Do We Seek the Gift of Tongues from the Holy Spirit Part 1
By Charles Feinberg

This is message number 7 in the series on truth and error about the Holy Spirit by Doctor Charles Lee Feinberg, dean emeritus and professor of Semitic languages and Old Testament at Talbot theological seminary. The title of this message, and its part one the field the subject is so large that we must deal with it in two different tapes, two different parts. This is part one of message 7. Message 8 will be part 2. Do we seek, the subject is do we seek the gift of tongues from the Holy Spirit? Now admittedly this subject is very much to the for because of the recent revival, recrudescence, reappearance of certain movements called charismatic movements. More properly, they should be called in relationship to a previous movement earlier in the 20th century related directly to the Pentecostal movement. So a more precise more correct title to the movement today is neo or new, neopentacostalism. It is admittedly gaining ground not only in this country, but abroad. Not only among protestants but among Catholics as well. Not only in one or two protestant denominations, but apparently in a great number of them. It is a subject as indicated that is fraught with a great deal of emotion. Many many sentiments involved here. But again, we must come directly and clearly to the question what does the scripture say? Now in beginning this discussion on do we seek the gift of tongues from the Holy Spirit, we ought to look first at certain basic considerations. First of all this would be admitted by all, even those who take a contrary position to that which we will be taking through these studies, these messages. All will admit to believe the bible to be the word of god that we are living in a day of faith, not sight. A day of faith not sight. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:7 for we that’s believers walk that is we live for we walk by faith not by sight. But you see the human mind and heart are
such that they want something tangible. It’s often said they want something with skin on it. They want something they can touch and feel. They do not want to walk by faith but rather want to walk by signs, just as Israel did. Show us a sign. They asked our lord Jesus even after he had done that marvelous miracle of the feeding of the 5000. But scripture tells us we walk by faith not by sight. If a man sees what he desires, we read in romans, what doth he yet hope for? We see it, there is no exercise of faith. In Hebrews we read that faith is the assurance of things hoped for. It is the certainty of things that are not seen. So we’ve got to realize that we are living because god has so orated it. He didn’t ask of anybody’s advice of course. We are living and rightly so in a day of faith not sight. Oh many say I would have loved to have lived and seen the lord Jesus god incarnate in the flesh. But we are not living in the first century ad, we were living in the 20th. And there is no use in such hopes. There’s no such use for such wishful thinking. We live in a day of faith and not sight. And I think right there the battle can be largely won. At least were off on the right foot. Now as we look through from genesis to the revelation we’ll find that there are 4 great periods, 4 prominent periods of bible miracles. It’s as though they were poured together into heaps or into certain great gatherings of supernatural workings of god. 4 great periods of bible miracles. First of all, is in the mosaic period. One cannot possibly read from exodus through the book of Deuteronomy. The mosaic period. You cannot read those books with any discernment at all but see that god wrought one miracle after another. Even the birth of Moses and his preservation, especially his preservation was a miracle because the very one who should have been thrown into the Nile and died as so many other Hebrew male children did became the deliverer. And pharaoh driven on by Satan outdid himself because he paid the nursery bill for the deliverer Moses. The little one was given over to Miriam you remember. And with the indication get a Hebrew mother to nurse this child. So that was just the beginning. And
then all those 10 plagues. My dear friends they are miracle judgements brought on Egypt from the first one the changing of the water of Nile into blood all the way to the death of the first born. Because in Egyptian theology the first born was the earthly representative of the deity and god was striking against all the land of Egypt. In the 11th chapter we read and against its gods. So in the mosaic period, you have miracles. The miracle of the passing through the red sea and even before that the miracle of the angle of death sparing passing over the houses of the Hebrews where blood, the blood of the lamb was sprinkled. That was a miracle. And then the passing of the red sea. And then all that wilderness journey with mana and with the water from the rock. One miracle after another. The mosaic period. And notice miracles were given as signs, not signs when Israel is in belief but in unbelief. It’s very important that we see this distinction. When they are in unbelief, the people of Israel were unbelieving and god gave them signs. And Paul says the Jews seek after signs. And when they asked some even when they had no reason to and signs had been given them our lord Jesus said no other sign will be given unto you. No other one. And then mentioned just a final one. The sign of Jonah. For as he was 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of the fish so will the son of god, the son of man be in the heart of the earth. The mosaic period unquestionably. And that’s why those 4 books along with genesis are tremendous obstacles to unbelief. Because on every page as it were in every turn of the road we find miracles. So one of the four great periods of bible miracles is the mosaic period. Then we read on through into the historical books and we come to the day and age and generation of Elijah and Elisha. There was great apostasy, great unbelief, great declension. So much so that Elijah said you are sitting on the fence not knowing whether you want to go this way or that way or the other way. Why go ye halting between two opinions. If the lord be god worship him. If Baal be god worship him. Make up your minds once and for all. Settle it once and for all. And you remember how the wonderful
