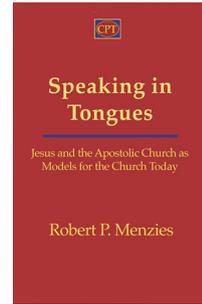


Book Review

Robert P. Menzies.
*Speaking in Tongues:
Jesus and the Apostolic Church as Models for the Church Today*
Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2016.
ISBN: 978-1935931560. \$17.95 & £14.41.

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Spirit baptism is the ‘crown jewel’ of Pentecostalism, and to the classical Pentecostal, is evidenced by speaking in other tongues. Robert P. Menzies is the Director of the Asian Centre for Pentecostal Theology and is concerned that Pentecostal pastors in his native USA tend to downplay the theology and practice of speaking in tongues. He cites three fears which pastors need to overcome if they want their churches to ‘experience the joy of speaking in tongues, and in so doing recapture power of Pentecost and follow in the apostolic model’ (p.5). These three fears are the reason for which the book was written and are ‘the fear of disagreement,’ ‘fear of embarrassment’ and ‘fear of excess.’ He suggests that to alleviate and overcome such fears requires an understanding of the biblical mandate which will furnish Pentecostal leaders with the confidence that speaking in tongues is an experience which every believer can and should experience.

Menzies seeks to do this in 168 pages carefully structured in four sections:

- Part One: Luke & Tongues,
- Part Two: Jesus & Tongues,
- Part Three: Paul & Tongues, and
- Conclusion: The value of tongues.

In Part One, Menzies presents the role of tongues in the church and the believer’s life from

Luke’s perspective. He cites a faulty assumption which is that glossolalia was either non-existent or only given to a limited few. Coupled with this is the idea that the New Testament depicts ‘speaking in tongues’ as the supernatural ability to preach in a foreign language unknown to the speaker. Menzies corrects these assumptions by appealing to the occurrences of tongues in Acts and Corinth. He demonstrates how that in 1 Corinthians, the gift of tongues when exercised by the believer, is a spoken, unintelligible utterance inspired by the Spirit, and when given publicly requires interpretation. He examines Luke’s gospel and Acts and posits that in Acts, speaking in tongues is a type of prophecy. He rightly asserts its association with prophetic utterances, and therefore the recipients of this phenomenon in Acts are ‘part of the end-time prophetic band of which Joel prophesied.’ In Joel’s prophecy, Menzies notes Luke’s subtle modifications to ‘highlight important theological themes and truths’ (p.22) which show that Luke anticipates such phenomena to characterize the ministry of the church in the last days and that tongues to have an ongoing role in the life of the church. However, Menzies may have inadvertently created confusion to the debate as to whether tongues are spoken to God or man when he refers to them as ‘prophetic speech’ and a ‘manifestation of prophecy’.

He next addresses the role of tongues in the life of the individual and asks if Luke envisions speaking in tongues as being available to all

believers. In addition to examining Luke's frequent references to 'Spirit-inspired praise', Menzies notes a parallel between Jesus sending out the Seventy (Luke 10:1-16) and God putting His Spirit on the Seventy elders to assist Moses (Numbers 11:24-30). Given that Spirit-inspired praise and prophesying occur regularly in Luke's gospel, Menzies's attempt to use such as a means of suggesting that Luke envisaged every believer to speak in tongues is unconvincing.

In Part Two, Menzies explores what the New Testament says about Jesus' experience of and attitude towards tongues. A key Scripture is Luke 10:21: 'He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said...' Menzies states that Luke connects the verb 'to rejoice' (Luke 1:47; 10:21; Acts 2:26) to the inspiration of the Spirit. He proposes that it is Jesus' tongue that 'rejoices'. There is, therefore, a connection with Luke's references to speaking in tongues. Such a connection might suggest that Luke and the early church may have understood this phrase from Psalm 16:9 as a reference to speaking in tongues and the possibility of Jesus practicing it (p.51).

In chapter four, Menzies seeks to strengthen his proposal that speaking in tongues marked Jesus' prayer life, by taking into consideration that the signs which Jesus spoke of in the 'long ending of Mark' except handling snakes and drinking poison have parallels elsewhere in Luke-Acts. He cites Job20:16 as 'the interpretative key to Mark 16:18' (p.74) and suggests that it gave rise to the inspiration of Jesus' words, and so strengthens the case for 'the long ending of Mark' and for Jesus speaking in tongues.

In Part Three, Menzies considers Paul's teaching that all believers should experience tongues. He refers to other scholars such as Fee and Turner to provide a helpful background to the Corinthian context while

specifically interacting with Carson and Turner in formulating a compelling case for every believer to speak in tongues. In tackling Paul's rhetorical question, 'Do all speak in tongues?' (1 Corinthians 12:30b), Menzies challenges Turner's apparent lack of faith in Paul's readers to note the distinction between the private and corporate expression of the gift of tongues. To bring closure to the argument, Menzies expounds on Paul's wish that all would speak in tongues.

Having examined Luke and Paul's material about speaking in tongues, Menzies reconciles their respective emphases, beginning with their perspective of tongues as a 'sign'. He presents an excellent treatment of Paul's reference to Isaiah 28 and in doing so shows that Luke and Paul's perspectives are not so different after all. Chapter seven shows Paul's appreciation of the gift of tongues as a means of prayer, praise, and proclamation. In appealing to Romans 8:26, Menzies encourages by highlighting the Spirit's role to help us in our weaknesses, but again appears dogmatic in stating that the text is describing tongues as a means of intercessory prayer (p.139).

He concludes by drawing together various insights from Mark, Luke-Acts and Paul's letters as a means of theological reflections structured around six central observations.

This book succeeds in its primary objective in furnishing pastors with a biblical mandate to overcome fears and so recapture the power of Pentecost. It's not only relevant to leadership but also to the individual. His conclusions and applications at the end of each chapter are especially useful in this respect. The book's title dictates the flow of the book, and he presents the material in a coherent and readable manner. Menzies demonstrates good

scholarship and interacts with the Greek- text and the Septuagint as well as with notable scholars such as Carson, Fee, and Turner. In comparison with other works, he has proposed two novel suggestions which are the possibility that Jesus spoke in tongues and that Job 20:16 inspired Jesus' words at the end of Mark's gospel. Although both suggestions are compelling, they aren't convincing. Menzies on a few occasions appears to be dogmatic in some assertions and suppositions which can't be scripturally substantiated. He does, however, offer pastoral counsel with sensitivity to those who are seeking the 'Pentecostal baptism' but as yet haven't spoken in tongues. Overall, the book has a valuable and challenging contribution in this specific area of pneumatology.

