

The Case for Tongues

Introduction

In 2017, while queueing to get onto the Temple Mount, I started talking to a pastor from the Bible Belt. We chatted about prophecy and various other things, until we ended up debating *tongues*. I said, “*I speak in tongues*”, to which he replied with a chuckle, “*No one speaks in tongues these days.*” When I told him that my wife speaks in tongues too, he started laughing. I soon realised that it was pointless to argue any further, and at that point we had anyway reached the Dome of the Rock. His implication that I was lying was remarkable though.

On another occasion, while praying moderately in tongues at the Western Wall, I sensed a few bewildered looks on people’s faces. I was standing some two metres from the barrier, when a Jewish woman suddenly shouted at me, “*What is this? What are you doing? This is our place! Stop it!*”

Despite (or *because of*) the amount of literature about the subject, there appears to be a lot of ignorance regarding *tongues*. Though this ignorance may partially be deliberate and thus harder to remedy, I would like to contribute to the discussion.

It’s not only about ignorance or misinformation though. I have hardly come across a subject which causes so much controversy, bigotry, and rejection as *tongues*. What is the reason for this?

In seeking to explain the animosity towards the Jewish state, Alan Dershowitz says in his impassioned book *The Case for Israel*, “*it became clear to me that darker forces were at play*”.

I cannot agree more with the above, and I believe the same holds true in regard to tongues. Tongues, as will be shown, are intrinsically connected with the restored covenant, with salvation, and with the Yisra’el of Eloah (**GAL 6:16**), *viz.*, with those Jews and Gentiles who are circumcised in heart, and who are saved.

All Scriptures taken from the Hebraic-Roots Version of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.

Nobody's Fools

Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened to ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were wise, and five of them were foolish. The five foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. And while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry, Behold! The bridegroom has come: go out now to meet Him! Then all those virgins arose, and made ready their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, Give us now of your oil, for our lamps have gone out. But the wise answered and said to them, We may not give you, lest there be not enough for us and you. But go now therefore to them that sell, and buy for yourselves: And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came. And they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut. And after that came the rest of the virgins, saying, Lord, Lord: open to us! But He answered, saying: Verily, I say to you, I know you not (MT 25:1-12).

At Yeshua's return there will be two groups of Christians¹ – those who are born of the Spirit, and those who aren't, viz., those who are born of the flesh. One will either belong to the wise virgins who have the oil of God's Spirit in their heart², or to the foolish ones who haven't³ – the former will be accepted, the latter will be rejected.⁴

Whenever the theme of rebirth is touched upon, everyone seems to have been born again and taken heed to Yeshua's sober warning:

Truly, Truly I say to you, that if anyone is not born again, he is not able to see the Kingdom of Eloah (JN 3:3).

In fact, there doesn't seem to exist anyone who falls short of being born again, at least not if we trust the statements of today's Christians which range from "I was born again at baptism" and "I was born again when I received Christ by faith" to "I can feel that I am born again" – all are happy and confident that they have been born of the Spirit.

¹ Although *Christian* was initially a derogatory term of pagan origin (**ACTS 11:26, ACTS 26:28, 1 PET 4:16**), it is used for all denominations in this article including Catholics. A more scriptural term for Torah-abiding followers of Yeshua is *Nazarene* (**ACTS 24:5**), or simply *talmid* ("disciple").

² Based on their biblical meanings, *heart* and *spirit* will be used synonymously throughout the article.

³ To interpret *lamp* as the word (**PSA 119:105**) or as the commandment (**PROV 6:23**) doesn't harmonize with ten individual lamps which belong to the virgins. A *vessel with a lamp* is clearly a reference to a *man with a spirit*: **The spirit of man is the lamp of YHWH (PROV 20:27)**. As oil is poured into a lamp, so Spirit is poured into a spirit (**ROM 5:5, EZE 36:27**).

⁴ This is of course a generalization. **MT 7:21-23** shows that Spirit-filled Christians who cast out demons and do many powerful works in Yeshua's name, won't be saved if they blatantly violate the Torah.

It is obvious that this state of affairs doesn't agree with Scripture. There simply has to be a group of Christians who are convinced that they have oil in their lamps, that they have been filled with Ruach HaKodesh, and that they are saved. However, the truth is that they are not born again, that God's Spirit doesn't dwell in their hearts, and that they are not saved – a truth which will only be revealed to them when Yeshua returns.

Any hint to a foolish virgin regarding her lack of oil, any innuendo that a person may actually not be Spirit-filled, or not be saved, is usually dismissed as “*judgmental*”, “*presumptuous*”, or even “*unloving*”. It seems there is hardly any area where different views can trigger such tension and animosity as in the question of salvation – and this leads us to our topic.

Tongues

Speaking in tongues has always been a sensitive issue, even outside the context of salvation. The Internet abounds in articles which claim that today's “*tongues*” are basically a counterfeit, or mere gibberish which has nothing to do with the miraculous gift of speaking in languages as recorded in ACTS.⁵

The most offensive claim on the side of the tongues-speaker⁶ is probably to assert, “*If you don't speak in tongues, you are not Spirit-filled*”⁷, which is a simple proclamation one may accept or reject, but which doesn't slander or ridicule. The manifestation of God's Spirit in the form of tongues, however, is being constantly attacked, demonized, disparaged, or outrightly denied – predominantly by believers, rarely by atheists.⁸

May one ask at this point why only tongues are so vehemently opposed? Why not also *the word of wisdom* or *knowledge*, or *the gift of faith*? Could it be because *the gift of tongues* is related to something – and yet differs from it – which is far more important, and which the adversary wants to obscure?

