

20th Century Bible Course

LESSON TWENTY-TWO

Dear Student:

An ostrich gulps down whatever looks interesting: an apple, a tennis ball, a pocket-knife-open or closed. The ostrich may survive, but the gullible mind may not.

The gullible Christian uses a strange brand of reasoning. He knows that God works miracles, so he reasons that all miracles must be from God. God has spoken to prophets; so if a person has heard a strange voice from "somewhere," he must be a prophet. This is dangerous logic. The fact that miracles are supernatural does not mean that all of them are from God. And the fact that miracles are worked in the name of Christ does not necessarily mean that Christ is connected with them.

This restless generation is spending more and more time playing around with the psychic and the supernatural. Sending messages to see if one comes back. Holding pencils to see if some power will make them write. Tossing balls over the wall to see if they return. There is an explosion of interest in the supernatural today. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, ouija boards outsold the 32-year-champion-Monopoly- in a very recent year.

Movies and books also reflect the great popular swing to supernatural themes. *Rosemary's Baby* is a best seller; "The Exorcist" and "The Omen" drew record crowds, and there are promises of more to come. On TV, witches and seances are common items of diet, to say nothing of scores of faith healers that one may watch.

Today a businessman stands in line to board a modern jet. And then he steps aside. The plane goes without him. Someone has looked into a crystal ball and told him the plane would crash. Prophets claiming to have messages from God are headlined in the news media that cater to the sensational. And throughout the land the sounds of strange tongues are breaking out in churches of all faiths.

What does it all mean? Is there anything to these supernatural phenomena? If we ignore them are we missing out on special spiritual blessings? How can we know if a miracle is from God or is plain trickery? Does the Bible offer some help?

Indeed it does, and this will be our study today. God's precious Word is the only safe guide. In the fast-moving world of today, even our senses may play strange tricks on us, but His Word will never fail.

Very sincerely yours,

Your Bible Instructor

LESSON 22

SPEAKING IN TONGUES AND OTHER MIRACLES

SCRIPTURE READING: ACTS 2:1-24; 1 CORINTHIANS 12

Since faith healing, speaking in tongues, and prophetic messages all involve the supernatural, and are considered to be miracles, let us give our first attention to some basic Bible principles about miracles.

1. Are miracles a safe test of what is true? Deuteronomy 13:1 - 4

2. Why should we be on guard against counterfeit miracles? Matthew 24:24

Thought question: Why won't the "elect" be deceived by counterfeit miracles?

3. Why are miracles not a test of what is genuine?

Revelation 16: 14 _____ can work miracles.

Revelation 19:20 The _____ and the _____ are able to perform miracles.

(See also Revelation 13:13,1

2 Corinthians 11: 14

From these scriptures we get a glimpse of the power behind some miracles. The Bible does not call these fake miracles, trickery or fraud (although, doubtless, much of it is). Apparently Satan and his angels have power to perform actual miracles. Read how Pharaoh's magicians duplicated most of the miracles that God performed through Moses (Exodus 7, 8, 9). All that appears to be miraculous or supernatural is not necessarily from God. Once that fact is fully established in our thinking, we are safeguarded from many a deception.

4. Why is it difficult to distinguish the true from the false by appearance? Matthew 7:15

Part 1-- FAITH HEALING

Divine healing is definitely taught in the Scriptures. Jesus spent more time healing than He did preaching. Sometimes He only spoke the word and the sick were healed. On other occasions He touched the diseased one. Once He anointed the eyes of a blind man with clay, directing him to wash it off in the pool of Siloam. In another instance, a woman touched the hem of his garment and was healed. Jesus was not confined to any one method of healing, but used both miraculous and natural means in His healing ministry. When God preserved the life of the prophet Elijah, He sent him food by ravens--a miracle, but his water came from the brook Cherith--in a very natural way

1. If faith healing is done in Christ's name, does that make it genuine? Matthew 7:22, 23
Why? (verse 21)

Miracles performed in Christ's name by individuals who do not obey the Word, are not genuine, however sincere the miracle worker may appear to be. Jesus said, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). The heart that truly loves will want to obey. "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Without obedience there can be no genuine relationship with Jesus.

2. What should we do if we are sick? James 5:13 _____

Jesus said, "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:14). This certainly includes healing. Christians should pray for themselves when they are sick.

