ARTICLE 9

We believe in speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance and that it is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Speaking in other tongues is the particular spiritual manifestation that accompanies the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity. Like the tongues that were spoken on the Day of Pentecost (Acts) and on other occasions recorded in the New Testament, today tongues are given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and are spoken in a language that has not been learned by the speakers.

1. Definition of Speaking in Other Tongues

“Speaking in (or ‘with’) other tongues” involves an individual’s being given the ability by the Holy Spirit to communicate or pray in a language unknown to that person.

a. The Book of Acts connects speaking with other tongues closely with baptism in the Spirit.

In the Bible whenever there was a genuine manifestation of speaking in tongues, the speaker was not the source of the words. The Holy Spirit gave the utterance (Acts 2:4). The mouths of people became the vehicles through which the Spirit spoke. When they were baptized in the Spirit, the Spirit pervaded the depths of their spirits, and they began to speak freely in a way that far exceeded anything they had before experienced. Speech under these conditions was not ordinary language, but inspired speech—spiritual utterance given by the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:4 such utterances are described as “other [heteros—a different kind of] tongues.” This type of language is different than human language, because it consists of words from the Holy Spirit.


b. We know from Scripture that God loves us and meets us where we are, regardless of our nationality, ethnicity, culture, physical limitations, mental limitations, disabilities, or mode of communication.

The Bible relates only the experience of speaking in audible languages as the sign of the initial outpouring of the Spirit. However, we can conclude from the Bible’s description about the nature of God and from biblical narratives regarding Jesus’ ministry and His followers’ experiences that when God gives the gift of Spirit baptism, He will work in and speak through each individual in a unique way, according to His plan. For example:

- God might choose to heal a particular disability permanently, allowing His Spirit to work in new ways in a person’s life (Mark 3:2-5; Luke 13:10-13; John 4:46-54).
- God might choose to temporarily suspend one’s limitations, allowing His Spirit to work differently through that person for a particular period of time (Judges 15:14-20; Matthew 14:26-33).
- God might choose to work within one’s disabilities, limitations, or mode of communication, demonstrating the presence of His Spirit in unique ways (Exodus 4:14-17; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10).
An example of God’s choosing to work through one’s mode of communication is His speaking through someone using non-audible language, such as sign language. This type of spiritual communication is often referred to as “manual speaking in tongues.” Pastors and missionaries ministering to those who have hearing disabilities have reported that some people who have been unable to hear spoken language or to speak audibly have spoken in audible tongues, while others have spoken using their hands. The difference between communication from God expressed through audible, vocal language and communication expressed using other means is simply the mode of communication. The essence of the communication is the same as if it were being expressed in audible language. The individual being blessed is actually expressing the thoughts of the Holy Spirit. *


Scripture references: Exodus 4:14-17; Judges 15:14-20; Mark 3:2-5; Luke 13:10-13; John 4:46-54; Matthew 14:26-33; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

2. The Initial Evidence (Sign) of Baptism in the Spirit

a. On several occasions in Acts when the Spirit came, believers spoke in tongues.

(1) On the Day of Pentecost the first response of the disciples to the coming of the Holy Spirit was that they spoke in tongues.

A striking feature of tongues was that the Holy Spirit gave the utterance. The languages in which the followers of Jesus spoke were unknown to them. Behind this extraordinary audible, visual sign was a profound spiritual reality, which was described in these words: “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4).

(2) Shortly after the Day of Pentecost, some Gentiles had an encounter with the Holy Spirit similar to the encounter that Jesus’ followers had had on the Day of Pentecost.

These Gentiles also experienced the same initial sign of speaking in tongues: “For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God” (Acts 10:46). The convincing evidence to Peter that the Gentiles had received the blessing of Spirit baptism was their divinely inspired utterances.

(3) When a group of Samaritans received Spirit baptism, there was also some visible or audible manifestation.