⁵ The **Toronto Blessing** is a good example of how an outpouring of the Holy Spirit is defamed. I don't agree with **dog barking** or uncontrolled **holy laughter** considering **1 COR 14:33, 40**. However, phenomena such as falling to the ground due to the Spirit's presence are in line with Scripture (**1 KIN 8:11, 2 CHR 5:14**). Considering that one of the Spirit's emblems is **wine (ISA 55:1, MK 2:22)**, and that the Scriptures compare **drunk with wine** to **filled with the Spirit (EPH 5:18)**, there also seems to be no reason for dragging a phrase like **drunk in the Spirit** mercilessly through the mud.

⁶ It is estimated that worldwide some 500 million people speak in tongues.

⁷ There can be a delay between the infilling of the Holy Ghost and the manifestation; in that case a person is born again even though they don't manifest tongues yet.

⁸ Though **GAL 4:29** refers foremost to the enmity between Ishmael's & Isaac's descendants, the above is reminiscent of: **He who was born of the flesh persecuted him who was born of the Spirit** (born of the promise of Ruach HaKodesh).

I have been speaking in tongues for 25 years (following repentance and water baptism), and can confirm that *tongues* are indeed languages, whether intelligible or not. ACTS 2:5-18 shows that some understood the languages while others considered them babble – this has not changed today.

At times I have witnessed brethren praying in tongues which sounded like French or Italian, though they had never learnt these languages. During collective prayer at international conventions people sometimes hear their native language from someone who is praying in tongues. Below is one of the many documented accounts of the phenomenon of intelligible languages:

“While on a tour in Israel, Pyle determined to visit the Western Wall early one morning before breakfast. Hiring an Arab boy to guide him, and taking his tape recorder, he started out. He had forgotten it was Saturday and the Jewish Sabbath.

As the pastor and his guide approached the Damascus Gate, two men and a woman sitting there raised their hands in protest, denying them entrance. At this moment Pyle felt moved upon by the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other tongues. The three people changed their attitude immediately. With smiles they shook the minister’s hand and let him proceed unmolested. Had Pastor Pyle spoken in their language?

Coming to the esplanade before the Western Wall, the man and the boy started toward the shrine. But some Jews approached them and said in broken English, ‘No, this is Sabbath!’ Fortuitously, the pastor had turned on his tape recorder to add this experience to the many hours he had already taped. So what followed was recorded. Once again, moved by the Holy Spirit, Albert Pyle began speaking in other tongues. And again, the attitude of the people changed. They provided him with the little cap used by our Jewish friends when at prayer, and allowed him to proceed all the way to the Western Wall.

The tape recorder relates the conversation between the Missouri pastor and a friendly Jew near the Wall.

“Did you understand what I was saying?” Pyle asked.

“Yes,” the Jew replied, “it was a language.”

“What was I saying?” the pastor continued.

“You were praying to God,” was the answer.

Since returning home, the author of this book has played the tape for Dr. Stanley M. Horton, professor at Central Bible College and the Assemblies of God Graduate School of Theology. Dr. Horton is a Hebrew scholar and has taught at the college for

more than 25 years. Although he could not recognize all the words of Pastor Pyle's utterance, he identified certain phrases as Hebrew words of praise.

*The Jewish people have returned to Israel from nearly one hundred countries of the world, and many know several languages. There was something in that utterance that persuaded the Jews at the Western Wall to welcome Pastor Pyle as one of their own.*⁹

To claim that “*speaking in tongues is not an option*” may not be the most popular statement, but it is nevertheless a true statement. We are not talking about *the gift of tongues* which is not compulsory to have, but we are talking about salvation and the evidence of spiritual birth.¹⁰

⁹ Spoken by the Spirit – Documented Accounts of “Other Tongues” from Arabic to Zulu, by Ralph Harris, 1973, pp. 65-67.

¹⁰ **ACTS 2** sets forth the pattern of salvation, not how to get *the gift of tongues*. The talmidim had never heard of the gift of tongues, let alone of the nine spiritual gifts which were addressed some twenty years later. How can one receive *gifts of the Spirit* without being zealous for them (**1 COR 14:1**), and how can one be zealous for them if one has never heard about them in the first place? To claim that all of the disciples were in agreement to receive the gift of tongues – instead of *prophecy* as recommended by Paul (**1 COR 14:5, 39**), or instead of focussing on *love* altogether (**1 COR 13:1**) – is just ludicrous. What a true baptism with Ruach HaKodesh and the reception of power entailed (**ACTS 1:5, 8**) became clear the moment they received the Spirit, because all of them started to speak in languages which they had never learnt before (to the amazement of the people).

Why were they not told off for operating 120 tongues simultaneously instead of 2-3, or for skipping the interpretations, or for edifying themselves instead of the assembly? Could it be because it wasn't *the gift of tongues* as defined in **1 COR 14**?

After Peter had confirmed that Yeshua is indeed the Messiah, who was crucified, who had risen, who had caused prophecies to come true, and who had received the promise of the Holy Ghost, *i.e.*, the Spirit which had just been poured out (as all could **see and hear**), – after that address the people were ***moved in their heart!*** They were not only convinced of Yeshua's Messiahship but they were convicted of their sins and wanted to get saved! They wanted to see Joel's promise, which Peter had just cited, become reality in their lives (**ACTS 2:21**). They wanted the same experience as they had just witnessed. They didn't mean, ***What shall we do to get the gift of tongues?*** – they meant, ***What shall we do to get saved?*** (**ACTS 2:37**).

Peter replied: ***Repent and be immersed, every one of you, in the name of Yeshua HaMashiach for the remission of your sins, and you will receive the gift of Ruach HaKodesh*** (**ACTS 2:38**).

