples were miraculously able to speak in foreign languages. That gift—as well as healing—was not a witness for believers, but a sign for unbelievers! The Apostle Paul himself explained, "So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers..." (1 Corinthians 14:22) In other words, tongues-speaking was not for making the believers feel spiritual or validating their spirituality. The gift was a witness to unbelievers! "The supernatural gift of speaking in another language without its having been learned" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary*) had the very practical benefit of being able to spread the Gospel efficiently throughout the world.



Some in the Corinthian Church, however, in their fascination for their ability to speak in tongues of foreign languages were abusing their gift! So the Apostle Paul had to lay down some guidelines. If there was not someone who could benefit in their particular language, and there was no interpreter—they should be quiet! Paul admonished, "If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church" (1 Corinthians 14:27-28 NIV)

By contrast, what is happening in the Charismatic Revivalist Movement today? Christians are caught up in speaking in unintelligible ecstatic utterances. This emotional experience makes them feel "spiritually good" (and sometimes more spiritual than others who are not experiencing the same). Rarely does anyone stop to "interpret" as the Apostle Paul taught. Modern "tongues" speakers consistently also ignore the Apostle Paul's admonition to speak "one at a time." So, are ecstatic, unintelligible utterances really from God?

Ecstatic Utterances by Non-Christians

Surprisingly, the experience of speaking in ecstatic utterances is not at all unique to Christians—nor to our times. Recent studies have indicated that glossolalia is not a uniquely Christian practice. Glossolalia is practiced by a large number of native non-Christian religions around the world. Glossolalia is found among the Inuit (Eskimos), the Saami (Lapps), in Japan and in Ethiopia as well as in various cults in Haitian Voodoo. Writing in *American Anthropologist*, L. Carlyle May of Harvard University observes that glossolalia in non-Christian religions is practiced in Malaysia, Indonesia, Siberia, the Arctic regions, China, Korea, Arabia, and Burma, among other places. It is also present extensively in African tribal religions. (*Metareligion*, “History of Glossolalia”)

Also in ancient times, the practice of speaking in unintelligible languages during religious ecstasy was not unknown. From eleventh-century B.C. Egypt come reports of ecstatic speech. Later in the Greek world the prophetess of Delphi and the Sibylline priestess spoke in unknown tongues. Amongst the Roman mystery religions, the Dionysian Cult was known for this practice. (*The History of the Charismatic Movement*, G. E. Gilley).

Fruits of the Spirit Replaced Gifts

Clearly, the Apostle Paul explained that “tongues shall cease” along with other miraculous gifts which established the infant Church. Such gifts of the spirit would be replaced with the fruits of the spirit—all manifesting love. “Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease...” (1 Corinthians 13:8 NAS) In order to experience an “abundant entrance” into heaven, the Christian must abound in the fruits of the spirit—faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness—and love. Not tongues. (See 1 Peter 1:4-11)



When nobody is hurting anybody else in the world, and the “knowledge of the LORD fills the whole earth as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9)—*then* all flesh will have experienced the pouring out of God’s holy Spirit. When no man has to teach anybody else about the LORD, because He is known from the “least to the greatest” (Heb. 8:11)—*then* God’s holy Spirit will have been poured out on “all flesh.” “When people are no longer blinded by the “god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4), *then* the holy Spirit will have been poured out on “all flesh.” Young people who have abandoned Christianity for whatever reasons—as well as people who never knew Christ—will have an opportunity to learn about Jesus and live eternally. *Christ’s Kingdom is the time when “all flesh shall see the salvation of God...”* (Luke 3:6



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