victory on Mount Carmel when they saw it was god who answered by fire. Not these miserable prophets of Baal calling on their god who could help them not a wit. Then they fell down and cried out as the orthodox Jew does in the synagogue on the Day of Atonement with his face to the ground. [Inaudible] the lord he is the god. The lord he is the one who is the god. The only god, the absolute god, the exclusive god. It was a time of apostasy because when Elijah fled from the threat of jezebel after he had had victory over the prophets of Baal and they were slain. Do you remember she said god do so to me and more also if your head sits upon you Elijah the tishbite by this time tomorrow. And Elijah fled, he was on a cross country run. Finally wound up at Sinai. Where in orthodox Jewish theology they say he re instituted, reaffirmed, reconfirmed the covenant made at Sinai with Moses because they had so defected. And Elijah under the juniper tree in great distress, in great weariness said lord they’ve digged down thine altars, they’ve slain thy prophets. Oh they’ve just gone the limit and now I only am left and they seek to take away my life. He wanted to die. God said to Elijah I have reserved 7000. He was only 6999 off on his count. God says I have reserved 7000 have not bowed the knee to Baal nor kissed their hand toward him. But even 7000 I submit to you friend. 7000 out of all Israel that was a very small group. So there had to be miracles. Not only with Elijah but with his understudy and successor Elisha. Elijah and Elisha was a period of tremendous works of supernatural blessing miracles as we call them. And then we read on through the end of the Old Testament. Don’t mean there weren’t miracles, don’t misunderstand. We’re talking about great periods when as it were they were in great accumulations. The next period is Christ’s earthly ministry. The era of the earthly ministry of our lord Jesus Christ the lord of glory. Miracles, look at Matthew. 8th chapter through the 10th the early part we have preparation in Matthews gospel. Then by the time you get to the fifth chapter our lord is tempted by Satan. Gloriously victorious. Then begins
preaching from that time on. In the 4th chapter he began to say repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand just as god had given john the Baptist that message as well. Then you get into the 5th chapter. 5th, 6th, 7th chapter. Those incomparable chapters of undying, undimmed beauty that we know of as the Sermon on the Mount. And as soon as those three chapters are concluded 5 6 and 7 showing the laws the righteous holy laws of Christ’s kingdom. These are my platform upon which I will administer my kingdom. Then chapter 8, 9 and 10 you have the remarkable piling up of miracles of miracles wrought in the heavenly area and the earthy area and even against demons and Satan in the sub terrestrial area. Under the earth. Oh yes. And then all through the ministry of our lord. Healing the sick, the blind, the lame, the deaf, the dumb. Raising from the dead that one who had just died. jairus' daughter. Raising from the dead that one whose body was already in the funeral procession. The widow of Nain’s son. And then the third raising even more remarkable, the raising of Lazarus in the 11th chapter of johns gospel when Lazarus' body was already in a state of decomposition because he had been lying four days in the grave. And so we go on and on. All through Christ’s earthly ministry. Wherever you look. He can feed 5000. He can feed 4000 with but a few loaves and fishes. Yes. Unquestionably Christ’s earthly ministry was characterized by great miracles. It was a great one of the four great periods of bible miracles was Christ’s earthly ministry. Why? Because Israel was in unbelief. He came unto his own things. His own right to rule and land. His own right to the throne and kingdom. His own right to a following. He came unto his own things and they who were his own, Israel received him not. but as many as did receive them to them he gave the right the authority the warrant to become the children of god even to them who believe on his name who were born not of blood not by inheritance, not by the will of man or the will of the flesh, not by determination or by what someone else could do for an individual. But they were born of god. So
that’s the third one. Then we go through the time of the New Testament and of course in acts there were miracles wrought through peter and through Paul and the apostles. But there’s not a piling up of them. We do not get to the fourth one until we come to the revelation. That’s the tribulation period. And there are numerous miracles there. That again is a period where Israel is to the fore and they are in unbelief. I must stress that. They are to the fore, they are in the vanguard. They are in the foreground but they are in unbelief. Whether in the mosaic period number 1, whether in Elijah and Elisha’s period number 2. Those 2 are in the Old Testament. And the third period Christ’s earthly ministry. That period in the New Testament and the tribulation period which is in the revelation. Now friends, let’s not try to inject great accumulations of miracles in other parts of the bible. If they belong there, the spirit of god would have seen that they were included there. They’re not there. So we have no right, we have no authority to say this period is not particularly a period of walking by sight but we are going to change it somewhat. And this is going to be a day not of faith but of sight. We don’t dare do that. Every doctrine then has to be based on the word of god. And every teaching and practice must be judged on the basis of the place and prominence given to whom? To Christ. To Christ. Colossians 1 that in all things he might have the preeminence. We’re going to test this phenomenon of the gift of tongues. We’re going to test it as to, I’m talking about the one today. We are going to test it as to whether it gives the preeminent place. Not just an eminent place. It gives the preeminent place to the lord Jesus Christ. And there’s another thing. And this is very vital that many have forgotten. So many say well we do have to have the gift of tongues in order that we might have new truth from god. New revelations from god. A new disclosure of god's mind on a certain question or problem today. But my dear friends. Remember we now have a closed canon of scripture. The canon of scripture the number of books in the bible is not a