You will receive Ruach HaKodesh just like them, and you will speak in tongues just like them! That is what Peter was saying. He presented the recipe for salvation which was adhered to by another 3,000 people on that day: **They repented, were fully immersed in water, and received the Spirit with the manifestation of tongues.**

The Restored Covenant

To grasp the purpose of tongues and the role of the Holy Spirit, we need to realize that we inherited spiritual death from Adam, and thus forfeited eternal life (ROM 5:12).¹¹ All of us are born with a dead spirit, separated from God, and unless we are reconciled to Him, eternal death will be our lot instead.¹² We are born as *carnal men*, who cannot perceive YHWH and are, in fact, in enmity towards Him and the Torah. Our spirit lies dormant while the flesh, *i.e.*, our body and soul¹³ rule our unregenerate lives.

Reason, conscience, memory, imagination, and affections make up the soul which is part of the heart. Another part of the heart is the spirit, which is also called ***the inner man*** (EPH 3:16), or ***the hidden man of the heart*** (1 PET 3:4, KJV). Since Messiah's whole purpose is to restore mankind's union with God, the inner man needs to be resurrected. Only the spirit needs to be born again¹⁴, not the body nor the soul.

As the expression ***dead in sins*** refers to our dead spirit, so ***quicken*** refers to the renewal and redemption of that spirit (EPH 2:5, KJV). Our dead spirit is compared to a heart of stone, otherwise called ***the uncircumcision of the flesh*** (COL 2:13). It is this *flesh nature* which is corrupt and which has to go.

The ***circumcision of the heart*** is not some new year's resolution to do better, but a concrete operation which is performed by Yeshua – ***the last Adam, who is a quickening Spirit*** (ROM 2:29, COL 2:11, 1 COR 15:45). When someone receives Yeshua's Spirit, their own spirit is revived and "*raised from the dead.*"¹⁵ Titus says they receive ***life by the washing of the new birth and by the renewing of the Ruach HaKodesh*** (TIT 3:5). It is in that moment that the stony heart becomes soft and its "*foreskin*", *i.e.*, the flesh nature is removed.¹⁶ In the place of the old nature, a new

¹¹ Comparing **GEN 2:7** with **GEN 3:8** reveals that man had died spiritually.

¹² Contrary to what the annihilationists would like us to believe, verses such as **MT 25:46**, **JN 5:28-29** or **LK 12:4-5** show that man's spirit and soul are immortal.

¹³ The temple shows our threefold nature: Body – Courtyard, Soul – Holy Place, Spirit – Most Holy Place

¹⁴ Literally, and more accurately ***born from above*** in the Greek.

¹⁵ The Spirit is put into man once the heart is circumcised: ***He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass [cut flesh]: as showers that water the earth*** (PSA 72:6, KJV).

¹⁶ The circumcision performed by The Word (**REV 19:13**) denotes the cutting of the restored covenant. Yeshua cuts away ***the flesh of sins***, *i.e.*, our old sinful nature (**COL 2:11**). The heart of unregenerate man has a "*partition wall*" or "*veil*" between soul and spirit, which is pierced through at rebirth (**HEB 4:12**). The revived spirit, which is filled with God's Spirit, can now assume its rightful position and subdue the soul, *i.e.*, the fleshly mind. In other words, the person is now able to love God with their whole heart (**MT 22:37**). A renewal process of the mind starts, and ideally the person is changed into the likeness of God (**ROM 12:2**, **2 COR 4:16**, **EPH 4:23**, **COL 3:10**, **2 COR 3:18**).

nature is imparted. The result of this heart operation is a **new creation** (2 COR 5:17, GAL 6:15). Many verses refer to this as “*putting off the old man and putting on the new man*” (COL 3:9-10, EPH 4:22-24).

Just as physical circumcision was the token of God’s covenant with Avraham¹⁷ (GEN 17:11), so is spiritual circumcision the token of the **Restored Covenant**¹⁸ between God and man. Yeshua made this possible by first pouring out His blood for our redemption (MT 26:28), and then pouring out His Spirit for our resurrection (JN 16:7). We were brought back to life and received God’s Spirit and God’s Law into our hearts, so that we would finally keep the latter:

Behold the days come, says YHWH, that I will restore the covenant [Brit Chadashah] with the House of Yisra’el, and with the House of Y’hudah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt [at Mt. Sinai, 50 days after Pesach]: forasmuch as they broke My covenant, although I was a husband to them, says YHWH. But this is the covenant that I will make with the House of Yisra’el after those days, says YHWH [in Jerusalem, 50 days after Pesach]: I will put My Torah in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it [by my Spirit] (JER 31:31-33, paraphrased).

I will take away, the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you, a heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes [to keep the Torah] (EZ 36:26-27).

You are a letter of the Messiah that was served by us: written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the Living Eloah; not on tablets of stone [stony heart], but on tablets of the heart of flesh (2 COR 3:3).

And YHWH your Elohim will circumcise your heart ... to love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your soul [to keep the Torah] (DEUT 30:6).

And by Him, you were circumcised with the Circumcision which is not by our hands [but by His Spirit], by the putting off of the flesh of sins, by circumcision of the Messiah. And you were buried with Him in immersion [baptized in water], and by Him, you have risen with Him [baptized in the Spirit], because you had trust in

¹⁷ Avraham’s part of this everlasting covenant was to shed some of his own blood.

¹⁸ Terms such as *New Testament*, *New Covenant*, and even *Renewed Covenant* in **MT 26:28** are misleading. The Hebrew term used in DuTillet’s and Shem Tob’s Matthew is **ברית חדשה** (“brit chadashah”). Though *brit* means covenant, *chadashah* doesn’t mean new, or renewed, but *restored* (to a previous condition).

the Power of Eloah, who raised Him from the place of the dead [by the power of the Holy Spirit] (COL 2:11-12).

