

The Gospel of Luke – The Acts of the Apostles

The Theme of the Holy Spirit and Speech: Tongues

1. What have you heard about why the Spirit speaks in various tongues though believers in Acts?
2. Examine the origin of multiple human languages and how God said He would continue to use it.
 - Gen.11:1 Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words...7 “Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.” 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth, and they stopped building the city. 9 Therefore its name was called ‘Babel’ [‘confusion’] because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth, and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the earth.
3. What are the similarities and dissimilarities between the two events? What’s the significance of this comparison?

Old Humanity at Babel	Old Humanity ‘in Israel’
They should have spread out over the earth, but they try to clump together at a city instead	They should have spread out over the earth making disciples of all nations, but they try to clump together at a city instead
The old humanity tries to be unified	The old humanity tries to be unified
They rally around a city as a political expression	They rally around a city as a political expression
Their motive is to make a name for themselves	Their motive is to be dominant among the nations
God’s judgment falls, dispersing them abroad while they are confused	God’s judgment falls, dispersing them abroad (again) while they are confused
The city is destroyed	The city is destroyed
One language broken up into many – causes the confusion	Multiple languages testifying to one God – causes the confusion

“When the simple intelligibility of the word of God is refused, divine judgment falls in the shape of the unintelligible.” (J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*. IVP: Downers’ Grove, IL. 1993. p.232)

4. What are the similarities and dissimilarities between the ‘old humanity’ at Babel (Gen.11:1-9) and the ‘new humanity’ with Jesus at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13)? Discuss the comparison.

Old Humanity at Babel	New Humanity in Christ by the Spirit
They should have spread out over the earth, but they try to clump together instead	They start from Jerusalem, and spread out over the whole earth
The old humanity tries to be unified	A new humanity unified in the Spirit of Jesus
They try to build a tower up to the heavens	God’s Spirit comes down on the believers
Let us make a name for ourselves	Exalt the name of the Lord Jesus
God’s judgment falls, dispersing them abroad with a message of confusion	God’s blessing falls, dispersing them abroad with a message of unity
One language broken up into many	Multiple languages testifying to one God

5. What does that suggest about what God is doing through tongues? Tongues is both a sign of the gospel’s advance and a sign of judgment on those who do not receive it.
6. What did God say to Israel about unbelief and tongues?
 - Isa.28:11 Indeed, He will speak to this people through stammering lips and a foreign tongue. 12 He who said to them, “Here is rest, give rest to the weary,” and, “Here is repose,” but they would not listen. 13 So the word of the Lord to them will be, “Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there,” that they will go and stumble backward, be broken, snared, and taken captive. 14 Therefore, hear the word of the LORD, O scoffers, who rule this people who are in Jerusalem, 15 because you have said, “We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have made a pact. The overwhelming

scourge will not reach us when it passes by, for we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves with deception.” 16 Therefore thus says the LORD God, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.”

- Note that Paul quotes this passage in 1 Corinthians 14:21 to explain how tongues is a sign to unbelievers, apparently in response to their unbelief, whereas prophecy is for convicting an unbeliever to believe (1 Corinthians 14:22 – 25).
 - Note that v.16 is a prophetic hope for a ‘new Temple.’ It is found in other places (e.g. Isaiah 8:14 – 15). Jesus said the ‘new Temple’ refers to himself (Lk.20:17, Acts 5:11).
7. Examine the responses of Jews to Gentiles speaking in multiple foreign tongues. *Notice that tongues appears in Acts 2, 10, and 19 when certain Jews are confronted with the gospel for the first time.* What is Luke’s narrative strategy concerning *the Jews* as suggested by the progression of these incidents?
 - a. Confusion in Acts 2:7-13 leading to conviction in 2:37-42
 - b. Amazement in Acts 10:45-46 leading to suspicion in 11:1-18
 - c. Endorsement of the prophetic hope spoken of by John the Baptist in Acts 19:1 – 7 leading to hardening of heart and hostility in 19:8-10
 8. What about angelic tongues? Is Luke referring to angelic tongues? These types of tongues seem to exist, since Paul refers to them in 1 Cor.13. But that is probably not what Luke has in mind here. Consistently in Luke, when the Spirit speaks through someone, it is coherent and is meant as a message to the body, not to the individual. It would be highly incongruous to argue for angelic tongues out of Luke’s Acts for precisely this reason. Only by taking passages out of their theme can one reach those types of conclusions. That methodology is, in my opinion, unsatisfactory.
 9. How can you participate in what God is doing by using your speech?
 10. Pray to speak in tongues, or in more tongues than you currently do. Are you comfortable with that? Why or why not?

For Further Study: See also 1 Corinthians 14