3. What else is proper to do for the sick? (verses 14,15) _____

4. Does God always heal the faithful? 2 Kings 13:14 _____

Even though Elisha was God's faithful servant and prophet, the Lord did not see fit to heal him. On one occasion Paul wrote to Timothy that they had to leave Trophimus, a fellow-worker, at Miletum because he was sick (2 Timothy 4:20). Why did not Paul heal him? When Paul prayed three times for deliverance from a "thorn in the flesh," which many believe was poor eyesight, God did not grant his request, but promised grace sufficient to bear his affliction (2 Corinthians 12:8, 9). No, God does not always heal in answer to prayer. In His infinite wisdom He knows what is best for us. Although Christ Himself "took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:17), only in the resurrection morning shall we have the full and complete redemption for which we long--"the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23). One man of prayer has expressed it this way: "Every child of God who remains a child of God will be healed--either now, or later on in the resurrection of the righteous." And that is a beautiful way to look at it.

5. What goes hand in hand with healing? Mark 2:3-11

God does not heal that we may continue in known sin. This would neither bring glory to Him, nor spiritual benefit to the recipient of His healing.

6. What attitude of submission did Jesus give us? Matthew 26:39

As we examine the healing ministry of Christ and familiarize ourselves with His methods and attitudes, we may learn better how to distinguish true healing from the false.

a. Christ healed when and where the need arose. There is no evidence that He ever staged a healing session, or that He ever advertised, "Healing will take place here tonight."

b. Jesus avoided building a personality cult around Himself. Quite the contrary, He often told people not to advertise what He had done for them, because He knew it would ultimately interfere with His real ministry—the spiritual healing He had come to give.

c. Jesus never charged any fees for His acts of mercy.

d. Jesus never *demand*ed God to do something. He commanded unclean spirits, but He never commanded God. His relationship to His Father was always, "Thy will be done." This is not a denial of faith. Our faith should stem from the knowledge that God can heal, that He wants to heal, and that if He can do the most loving thing by healing, He will. (Adapted from Marvin Moore, "Is Faith Healing for Real," *Insight*, September 9, 1975.)

Part 2-- SPEAKING IN TONGUES (Glossolalia)

Our only safeguard against the last-day deceptions of Satan is to be so firmly established in the teachings of the Word of God that we will be able to recognize any counterfeit, no matter how much like the genuine it may appear. Since Satan has distorted every truth that God has revealed in the Word, we may be sure the gift of tongues is no exception. By being able to recognize the true gift, we may fortify ourselves against deception.

1. What special gifts will the Holy Spirit give to the church? 1 Corinthians 12:7-10, 28-30?

2. Do all members of the church receive the same gift? (verses 11,29,30)

3. Who determines who receives what gift? (verse 11)

The Holy Spirit not the believer, determines who is given what gift, but all His precious gifts are for the benefit of the church; none are bestowed merely to elevate an individual Paul compares the church to the human body (verses 12-17). Just as each part of the body has a specific function, so each member of the body of Christ will serve in a specific capacity. The gift and abilities that God gives me will complement those He gives my brothers and sisters. We are not all heads! We are not all tongues! We are not all fingers! Yet the unique gift of each member enables the church as a body to function efficiently.

Thought question: In view of this, how would you react if someone claims you do not have the Holy Spirit because you don't speak in tongues? _____

4. For what purpose was the Holy Spirit promised? Acts 1:8

"All gifts of the Holy Spirit, tongues included, are bestowed for practical use in witnessing for Christ successfully. . . . They are not given to gratify ambition, to build a stratified elitist spiritual society, or to race one's emotional motors" (*As the Spirit Speaks*, p. 52).

5. To whom only will the Holy Spirit draw attention? John 16:13,14

Do we read anywhere of Peter telling what a wonderful sensation flowed through him when the Spirit fell upon him? Is any mention made of ecstatic feelings or peculiar ting-lings? None whatsoever! The Holy

Spirit is Christ's personal representative; to Him alone the Spirit directs attention. To divert attention from Christ to the earthly vessel containing the gift is a sure sign of a counterfeit. Compare the simple accounts in Acts 2, 10, and 19 with this from the *Christian Herald*, September, 1972: "All the joys of my life were blended together in one ecstatic moment-all the fun of childhood, my first date, the moment when the man I wanted asked me to share life with him, the exultation of the finished sex longing. . . . I had the sensation I was almost floating instead of walking."

6. What happened when the Holy Spirit fell upon the waiting church on the Day of Pentecost? Acts 2:1-4

"They were all filled with _____, and began to speak with _____, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

7. What shows that they were speaking real languages? (verses 5-8)

This gift enabled the disciples to speak fluently languages they had never previously spoken, which greatly aided them in spreading the gospel. Says Dr. Howard M. Ervin, Dean of the Graduate School of Theology, Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma: "If tongues are merely 'ecstatic babbling,' they are totally irrelevant to Christian worship" (*Christianity Today*, April 11, 1969, p. 10).