He is not a Jew who is one in appearance [only]: also what is made visible in the flesh [alone] is not circumcision. But that one is a Jew, who [is one] secretly: and circumcision is that of the heart by the Spirit, and not by the letter [only]; whose praise is not from men, but from Eloah (ROM 2:28-29).¹⁹

It should be clear from these verses that neither ethnic Israel nor the rest of mankind has obeyed God's Law, otherwise Yeshua's death nor the renewal of the covenant wouldn't have been necessary. God's Law was broken in the very beginning by Adam, condemning us all to become lawbreakers who deserve eternal death. Thus, first and foremost we need to be redeemed, viz., bought back from the slavery of Satan, sin, and death. It is no use trying to keep the Torah as an unregenerate person (as commendable as such attempts might be). Keeping the Law cannot change our status "from sinner to saint" – it cannot impute righteousness, it cannot save. No matter what we do, we remain sinners, sons of fallen Adam, born of the flesh which cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. That is why Yeshua tells us to be born of the Spirit (JN 3:5).²⁰ Once this has been accomplished, we are reconciled to God and have the power to fulfil the Law²¹ – ***that the righteousness of the Torah might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk by the flesh, but by the Spirit*** (ROM 8:4). Henceforth, we keep the Torah because we are saved, not in order to be saved.²²

¹⁹ Spiritual circumcision doesn't replace physical circumcision. A careful reading of **ACTS 15** shows that Gentiles, who had come from a background of sun worship and temple prostitution, weren't forced to be circumcised upon conversion – they had to overcome their gross sins first (**vs. 20**). After having been instructed in the Torah they would eventually take the step of circumcision, depending on their maturity (**vs. 21**).

²⁰ **Born of water** refers to the Spirit. Water baptism signifies death and burial, not rebirth.

²¹ The power of the Holy Spirit also means *anointing*. A follower of the Nazarene needs to be anointed just like Yeshua was anointed with the *Oil of the Spirit* before He commenced His ministry as Prophet, Priest and King (**MT 3:16, LK 4:18, REV 1:6**). Without this anointing no one is able to do the works of Yeshua and to walk as He did. To fully preach the Gospel, we have to demonstrate Eloah's power and use His name and authority – just as Paul, Peter, Stephen, Barnabas, and many others did (**ROM 15:9, 1 COR 2:4**). John, who wrote to the assemblies of Asia Minor, told the brethren that all of them had been anointed with Ruach HaKodesh (**1 JN 2:20**).

²² Rome's satanic doctrine that "the Law was abolished through Christ" has corrupted Christianity since the 2nd century. The reception of God's Spirit does therefore not automatically and immediately lead to Torah observance, and usually a long process of relearning is required.

The Evidence of Spirit Baptism

Besides wine and oil, also fire, water, and wind symbolize the Spirit.

John the Baptist was the first to tell the crowds that Yeshua would immerse them with the *Fire of the Holy Spirit*.

Behold I am only immersing you in water to repentance. And He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry, and He will immerse you, with the fire of the Ruach HaKodesh (MT 3:11).

Then, before the crucifixion Yeshua told the crowds that those who believed would receive the *Water of the Holy Spirit*.

Whoever believes in Me, as the Scriptures have said, rivers of water of Life will flow from his belly. And He spoke this about the Spirit, that those who believed in Him were about to receive (JN 7:38-39).

Lastly, after Yeshua had been ***sown in weakness and raised in power*** (1 COR 15:43), having become our forerunner and the firstborn of the dead (1 COR 15:20)²³, He told His disciples that they would receive the *Power of the Holy Spirit* from on high (LK 24:49), and that they would speak in tongues:

And these signs will follow those who believe: in My Name, they will cast out shadim, and they will speak with new tongues (MK 16:17).

Thus, what occurred on that ***day of the first fruits*** (NUM 28:26) proved to be – as one would expect – quite tangible:

There was suddenly a sound from heaven like a powerful wind [ruach]: and that entire house in which they were sitting was filled with it. And tongues that were divided, appeared to them like fire, and sat upon each one of them. And all of them were filled with Ruach HaKodesh, and they began to speak in different tongues, like which the Spirit gave them to speak (ACTS 2:2-4).

Firstly, we see the Holy Spirit manifesting Herself²⁴ as *Wind* (JN 3:8) or as the *Breath of Life*, the same *Breath of Life* which Adam received at creation.²⁵ The wind filled the

²³ In antitype of the first fruits of the barley harvest.

²⁴ Though having no literal gender, the Ruach HaKodesh is grammatically and figuratively feminine.

²⁵ A type of Holy Spirit baptism can be found in **GEN 17**, where God makes the covenant of circumcision with Avram. God puts the Hebrew **ah** (“breath” or “Spirit”) into Avram, and Avram turns into Avra**ah**am.

whole house, just as the glory of YHWH, once resting on Mt. Sinai, had filled the whole House of Elohim (1 KIN 8:11).

The next manifestation of the Holy Spirit was *fire*. Fire transforms, purifies metal and sets dead wood ablaze. It's a familiar emblem of Eloah's power, but its appearance on that day in Jerusalem was absolutely unique: **tongues of fire which were lighting for a short while on each of the 120 brethren.**

We remember Yeshua's anointing, and the unique manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove which came down from heaven and lighted on Him (MT 3:16, JN 1:32). Did not the gentle dove signify His character and fate, that He would be humble, harmless, and eventually sacrificed?