fluctuating thing. It’s through, and no one dares add to it. Revelation tells us that is not something that god views lightly. We dare not re open the canon. The canon of scripture is closed. Otherwise if you open the canon and say there are books equally authoritative, there are disclosures equally authoritative with the bible, then you must be prepared to take the books of 7th day Adventism by Ellen J white as authoritative. You must be willing to take the book by smith and others on Mormonism as authoritative. You must be willing to take the work of [inaudible] and theosophy. The fox sisters in Spiritism. And we could go on and on and on. Where would you stop? The canon would never be closed. You’d never know the mind of god because if you go to these other books that are supposed to be authoritative they contradict themselves. Even in the same area, if you don’t get the right edition of some of these books in these cults we call them, in these sects, you’d be amazed how they vary. And they just say well this is a later revelation. In one place were told that there may be plural marriages, there may be numerous marriages for one person. And but a later revelation says something else. God does not contradict himself in that fashion. No, we now have closed canon of scripture. Now let’s begin at the beginning. Where tongues mean languages. We find that in the revelation. There will be in heaven those of many peoples and nations and kindreds and tongues. That means languages. Now whence comes language. Where did plurality of languages start? We read in genesis 11, now the whole earth. This is after the flood. Now the whole earth used the same language. Notice it lan g u a g e. that’s the meaning of tongue. Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. My what a help that is. We often take folk on tour to the holy land. And as long as were in English speaking countries they feel very very comfortable. But soon as you go into a French country or a German country or a Spanish or Italian country or an Arab country or a country where they speak Hebrew, they are lost. They feel very very much out of place. Oh
languages are not a unifying force. Let’s hear this. They are not a unifying force. They as at babel in genesis 11 have been a separating force. How did languages begin? Well there was just one language from Adam on. Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. You and I are not left to guess that. It’s told. And notice the origin of numbers of languages. Are not that origin is not related to holiness. It isn’t that god said well they’re doing so well with one language among all of them, I’ll just do this. I will reward them and give them numbers of languages. Oh no no no no. the multiplicity of languages. The origin. The beginning of languages plural is related to sin and opposition to god. They wanted to set up a tower. And that tower was an idol tower as we know from archaeological research. Like the ziggurat. z i g g u r a t. like the ziggurats in mesopotamia. And god said. They want to build a tower to heaven. God was not afraid that they might make a skyscraper. I’ve been in planes over New York that’s supposed to have many skyscrapers. Neither one of them I assure you really scrapes the sky. So god wasn’t afraid of that. Gods not afraid of anything. He said this had they begun to do now nothing will be withholden from them which they purpose to do. They were wanting to put up a vicious diabolical satanic worship opposite to god of a non-entity. Of an idol. So friends, once and for all, multiplicity of languages. Now that seems great to us. Oh if anybody knows 5 or 6 languages, my he is somebody come. He is somebody as they say today out of this world. But multiplicity of languages isn’t a witness to man’s ingenuity. It is not a witness to man’s insight and wisdom. But to his sin and defection from god. It is used to keep men from one another. Satan uses it for that purpose. It is founded on man’s sin and opposition to god. God said I will stop this work of opposition to me. And I will do it definitely by changing their language. And god did that. They couldn’t build together when one man would ask for a 2 by 4 and somebody would give him a brick. Throw a brick over to him. No you can’t build that way.
So it was a separated thing and they were spread. Scripture says in genesis 11. They were spread from there throughout all the length and breadth of the earth. Multiplicity of languages isn’t some tremendous mark of wisdom. It isn’t something in which man can boast. He does, but he better remember that it was founded, it came from sin. Diabolical sin against the living god. And defection from god. Now the reason strange languages were introduced into the national life of Israel. Coming more particularly to Israel is found in Isaiah 28 verses 9 to 13. This passage is quoted in 1 Corinthians 14 as were going to be seeing a bit later. We’re going to be quoting these passages beloved because they are that important. Now let’s read this passage from scripture, Isaiah 28:9 to 13. To whom would he teach knowledge? And to whom would he interpret the message? We’ll be interpreting this in just a moment. Those just weaned from milk, those just taken from the breast? For he says order on order. Or line upon line. Order on order. Line on line. Line on line. A little here, a little there. Indeed he will speak to this people through stammering lips and foreign, notice that word. Foreign tongue. Strange tongue. He who said to them here is rest give rest to the weary. And here is repose but they wouldn’t listen. So the word of the lord to them will be order on order. Line upon line. Precept upon precept. Here a little there a little. Order on order. Order on order. Line on line. Line on line. Line on line. A little here a little there. Why? That they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared and taken captive. I’ve been reading then Isaiah 28 verse 9 to 13 to show the reason strange languages were introduced into the national life of Israel.