

# Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

## A STUDY ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

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### PART 14: THE INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES (LANGUAGES)

#### INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES

The interpretation of tongues is the ninth gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the ability to understand and explain a message spoken in an unknown language. This is not the same as translation where the person already knows the language, but it is bestowed by the Holy Spirit so that the congregation can be edified.

*“To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the **interpretation of tongues.**” (1 Corinthians 12:10)*

Just like the other eight previous gifts, there is no way to prepare for it except to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and waiting for God to activate it in your life.

Operating in this gift of the Holy Spirit – or any other for that matter – is exciting because it means you are in God’s will and He is choosing to use you for something particular. It is wonderful knowing that the path you’re on is sanctioned by God and receiving His blessing in the form of one of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit.

#### MY EXPERIENCE

It was the summer of 1971 when Aina and I, along with another couple from seminary, were in Sweden for a series of revival meetings in mostly Baptist churches. I was asked to preach at one of the largest Pentecostal churches in Stockholm. I had been baptized in the Holy Spirit at this point in my life, but had yet to manifest any of the nine gifts.

I sat on the platform during the songs and the announcements that are normal for a Sunday morning church service. During a brief pause in the singing, a person suddenly stood up in the congregation and spoke loudly in an unknown tongue. I was excited when the person stopped speaking and eagerly awaited the interpretation. There was silence in the auditorium; it was so quiet that you could have heard the proverbial pin drop.

I looked around at the people in the pews and waited for someone to stand up and provide the interpretation. A minute passed. Then two minutes. Without warning, the Holy Spirit spoke inside of me and said: *“Stand up and give the interpretation.”*

I froze in fear because this was a new experience. I had never spoken in tongues, let alone provided an interpretation. I did not understand the message that had been delivered and desperately told the Holy Spirit, *“I do not know what to say.”*

His voice came back stronger, *“Stand up and open your mouth and I will speak through you.”*



Fear began to well up as I looked out at the thousands in the sanctuary from my elevated position on the stage. What if the Holy Spirit does not speak through me?

I realized it was a sink or swim moment and I obediently stood up and opened my mouth – and a split second later – the Holy Spirit began to speak through me and provide the interpretation of the message.

This was a bizarre event because it was like my brain was disconnected and I listened to my mouth speaking an unrehearsed translation of the message I had heard from the other person but not understood.

The Holy Spirit spoke in a loud voice just like with the previous person. There was no hesitation; the words simply flowed out of me like a river. When the interpretation was done, my mouth stopped speaking and I sat down in shock.

I had never experienced anything like this before. It was a possession of my body that was peculiar and fantastic at the same time – the complete opposite of demon possession, which is invasive and tormenting.

It was a shocking encounter as I realized the Holy Spirit is real and the third person of the Godhead moves sovereignly with power and majesty.

I no longer remember the words of the interpretation, but what still stands out to me in stark contrast all these years later, I spoke with a power that I had never felt before when I got up to preach that morning.

*“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” (1 Corinthians 2:4)*

## **TYPES OF TONGUES**

There are three types of languages used by the Holy Spirit when He moves upon a person who has received His baptism:

1. Earthly languages – Such as those described in Acts chapter two.
2. Any spoken language – Followed by an interpretation.
3. An unknown tongue – A special (heavenly) prayer language for which there is no interpretation.

## **EARTHLY LANGUAGES**

There was no need for interpretation on the day of Pentecost when the 120 disciples spoke in earthly languages understood by the diaspora Jews from the different nations who had come to Jerusalem to be part of the temple ceremonies.

Unfortunately, none of the New Testament writers provided a real-life example on the interpretation of tongues. No such account exists of an apostle providing an interpretation for someone who had spoken in tongues.

## **ANY SPOKEN TONGUE**

Giving a message in tongues and then having an interpretation is edifying to the congregation, but it can also be done in a private meeting between two people.

*“I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.” (1 Corinthians 14:5)*

Paul made it clear if a person speaks in an unknown tongue, it does not benefit the congregation, but revelations, knowledge, and prophesy edify the listeners.

*“Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?” (1 Corinthians 14:6)*

In ancient times when an army went into battle, the commander used trumpeters to produce sounds for attack and retreat. There was confusion and chaos if the signal was not clear.

*“And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1 Corinthians 14:7-8)*

Christians must speak in such a way that people can understand what they are saying.

*“So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.” (1 Corinthians 14:9)*

Paul also stated that if a man speaks in an unknown tongue, he should pray for the interpretation:

*“Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.” (1 Corinthians 14:13)*

Paul said he would rather speak five words of understanding than speak in an unknown tongue.

*“Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.*

*Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.*

*Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.*

*If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" (1 Corinthians 14:19-23)*

## **UNKNOWN TONGUE**

Every church service should be orderly, not chaotic.

*"How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying." (1 Corinthians 14:26)*

Paul also imposed limits on the amount of messages in an unknown tongue taking place. No more than two or three individuals should speak at a time before an interpretation occurs.

*"If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God." (1 Corinthians 14:27-28)*

## **MY LIFE**

The gift of interpretation was only active once in that Pentecostal church in 1971. In the churches I have pastored and during meetings as an evangelist, I have witnessed a number of persons speak in tongues, followed by an interpretation.

I attended numerous conventions of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMF) from 1970 to 1985. On a couple of occasions, I had personal time with Demos Shakarian.

It was common for people in church to speak in tongues with an interpretation from 1970 until 1990. When I traveled overseas as an evangelist, it was not uncommon in the meeting for someone to speak in tongues with an interpretation following thereafter.

## **DAVID WILKERSON**

I had the privilege to attend a pastoral workshop in Palm Springs around 1985 led by David Wilkerson and three other pastors from Time Square Church in New York. There were only 50 pastors in attendance and I was singled out by Pastor Wilkerson when he told me to come up to the stage, where he prayed and prophesied over me. On the last day, David called me and Aina forward so that he and his team could lay hands on us and pray. It was fantastic to be in these meetings, where there were tongues, interpretation, and prophecies because I was at a low point in my life. Having a well-

known man of God like David Wilkerson prophesy over me and encourage me to stay strong in the ministry meant a lot to me.

## **SUMMARY**

The gift of interpretation is vital if there are messages given in unknown tongues to a church. Seven of the gifts can operate individually, but the gift of interpretation must be carried out in conjunction with speaking in an unknown tongue. Sometimes a Christian can be used by the Holy Spirit to speak in tongues and also provide the interpretation. However, the most common practice of the Holy Spirit is to use two believers whereby one presents the message and the other interprets what was spoken.

***Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!***

***Do you have an ear to hear with?***