

QUESTIONS WE WANT ANSWERED

26 What Are the Gifts of Tongues and Interpretation?

A popular word today is the word “charisma.” Ladies go to a beauty parlor the owner has named Charisma, and men wear a top-of-the-line high fashion shirt called Charisma. The word implies charm, beauty and a certain appeal which inspires the imagination and is a pleasure to behold. It is from the Bible that we learn of a deeper significance to the word. Charisma is one of nine different Greek words translated as “gift” in our English versions. Associated with “charis” (grace) on the one side, and “pneuma” (spirit) on the other, charisma means spiritual gifts which have come freely to believers endowing them to serve their Lord to the benefit of others.

Not natural talents, the charismata (plural) are an essential part of a true Christian experience and understood in the proper exposition of the Word of God. Unfortunately, charismatics are often associated with only one grace gift, mainly tongues-speaking. The technical word for this manifestation is glossolalia. Actually, any Christian who believes in the distribution of these gifts by the Holy Spirit and who seeks to know and use such a gift can be said to be charismatic, but not all charismatics are glossolalialists.

I. THE MINISTRY OF THE GIFT OF TONGUES AND INTERPRETATION:

1. Eight passages in the Bible refer to this subject. (Isaiah 28:11; Acts 2, 10, 19; I Corinthians 12, 13, 14; Mark 16:17-18)
2. The purpose of glossolalia in the Book of Acts was circumstantial, that is to communicate and to authenticate the Gospel and its messengers.
3. The purpose of the Corinthian tongues was edification. The “divers kind of tonques” of I Corinthians 12:10, if these tongues were those of ecstatic speech, were to be elevated by interpretation to the status of prophecy and to the edification of all. (I Corinthians 14:4) Glossolalia does not reach the gift status unless it is interpreted and thereby becomes the means of edification. Uninterpreted tongues speaking may be a spiritual exercise to edify self.

II. THE MISUNDERSTANDING ASSOCIATED WITH THE GIFT OF TONGUES:

1. It is misunderstood by being self or satanically produced.
2. It is misunderstood by being associated with the baptism of the Spirit.
3. It is misunderstood by being understood as the filling of the Spirit.
4. It is misunderstood by being associated with the fruit of the Spirit.
5. It is misunderstood by being thought an indication of spiritual maturity.
6. It is misunderstood by being taken as a means of spiritual growth.
7. It is misunderstood by being taken as a means of ecumenicity.
8. It is misunderstood by being a means of division among God's people.

III. THE MANAGEMENT OF THE GIFT OF TONGUES AND INTERPRETATION:

1. The number of people speaking shall be limited. (I Corinthians 14:27)
2. No one shall speak without benefit of an interpreter. (I Corinthians 14:27b)
3. Those speaking shall be observed and discerned by others. (14:29)
4. Confusion and spoiling of the peace is out of God's will. (14:31, 40)
5. Women shall keep silent. (14:34-35) Scholars divided here.
6. Recognize God's overwhelming sovereignty in the matter. (12:18)
7. The gift of tongues is not to be sought. (12:31)
8. Proclaim the works and words of God in understandable speech. (14:19)

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