Likewise, the **powerful wind** which filled the entire house followed by tongues was simply an expression of what was to happen: human temples would be filled with the *Power of the Spirit* and subsequently manifest tongues.

What happened after the Spirit had filled the house in Jerusalem? She manifested Herself in tongues. What would we expect to happen once the Spirit had filled the houses or "*temples*" of the talmidim? Tongues – we would expect them to manifest tongues, to utter languages.

The Fire of the Holy Spirit, which John the Baptist had anticipated, manifested itself in tongues, because once they had received the Spirit and once the fiery tongues had vanished from above their heads, the Fire of the Holy Spirit manifested itself again in tongues.

In other words, the evidence of the infilling of the Spirit is *tongues* – anyone who is baptized in the Spirit will start to speak in tongues, just as the one hundred and twenty on that day.²⁶

Everyone could hear them. Some of the Jews understood what was said as they heard them speak in their own languages, while others thought it was gibber.

As we will further see, being immersed in the Holy Spirit without some manifestation as quoted above doesn't agree with Scripture. All the people to whom I have talked felt some hot or tingling sensation, like a current of power going through them. Some

²⁶ **ACTS 2:36** shows that a remnant of all the Twelve Tribes was present, which agrees with **EX 12:47** according to which Pesach is to be kept by **all the assembly of Yisra'el**. It seems likely that the 120 talmidim constituted representatives of the House of Yisra'el and the House of Y'udah.

were actually "slain by power", viz., they fell to the floor the moment they received – reminiscent of the cohanim who weren't able to stand in The Temple (2 CHR 5:14).²⁷

The outpouring of the Spirit in Jerusalem is a precedent and a plumb-line to which any subsequent bestowal should match up, and we should not wave aside its significance. One hundred and twenty talmidim started to speak in tongues and were followed by another 3,000 on the very same day.²⁸

There is no reason to doubt that all of the disciples manifested the same sign the moment they received Ruach HaKodesh. That the languages were not only audible but also visible, is confirmed a few verses later:

And this is He who at the right hand of Eloah is exalted: and received from the Father the promise concerning the Ruach HaKodesh. And He has poured out this gift [like water], which, behold, you see and hear (ACTS 2:33).

3½ years later, a Samaritan named Shim'on saw a manifestation of the Holy Spirit:

Then they placed a hand on them, and they received Ruach HaKodesh. And when Shim'on saw that by the placing of a hand of the emissaries the Ruach HaKodesh was given, he offered them money (ACTS 8:17-18).

Even Shim'on, a sorcerer who had deceived the Samaritans for a long time through faking God's power, was quite impressed and wanted "true power" for a change. How did he know the Samaritans had received the Holy Ghost? Were they all just smiling, telling John and Peter, "Good prayer, thanks!" before quietly walking away? Maybe they were, but it's even more likely that they started to speak in tongues, which is what Shim'on had observed.²⁹

The outpouring of the Holy Ghost in Caesarea is mentioned next:

And while Peter was speaking these words, the Ruach HaKodesh rested upon all who were hearing the Word. And the circumcised brothers who had come with him, were amazed and astonished that the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh was also poured out upon the Goyim! For they heard them while speaking in different

²⁷ This is admittedly subjective, but I may add that my personal experience was of a very gentle nature. There was nothing dramatic, just warmth and joy coming over me while I was starting to form syllables which I had never spoken before – only later I realized that it was a prayer language.

²⁸ To question whether the 3,000 spoke in tongues as well, is like doubting whether they had repented, or whether they had been immersed in water, which I find a fairly absurd thing to do.

²⁹ It is clearly visible when someone prays in tongues.

tongues and magnifying Eloah. And Peter said, Can anyone forbid water, that those should not be immersed who, behold, have received Ruach HaKodesh, just like we have? (ACTS 10:44-47).

The believing Jews were amazed because they realized that also the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit. How did they know? **Because they heard them speaking in tongues.** Peter confirms that it was the same experience which the Jews had in Jerusalem some 3½ years earlier, and alone the imperative ***behold*** in verse 47 shows that it was a visible manifestation.³⁰

A few days later, Peter relates the above event to the believing Jews in Jerusalem who had received the Holy Ghost on Shavuot shortly after the crucifixion.³¹ Once again *fire baptism* is connected with speaking in tongues:

And when I began to speak there, the Ruach HaKodesh rested upon them like upon us from before [3½ years earlier]. And I remembered the Word of our Adon who said, Yochanan immersed in water, but you will be immersed in Ruach HaKodesh (ACTS 11:15-16).

Twenty years later on his third missionary journey, Paul meets twelve disciples in Ephesus, who had been baptized, but who hadn't heard about the Spirit's outpouring and the phenomenon of tongues.³² After Paul had strengthened their faith in Yeshua and in the promise of fire baptism, he baptized them again (ACTS 19:4-5). This is what followed:

And Paul laid a hand upon them and the Ruach HaKodesh came upon them, and they spoke in different tongues and prophesied³³ (ACTS 19:6).

³⁰ It was the end of the 70th week, during which Yeshua would confirm the restored covenant by signs and wonders to the Jews only (**DAN 9:27, KJV**).

³¹ In 31 A.D., in the midst of the 70th week (**DAN 9:27**).

³² In my former assembly everyone who wanted to get saved was shown from the Scriptures that they **a)** had to repent **b)** had to get baptized by full immersion, and **c)** had to receive the Holy Spirit (**ACTS 2:38**). We were explained that we would start speaking in tongues just like in **ACTS 2:4**. Out of 600 people who followed the instructions, 600 received and started to speak in other tongues (***as the Spirit gave them utterance, KJV***). The situation in **ACTS 19:1-7** seems to have been similar. People weren't aware that they could indeed receive the Holy Spirit, and that they would manifest tongues like all the others before them.

