

The Doctrine of Tongues

OK, I'm going to jump into a very controversial doctrine right off the bat. There are many different views of the doctrine of tongues and I want to briefly discuss them and their basis in this lesson. Hopefully we'll come to a better understanding of the truth.

In order to understand the doctrine of tongues we must first understand what it means. There are actually two types of gifts of tongues discussed in Scripture. The first was manifest on the Day of Pentecost when everyone heard the disciples speaking in their own language. You can read about this in Acts 2. The second is the unknown tongue. Paul talks extensively about this in 1 Corinthians 14. As these are rather lengthy Scriptures I will not include them here, but I encourage you to take out your Bible and read these Scriptures before continuing with this lesson.

With this in mind let's begin to look at some different views on tongues. There are those who focus only on the unknown tongue. These tend to include Acts 2 as the same type of tongue, even though it's clear that they could be understood by all. Generally associated with this view is the view that speaking in tongues is the sign that you have been baptized with the Holy Ghost. They take this from Acts 2 where they spoke in tongues when the Holy Ghost fell on them as well as from Acts 10:44-46, among others. Churches which teach this doctrine tend to put a great emphasis on people speaking in tongues.

Another viewpoint focuses primarily on the tongues of Pentecost, believing that the unknown tongue is just talking about a language that is foreign to the people in the church. These generally believe that the gift of tongues was done away with at the closing of the canon of Scripture. These tend to use 1 Corinthians 3:8-10 to justify their teaching.

This is a doctrine which seems to be held dearly by both sides of this argument, but I would argue that neither is correct. If we really get into the Scripture we find that the gift of tongues is not given to everybody who has gifts of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 12:4,30), but some are given this gift. Tongues will pass away when that which is perfect is come. This time is the same as when we'll know even as we're known. Clearly this refers to the time of the kingdom which is still to come.

Paul gives a very clear indication in 1 Corinthians 14 that the unknown tongue is generally intended for personal worship time. It seems that the Corinthian church had gotten focused on this doctrine, and Paul sets them straight by telling them that there are more important things than tongues. Paul says it's OK to practice tongues in worship, but that this should be secondary and done in order.

So why is the Church divided over this issue today? I think that it's because we're afraid to get into the Scriptures to see what they really say. We get caught up in what we're taught, and then refuse to fellowship with those who see things a little differently.

I hope that you have read the Scriptures today and that they've helped you to see that if we get caught up with the doctrine of tongues, either for or against, we lose focus on Christ.

We'll continue looking at controversial doctrines within the Church that serves to divide rather than unite in the next lesson. Until then may God richly bless you.

Yours in Christ,

Bro. John Rich