After Peter and John prayed with some Samaritans, who had recently converted to Christianity, the Samaritans received the blessing of Spirit baptism. Acts 8 states, “Now when Simon (the sorcerer) saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also’” (Acts 8:18-19). What Simon most likely saw and heard was the Samaritans speaking in tongues. As a result, he offered to pay for the ability to give this phenomenon of speaking in tongues to other people.

Scripture references:
Day of Pentecost—Acts 2:4
Samaritans’ encounter with the Holy Spirit—Acts 8:18-19
b. Although speaking in other tongues is the initial sign that one has been filled with the Holy Spirit, it is not the whole experience of being baptized in the Spirit.

Speaking in tongues can be compared to the tip of an iceberg. The tip is the visible part of a much larger piece of ice that cannot be seen. Similarly, speaking in tongues, which can be seen and heard, is the initial sign of a more profound spiritual reality. The Spirit manifests the reality of His fullness through inspired speech, showing the relationship between the spiritual experience and empowerment for practical service.

*Scripture references:* Acts 1:8; 2:1-4; 8:14-19; 19:1-7

3. Additional Significance of Speaking in Tongues

Speaking in tongues, in addition to being an experience that confirms the reality of Spirit baptism, is also significant in other ways:

a. Speaking in tongues is a form of communicating with God.

The dynamic experience of speaking in tongues, inspired by the Holy Spirit, puts the believer in direct communication with God. This type of communication with God may overflow into prayer and praise to Him for His work in redemption, for His outpouring of the Holy Spirit, or for other blessings. Through the Holy Spirit, we may experience on a very deep level: needs, emotions, wisdom, or inspiration for which our language is inadequate to express. As a result, we may break into spontaneous worship—praising, honoring, petitioning, and communicating with God in language unknown to us.

*Scripture references:* Acts 2:11; 10:46; 1 Corinthians 14:2,15

b. Speaking in tongues can be a sign of God’s presence for unbelievers.

The occurrence of tongues may be a message from God for those who do not believe in the reality of Christ or for those who have not made the decision to follow Christ. Such a message in tongues may enlighten unbelievers as to what their current spiritual condition is. If the persons for whom a message is intended recognize its true significance, this manifestation of the Spirit may prepare them to accept Christ as their Savior. Otherwise, they may become even more confirmed in their unbelief.

*Scripture references:* 1 Corinthians 14:22; see also Acts 2:5-13

c. The presence of speaking in tongues is a sign that we are living in the time period called the "Last Days."

On the Day of Pentecost speaking in tongues by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit marked the introduction of the Last Days. The visible sign of tongues was a kind of prophetic speech and signaled the era of the Spirit expected by the Old Testament prophets. This era of the Spirit, or the Last Days, began on the Day of Pentecost and will reach its final fulfillment at the Second Coming of Christ.

*Scripture references:* Acts 2:17; see also Acts 3:18-26
4. Receiving Spirit Baptism

a. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a gift from God.

Much is said in the Scripture about God as the giver of the Holy Spirit. God has promised His special blessing of the fullness of the Holy Spirit to every believer in Christ (Acts 2:39). Therefore, all believers should have a desire for this wonderful experience.

*Scripture references:* Joel 2:23-29; Acts 2:33, 39

b. Baptism in the Spirit may be received soon after becoming a Christian or along the way of the Christian walk.

God’s own timing for giving His blessings may differ from individual to individual. Therefore, the timing of a person’s reception of the blessing of Spirit baptism occurs according to God’s plan for that particular individual’s life. It may also coincide with the deepening of one’s faith in Christ and devotion to living the Christian life. In short, being led by the Holy Spirit may bring us to a point of a profound encounter with God. Through this special encounter with the Holy Spirit, we come to have a fuller Christian life and a more powerful ability to tell about and to share God’s love. It is, however, God whose sovereignty grants the baptism in the Spirit to those who have faith in Christ. As we ask God for the blessings of His Holy Spirit, the basic thing we need to remember is that what is most important is the fulfillment of God’s sovereign purpose in our lives.