³³ Prophesying in a larger sense can also mean preaching or praising God under inspiration. The latter seems to be clearly the case here (cp. **ACTS 2:11, ACTS 10:46**). The disciples hadn't received *the gift of prophecy* which they then operated 12 times simultaneously, instead of 2-3 times one after the other (**1 COR 14:29-31**). As we have seen earlier, they hadn't received *the gift of tongues* either.

To summarize, in the *Acts of the Apostles* we have found three witnesses which testify that **anyone who was baptized in the Fire of the Spirit began to speak in tongues**, audibly and visibly. Many more people were added – all those whom God would call. And all of them were baptized by fire because the promise was, and still is, for all:

For to you was the promise, and to your sons, and to all those who are far away, those whom Eloah will call (ACTS 2:38-39).³⁴

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Before looking at what exactly happens when someone speaks in tongues, and what the exact purpose is, let's clarify the meaning of the ambiguous term *gift*, or more precisely, *the gift of the Holy Spirit*.

The following phrases show that *the gift of Ruach HaKodesh* is nothing else but *the Ruach HaKodesh*, and not the sign of tongues:

- ***Ruach HaKodesh*** (ACTS 8:15, 10:44, 19:2, JN 20:22)
- ***receive Ruach HaKodesh*** (ACTS 8:19, 10:47)
- ***filled with Ruach HaKodesh*** (ACTS 2:4)
- ***immersed in Ruach HaKodesh*** (ACTS 11:16)
- ***gift of Ruach HaKodesh*** (ACTS 2:38)
- ***gift of the Ruach HaKodesh*** (ACTS 10:45)

The verses below demonstrate even more clearly that the Spirit is the gift:

And this is He who at the right hand of Eloah is exalted: and received from the Father the promise concerning the Ruach HaKodesh. And He has poured out this gift, which, behold, you see and hear (ACTS 2:33).

³⁴ Sometimes we only read that people were baptized, or that they turned to YHWH. Again, there is no reason to assume that they weren't baptized in the Spirit, or that repentance or anything else was missing – they will have manifested the fire baptism by speaking in tongues just like anyone else. Scripture nowhere records that the Holy Ghost was poured out, and only a few or none of the recipients started to speak in tongues.

While saying, Give me also this authority that upon whom I place a hand, he will receive Ruach HaKodesh. Peter said to him, Your money will go with you to destruction because you thought that the gift of Eloah could be obtained by the goods of the world (ACTS 8:19-20).

And I remembered the Word of our Adon who said, Yochanan immersed in water, but you will be immersed in Ruach HaKodesh. If therefore Eloah equally gave the gift to the Goyim who believed on our Adon Yeshua the Messiah like also to us, who was I that I should be able to hinder Eloah? (ACTS 11:16-17).

Again, *the gift of the Holy Ghost* is synonymous with *the Holy Ghost*. Speaking in tongues as the sign of spiritual birth is, in fact, never called *the gift* of the Holy Ghost neither a *gift* of the Holy Ghost. On the contrary, it seems as if God's Spirit wants to prevent us from mistaking the evidence of rebirth with a *spiritual gift*.³⁵

The Purpose of Tongues

Spiritual gifts are dealt with towards the end of the first letter to the Corinthians, where Paul addresses specifically three of the nine spiritual gifts³⁶, and sets down certain rules of how to operate them in public. The gifts are **1) tongues, 2) interpretation, and 3) prophecy.**

Though the chapter focusses mainly on the endowments of the Spirit, there are two passages where Paul briefly diverts to speaking in tongues in the sense of worshiping, praising, and praying to God:

- a) In 1 COR 14:13-15 Paul does not only exhort the brethren to pray to be able to interpret, but he also tells them how to do this: ***pray also in [your] understanding*** – and not only in tongues. Why not? **For if I were to pray [only] in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is without fruit** (vs. 14).

³⁵ The Greek term for denoting a spiritual *gift* is χάρισμα – “khárisma” (ROM 1:11, ROM 12:6, 1 COR 1:7, 1 COR 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31).

The Greek term for denoting the *gift* of the Holy Spirit is δωρεά – “dōrea” (JN 4:10, ACTS 2:38, ACTS 8:20, ACTS 10:45, ACTS 11:17, HEB 6:4).

“Dōrea” is never used to denote a spiritual *gift*, neither is “khárisma” ever used to signify the *gift* of the Holy Spirit.

³⁶ *Spiritual gifts* are gifts or endowments of the Spirit.

In other words, when asking God for something, we should also use our natural language and not just the supernatural. But more importantly, the reason given here sheds some light on what happens when we pray in tongues.

The human spirit or *hidden man of the heart* has a voice which can communicate as well. If I pray in tongues, that renewed spirit, that revived inner man prays, *i.e.*, **my spirit prays**. The understanding or intellect is **without fruit** because it is not involved in producing the language. The human mind isn't able to influence the prayer's content because God's language bypasses the mind.³⁷ That is why Paul told the brethren they should pray with the understanding also when praying for the gift of interpretation.

Every father will teach his new-born child how to communicate with him. At first the father will present simple words, then phrases, and eventually the child will speak his language. YHWH does the same, only that He imparts His language within a few seconds into His new-born. Yeshua had promised that He won't leave us orphaned, but that He would adopt us. He would give us the **spirit of adoption** (ROM 8:15):

And because ye are sons [children], God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father (GAL 4:6).

