

“MIRACLES AND SPEAKING IN TONGUES”

After the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and during the age of the apostles, the apostles healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, and there were even a few miracles. Then miracles, speaking in tongues, etc. ceased.

Before the First World War there was in this country a groundswell of interest by many Christians to return to the ways of the early church and reclaim its power. This desire was accompanied by a fascination with the Second Coming. Some of them believed that if a person had enough faith and their life was holy they would be able to speak in tongues, cast out demons, heal the sick, and maybe even raise the dead. Moreover, they looked for the imminent return of Christ.

The Pentecostal movement in the USA began with the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church which spread across the Southern states, and the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles whose influence was nationwide. The Fire-Baptized Holiness Church became the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee). The Azusa Street Mission began in 1906. By 1915 it had lost most of its members. However, its legacy continues. Almost every Pentecostal Church has its roots in Azusa Street.

They had five basic beliefs: Salvation by faith, Sanctification of the believer, Tongues as an evidence of the Spirit's baptism, Faith healing as part of God's redemption, and the very soon return of Jesus Christ. It inspired a surge of interest in foreign missions and in the early days it was believed that the gift of tongues would enable them to speak in the foreign language of the people without any language training.

1.) Miracles

The word "miracle" is used very loosely today to describe any unexplained act of apparently supernatural origin. Someone is seriously ill, not expected to recover. Friends pray for him/her and he/she recovers. The doctors are amazed and cannot explain it. People say it was a miracle. It was God's working – yes – but it was not a miracle in the Bible's use of that word.

Miracles occur during periods of redemptive work by God. God sends prophets to explain the work of redemption. He uses miracles to show that the prophets came from Him and are proclaiming His message. Examples of periods of redemption are the Exodus from Egypt, making His people into one nation, sending prophets to warn about judgment for idolatry and to deliver God's promise of a coming Messiah, the return of God's people from Captivity in Babylon, the birth of God's promised Messiah, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the coming of the promised Holy Spirit.

Those periods of redemption took place across a span of two thousand years. There were many times when centuries would pass between one redemptive work and the next. There were religious teachers and priests but no prophets. Only when there was a new work of redemption, and prophets sent by God to explain it, were there miracles performed by prophets showing that they were sent by God.

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; (Hebrews 1:1-2 NKJV)

God has completed speaking to us in His Son. There will be no more prophets and no more miracles until Jesus comes again.

There will be no sermon next week. Rev. Pritt will be out of town.

2.) Speaking in tongues

In the New Testament there are three different types of speaking in tongues. At Pentecost there was speaking "in other tongues", that is, they were speaking in known languages which people in the crowd recognized as their own. That form of speaking in tongues is only recorded as occurring at Pentecost.

There was speaking in tongues and interpreting. In the early church there were no Gospels or Epistles. Speaking in tongues and interpreting was a temporary measure, until the New Testament Scriptures were written and circulated to the church. The Holy Spirit would communicate the teachings of Jesus Christ in a church service by one person speaking in tongues and another person interpreting but Paul says it was a temporary phenomenon that would cease:

Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. (1 Corinthians 13:8 NKJV)

When the Scriptures came in written form these inferior and less reliable forms were no longer used.

Speaking in tongues can also refer to a form of ecstatic utterances used in prayer. This may be what Paul means when he wrote-

I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. (1 Corinthians 14:18-19 NKJV)

The danger of praying in an ecstatic unknown tongue is this – if you can't understand what you are saying, how do you know that you are praising God and that some demon has not taken opportunity to curse God? In every other facet of life when our body is not being controlled by our rational mind it is sinning – in lust, in anger, in drunkenness, etc

3.) Continuing revelation

Inevitably the quest for the apostolic gifts leads to a number of errors culminating in continuing revelation. When speaking in tongues and interpreting are practiced, the message which comes to the church is not the message of the Gospels and Epistles but it is received as new revelation from God. If we do not believe Hebrews 1:1,2 that God has completed His speaking, then what new revelations will we accept as coming from God? The Pope claims that when he speaks *ex cathedra* that he is pronouncing new revelation from God. The Mormons believe that Joseph Smith and every President of the Church since then is the spokesman of Jesus Christ on earth. If speaking in tongues and interpreting receives new revelations from God, then the Catholics and Mormons have the same right to be believed. If God's revelation is completed and written in the Bible, we have a firm basis for truth.

On the same basis, they claim the ability to cast out demons. This has led to the error of ascribing the various sins in one's life as being demons that can be cast out. This is completely opposite of what God requires – to acknowledge our own responsibility for our sins and to repent and ask forgiveness from Him.

Claiming apostolic gifts led also to faith-healing. God invites us to call upon Him for the healing of our sickness and afflictions and for other Christians to pray with us “The effective, fervent prayer of the righteous man avails much.” James 5:16b Our prayers are always “Your will be done.” Faith healing has distorted this. It says that if you have enough faith you will be healed and that if you aren't healed it was because you didn't have enough faith. BUT It is God who gives faith to us.

Rev. Troy Lynn Pritt

June 7, 2009

Page 5

There will be no sermon next week. Rev. Pritt will be out of town.