8. When the apostles spoke in tongues, of whom did they speak? Acts 2:11

Thought question: Was the gift of tongues an instantaneous unpremeditated reception, or did the recipients go through special steps in order to receive it?

While there are variations, the "gift" of tongues prevalent today is often received by instruction. A "Praise Sheet" put out by one group instructs tongues seekers:

"The Baptism of the Holy Ghost is usually received while praising the Lord. . . . Re-peat the words of praise in the first space [of a chart] over and over for two or three minutes, then repeat the words in the second space . . . , allowing. . . two or three minutes for each space. . . . Speak about two or three times faster than you ordinarily talk" (Plunket Rainbow Revival, quoted in *Rattling the Gates*, by Roland R. Hegstad, p. 88).

A group of tongues seekers at Yale were instructed as follows:

"(1) To think visually and concretely, rather than abstractedly: for example, to try to visualize Jesus as a person; (2) consciously to yield their voices and organs of speech to the Holy Spirit; (3) to repeat certain elementary sounds which he told them, such as 'bah-bah-bah,' or something similar. He then laid his hands on the head of each seeker, prayed for them, and the seeker did actually speak in tongues" (Ibid., p. 89).

Christ said, "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions" (Matthew 6:7, NT 7 [4]).

9. How did Paul feel about unintelligible tongues? 1 Corinthians 14:18,19

10. What guidelines did Paul give in the use of tongues? (verses 12-40)

(verse 12) "Seek that ye may excel _____"

(verse 22) "Tongues are for a sign . . . to them that _____"

(verse 27) "Not more than _____ or _____ should speak in one service, and even that should be by _____, and there should be an _____"

(verse 28) "If there be no interpreter, let him _____."

(verse 33) "God is not the _____."

(verse 40) "Let all things be done _____ and _____."

11. What gift did Paul consider more important than tongues? (verses 1, 39) _____
Prophecy is the power to speak authoritatively for God. The whole Bible has come to men through this gift. The Scriptures testify of Jesus, and the gift of prophecy is appropriately called the "testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 19:10; 1 Peter 1:10-12). We shall touch more on this gift in the next lesson.

12. To whom will God give His Holy Spirit? Acts 5:32 _____
Jesus "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey him*" (Hebrews 5:8, 9). Whatever the name of the movement, if it excuses disobedience to God's law, beware of it! "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

13. When did Christ receive the Holy Spirit? Luke 3:21, 22 _____

14. What must all Christians have? Romans 8:9 _____
There are no Spiritless Christians. If a person hasn't the Holy Spirit, he is not a Christian at all! The Holy Spirit communicates Christ to us. To have the Spirit is to have Christ.

15. What is the real evidence that one has been baptized by the Spirit? Galations 5:22, 23 _____

What a reassurance to anyone who may be wondering whether God has accepted him since he does not speak in tongues or perform miracles! A spectacular spiritual experience is not the mark of the Holy Spirit. The real evidence of Spirit baptism is the fruit of the Spirit in one's life. In fact, Paul says, "Though I speak with tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1). Holiness does not consist of feelings; holiness is surrendering self entirely to God, doing His will in all things, and trusting Him completely.

In the last days, God's people are to be empowered to witness to the world and prepare a people for Christ's soon return. The enemy of our Lord is not ignorant of this, and it is not surprising that he will try to so cloud the issue that the true manifestation of God's Spirit will not be recognized.

Part 3-- FOUR FOOLPROOF TESTS TO APPLY TO MIRACLES AND TONGUES

1. Deuteronomy 13:1-4 : _____ *are not a test of the true.*
2. 1 John 4:1-3 Must confess that Jesus, the divine Son of God, came _____
3. Matthew 7:16 Examine their _____.
4. Isaiah 8:20 (OT 557 [433]) If they are not in harmony with the _____ and the _____ (Scriptures), "there is no light [truth] in them."

Let us evaluate miracles by the Word of God, not the Word of God by miracles. Let us judge all religious groups by what they teach, not by the miracles they can display. If the teaching is not in harmony with the Word, a thousand miracles cannot make it right. It is for us to search for truth and follow it, irrespective of miracles, including tongues.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDITIONAL READING: *Charisma in the Spirit*, by Rene Noorbergen.