Thus, speaking in tongues as a prayer language is a pure form of direct communication to Eloah – spirit to Spirit (ZEPH 3:9).

b) Paul refers to tongues as a prayer language again in 1 COR 14:18-23 where he says the following: ***I thank Eloah that I speak in tongues more than all of you (vs. 18)***. Firstly, such a statement only makes sense if all the brethren are able to speak in tongues. Secondly, it shows that *speaking in tongues* and *praying in tongues* are overlapping terms – Paul wasn't referring to *the gift of tongues* which always needs interpretation, he was talking about prayer. He was basically saying, *"I pray more with my spirit than anyone of you"*.

Lastly, as *the gift of tongues* and the *evidence of rebirth* originate from the same Spirit, we should also expect to find some common features. The first basic common principle

³⁷ Someone who prays in tongues is fully aware of their surroundings. Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania took brain images of five women while they spoke in tongues and found that their frontal lobes – the thinking, willful part of the brain through which people control what they do – were relatively quiet, as were the language centers. *"The regions involved in maintaining self-consciousness were active. The women were not in blind trances, and it was unclear which region was driving the behaviour."*

<https://mobile.nytimes.com/2006/11/07/health/07brain.html>

may be gleaned from 1 COR 14:2³⁸ where it says that ***He who speaks in a tongue... speaks in the Spirit a mystery.***

The reason we find both in the scriptures, to ***speak in the spirit*** and to ***speak in the Spirit***, is because the human spirit was merged with God's Spirit at rebirth (1 COR 6:17, 2 COR 3:17, JN 14:20). God's Spirit and my spirit are interdependent in the operation of tongues. I cannot pray with my spirit without praying in the Spirit, and vice versa. After having filled my renewed heart (ROM 5:5), the Spirit releases a language through my spirit and I start to speak in tongues. Thus, with regards to praying in tongues, the terms ***in the Spirit*** and ***in/with the spirit*** are interchangeable.

The above verses have shown **a)** that everyone in the Corinthian assembly prayed in tongues, **b)** that it is the spirit, indwelt and enabled by the Holy Spirit, which does the praying, and **c)** that *praying in the Spirit* means *praying in tongues*.

Paul wasn't praising himself when He wrote that he prays more than anyone else. Instead, he was trying to encourage the Corinthian brethren to spend more time in prayer. Likewise, and as a means of spiritual warfare, Paul admonishes the brethren of the Ephesian assembly to pray intensely in the Spirit:

With all prayers, and with all petitions, pray at all times in the Spirit (EPH 6:18).

Shall we assume that there were brethren who couldn't fully partake in the spiritual battle because they weren't able to pray in the Spirit?

In Jude, a letter which doesn't address a particular congregation, but which was circulated to all Nazarene assemblies, we find that believers are admonished to build themselves up by praying in the Spirit:

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost (JUDE 1:20, KJV).

Again, why would Jude admonish the ***beloved*** to pray in the Holy Ghost, if some of them weren't able to do so?³⁹

The fact, that speaking or praying in tongues builds up the inner man, is the second common feature we find (1 COR 14:4, EPH 3:16). Isaiah, whom Paul quotes in his

³⁸ By taking the verse out of its immediate context of interpretations and prophecy, many charismatics teach that we should "*pray out the mysteries of God*". However, the *mystery* is simply the divine word for an assembly during a service, which is revealed by operating the gift of interpretation.

³⁹ Epistles such as Romans, Galatians, Philippians, etc., abound in references to the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Shall we really suppose that none or only some of these references imply, that there was a manifestation when people were born again?

chapter on tongues, calls it the rest and the refreshing (ISA 28:12). Yeshua Himself alludes to the Spirit when He promises the Samaritan woman water that would quench thirst unlike any other water, and even become a well inside of her:

If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life (JN 4:10, 14, KJV).

The last thing Yeshua said to her before revealing Himself, was this:

For Eloah is spirit, and those who worship Him, ought to worship in spirit and in truth (JN 4:24).

We are to worship God by turning on this well, viz., by praying in the Holy Ghost. The rivers of living water which flow from the belly, i.e., from the heart, are nothing else but tongues (JN 7:37-39). I can confirm that it often sounds like water bubbling forth from a fountain when I pray in the Spirit. The inner man is being watered during prayer, the spirit drinks while a person worships Eloah in the Spirit of Truth (1 COR 12:13, JN 15:26) – this is the refreshing which Isaiah foresaw.⁴⁰

Praying in tongues also gives ***rest unto [our] souls*** (MT 11:29, KJV), because we don't need to think what to pray for or which words to use. The Holy Spirit gives the utterance and our minds are completely at rest.

We don't know what God wants us to pray for anyway, but the Spirit does. When we pray in tongues, the Spirit gives the content and the language, and thus we always pray according to God's will:

Thus also, the Spirit aids our infirmity, for we do not know what is right to pray for. But the Spirit prays on our behalf with groans that are not describable. And He who searches the hearts, knows what is the thinking of the Spirit that prays on behalf of the Set-Apart-Ones, according to the will of Eloah (ROM 8:26-27).⁴¹

⁴⁰ JN 6:53 conveys the same idea of eternal life springing forth from inner spiritual life: ***And Yeshua said to them: Truly, Truly, I say to you: that unless you... drink His blood, you do not have life in yourself*** (cp. 1 JN 5:8). The verse reminds us of a thirsty land which drinks in the rain (ISA 44:3, HEB 6:7), and it alludes in the first place to receiving Yeshua's Spirit as a condition for receiving eternal life.

⁴¹ ***The Spirit prays*** and ***the spirit prays*** are synonymous terms as we have seen – one cannot occur without the other.

Spiritual warfare, edification, and refreshing are not the only reasons why we should pray in tongues. Praying in the Holy Ghost will also...

