Glossolalia
(Speaking in Tongues)

Modern day Glossolalia is a phenomenon sometimes referred to as “ecstatic utterances,” is the uttering of unintelligible, language-like sounds while in a state of ecstasy. Glossolalia is sometimes confused with xenoglossia, which is the biblical “gift of tongues.” However, whereas glossolalia is babbling in a nonexistent language, xenoglossia is the ability to speak fluently a language the speaker has never learned.

The first mention of speaking in tongues in Scripture happened at Pentecost and is known as the start of the Christian church. (Acts 2:1-8) What is different from modern day speaking in tongues compared to Pentecost miracle? The difference is that all peoples of different languages understood. I am not sure if the miracle was with the speaker or the ears that heard. The Holy Spirit used this to communicate and to instruct. This was not some from of gibberish.

To have the gift of tongues is to speak to other people in a language that you do not understand. Sometimes it is something they needed to hear, maybe not what you were trying to communicate. Many times, I would preach a sermon, and someone would respond and say that the sermon spoke to them. They would relay what they heard and thinking about I never said such a thing. They heard what they needed to hear.

Sometimes that Holy Spirit will speak for us when we are unable to do so ourselves. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us. Have you ever been in a point in life that you were so hurt and knew you needed help but did not know how or what to ask for? We all have. In a private area go to the Lord in prayer and just pour out your heart in tears and agony. Ask God’s help in praying and then open our mouth and let it fly. (Romans 8:26) This can be a prayer language. Who knows you may be speaking the in the tongue of angels?

In just about every part of the world, glossolalia can be observed. Pagan religions all over the world are obsessed with tongues. These include the Shamans in the Sudan, the Shango cult of the West Coast of Africa, the Zor cult of Ethiopia, the Voodoo cult in Haiti, and the Aborigines of South
America and Australia. Murmuring or speaking gibberish that is construed to be deep mystical insight by holy men is an ancient practice.

The Greek oracle of Delphi would breathe volcanic fumes and speak in an unknown tongue.

There are some Christians, especially within the Pentecostal movement, who believe there is a supernatural explanation for glossolalia like that described in the New Testament. They believe that the chief purpose of the gift of speaking in tongues is to manifest the Holy Spirit being poured out upon them just as on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), which was prophesied by Joel (Acts 2:17).

Among those Christian churches who do espouse the practice of glossolalia to one degree or another, there is no uniform agreement as to its workings. For example, some are adamant that it is indeed a gift of the Holy Spirit, while others minimize its importance, saying Paul taught that the gift of “speaking in tongues” wasn’t nearly as important as the other gifts of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 13). Also, there are those wishing to avoid dividing the church on such issues by not speaking of it at all or dismissing it as a simple psychological experience. Then there are those who regard glossolalia as a deception of Satan himself.

Simply put, the practice of glossolalia is not the biblical gift of tongues. Paul made it clear that the chief purpose of the gift of speaking in tongues was to be a sign for those who did not believe and to spread the good news, the gospel of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:19, 22).