*Scripture references:* Romans 11:33-36; Philippians 2:13

c. Like the other promises of God, baptism in the Holy Spirit is received through our trust in God.

(1) Faith is the basic and essential requirement for receiving the blessing of spiritual empowerment from the Holy Spirit.

This requirement of faith naturally includes purity of heart that has resulted from our trust in God. This purity of heart is the cleansing, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, which begins as soon as we begin to trust and follow Christ.

(2) As we mature spiritually, our faith in God is strengthened causing us to have a greater desire for spiritual things.

The growth of faith in our lives over time does not mean that our initial faith in Christ has lacked genuineness, significance, or power. Our initial faith secures for us forgiveness of sins and a new life, which are essential to being a Christian. Yet faith is not static. It can be developed or increased by our commitment to living the Christian life and by depending on God’s grace and help (2 Peter 3:18). The dynamics of faith are vital to receiving the baptism in the Spirit.

*Scripture references:* Acts 2:38-39; 8:5, 12, 17; 10:44; 19:4-6; 2 Peter 3:18

d. To be ready to receive the blessing of Spirit baptism, we must submit our hearts to God.
Faith and purity of heart are closely related. There is no cleansing of the heart without faith in Christ. When we are saved from sin by faith in Christ, we are set apart and consecrated to God. At the moment we accept Christ, the Holy Spirit begins to cleanse us of sin. The Bible tells of “salvation through sanctification by the Spirit” (2 Thessalonians 2:13). The consecrating, sanctifying work of the Spirit accompanies the faith that we have when we come to Christ at the moment of our conversion. In Acts, the apostle Peter spoke about hearts being purified by faith (Acts 15:9). A life that is submitted to God for ongoing renewal is a life that is open to the extraordinary blessings and works of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture references: 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Acts 15:9

e. The experience of Spirit baptism is received by those whose hearts have been prepared by the Holy Spirit.

It is during our daily walk with God, that the Holy Spirit prepares our hearts for His blessings. Since God gives the special blessing of Spirit baptism according to His perfect timing and not ours, we need to be ready to receive His gift when the timing is right. In order to be ready, we are to dedicate ourselves to a life of spiritual growth. For Christians, this involves submitting in an ongoing manner to the Spirit’s cleansing of our lives. This life of spiritual growth, which can be described as a life of Christ-like living, a life of personal holiness, or a life in which one is being led by the Spirit, will always precede Spirit baptism. During Spirit baptism, the Holy Spirit gives a special power for service to those whom He has cleansed through their trust and faith in Christ.

Scripture references: Acts 5:32; 20:32; 26:18; see also Romans 12:1-8

Discussion

Definition of Speaking in Other Tongues

1) What does the phrase “speaking in other tongues” mean?

2) In the Book of Acts, what spiritual blessing is closely connected to speaking in other tongues?

3) Explain how the Holy Spirit may enable a person who is deaf to speak in tongues.

The Initial Evidence (Sign) of Baptism in the Spirit

4) Discuss the basis on which speaking in other tongues is the initial evidence (sign) of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Additional Significance of Speaking in Other Tongues

5) What are some other significant factors of speaking in other tongues?

Receiving Spirit Baptism

6) What are some of the factors in our receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit?
Prayer

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for making known Your presence through supernatural manifestations. Through the God-given sign of tongues, You have provided evidence of our receiving divine power for life and service.

We praise You for this sign that points to the profound experience of the baptism in the Spirit. As a result, we have a great sense of Your powerful presence in our lives.

Your special blessings have deepened our reverence for God, intensified our dedication to His work, and given us a greater love—
for Christ, for His Word, and for the lost.

Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the overwhelming fullness of Your presence in our lives, and for empowering us to serve Christ and others.

Amen.

Resources for Additional Study