- Convict of sin (JN 16:8-9)
- Glorify Yeshua (JN 16:14)
- Mortify the flesh (ROM 8:13)
- Teach everything (JN 14:26)
- Lead into all Truth (JN 16:13)
- Reveal deep things (1 COR 2:10)
- Make known future things (JN 16:13)
- Remind us of Yeshua's words (JN 14:26)
- Change us into the image of Yeshua (2 COR 3:18)

Objections

Amongst the more radical objections, which are unsurprisingly only raised by "non-tongue-speakers", we find assertions such as "Tongues...

- *are faked."*
- *have ceased."*
- *are from the devil."*
- *are not in the Bible."*
- *are only for weirdos."*
- *are an offense to God."*
- *are a mass psychosis."*

- *are meaningless babble.*⁴²
- *are only for a few chosen vessels.*
- *are also operated inwardly and inaudibly.*
- *are merely a means of crossing the language barrier*
- *are only found in Acts, because through them God showed the Jews and the Gentiles that they were both accepted – today this isn't necessary anymore.*

Besides these, the most moderate and self-assuring claim is, “*The Bible clearly shows that not everyone needs to speak in tongues!*” The claim is based on three verses:

Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Or do all interpret? (1 COR 12:30).

For Eloah placed in His assembly first: emissaries; after them, prophets; after them, teachers; after them, workers of power; after them, gifts of healing and helpers, and leaders, and kinds of tongues⁴³ (1 COR 12:28).

And for another, power, and for another, prophecy, and for another, discerning of the Spirit, and for another, kinds of tongues, and for another, the interpretation of tongues (1 COR 12:10).

The problem is that none of these verses refer to the initial sign of rebirth as seen in ACTS. All of them refer exclusively to the gifts which the Spirit ***distributes to every man as He wills*** after a person has been reborn (1 COR 12:11).

⁴² The argument often put forward that an unintelligible language “*can't be from God, and is therefore utter nonsense*” is not tenable. Paul says: ***there are many kinds of tongues in the world, and there is not one of them without meaning*** (1 COR 14:10). But more importantly, he adds: ***He who speaks in a tongue does not speak to sons of men but to Eloah: for no man understands a thing that he speaks*** (1 COR 14:2). There is a tradition which says that when the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he could communicate to God in a language that only he and God understood. This ability to speak in and understand the language of God only occurred when the high priest was in the Holy of Holies, and after he exited the sacred chamber, he was no longer able to speak that heavenly tongue.

⁴³ The term ***kinds of tongues***, which is sometimes translated as ***different languages***, highlights the fact that each person receives a different language. **1 COR 14:2** says ***he who speaks in a tongue***, viz., in one particular tongue, the one God has given him. To split up the gift of tongues into several types is just another attempt from the enemy to class the sign of rebirth as a “*khárisma*”, and thus deny the need for it.

The answer to verse 30 is therefore indeed “No”. Though a Christian is able to pray in the Spirit from his rebirth onwards, he may not have *the gift of tongues* yet. Or he possesses *the gift of tongues*, but chooses not to always operate it. Scripture only allows two to three tongues to be given at a gathering, no matter how many people attend. *The gift of tongues* is distinct from the language which every child at the moment of its new birth receives:⁴⁴

Sign of Spiritual Birth

- Used for prayer and worship.
- Used in public gatherings and in private.
- Can be operated as often and as long as one wishes.
- Expresses praises and groans.
- Is a sign for unbelievers.⁴⁵
- Doesn't need to be interpreted and is sometimes understood.

Spiritual Gift

- Not used for prayer and worship.
- Used in public gatherings only.
- Can be operated two to three times per gathering.
- Expresses mysteries.
- Is not a sign for unbelievers.
- Needs to be interpreted and is never understood.

⁴⁴ The phenomenon of speaking in another language which accompanies the initial infilling of Ruach HaKodesh in **ACTS 2:4**, **ACTS 10:46**, and **ACTS 19:6** is rendered **לשן בלשן** (“BeLishan Lishan”) in the Aramaic Peshitta. This expression literally means “*in the language of language*”, and is nowhere used in **1 COR 12, 13, or 14**.

⁴⁵ The phrase ***this is the refreshing*** in **ISA 28:12** suggests that praying in the Spirit is the sign for unbelievers, not *the gift of tongues*. Paul seems to confirm this: ***In the Torah it is written: With a strange speech and with another tongue I will speak with this people; even so, they will not hear Me, says YHWH. Therefore, tongues are placed for a sign: not to believers, but to those who do not believe (1 COR 14:21-22)***. Seeing the Assyrian invaders and hearing their strange tongue was proof of Israel's disobedience and unbelief. Moses' warning, that YHWH would bring a nation against them ***whose tongue [they] shall not understand*** had come true (**DEUT 28:49**). It was a sign and a call to repentance, but Israel didn't take heed.

Conclusion

I don't think anyone will deny the difference between *the spiritual gift* and *the sign of the new birth*. ACTS portrays the manifestation of the restored covenant between God and His people, while CORINTHIANS regulates the use of gifts in an assembly.

Most will continue to reject tongues though. They will continue to maintain that their lamps have oil, that they have been born from above, and that they are saved.

The enmity of the flesh towards the Spirit is so strong, that an unregenerate person will rather justify themselves and explain away the obvious. Especially people who have a lot of sound biblical knowledge, and who seem otherwise unbiased, will not easily admit that they have been "*wrong for so long*".

Yesha'yahu was prescient: ***God said to His own, This is the rest, and this is the refreshing, but they would not listen*** (ISA 28:11-12).

For those, however, who are humble enough to acknowledge that they could be lacking something, and who come to God like little children, the promise is still there:

If you, who are evil, know to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

Luke 11:13