

# The divine Origin of Languages: A Biblical View

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## Abstract:

*“But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart,  
that you may do it. (Deuteronomy 30:14)*

Where is the word? Can be a question asked to God. The answer that He has given reveals the faculties that engage man in language production activities as we read in above verse. God has birthed everything through His spoken word and power that sustains His word. But when man was created through the breath of Elohim He came into man and made His dwelling with him. This is a unique characteristic of man that he can speak. The very purpose of man's existence was to have fellowship and communion with God. Therefore, man received a special gift of speech with which he would express everything that he experienced. The relationship between God and man is of a mysterious nature and of an intimate kind. Wherein God has revealed His heart to man. Ever since when God began to talk with man the life has gained a meaning and an eternal value.

**Key Words:** language, God, power, fellowship, gift of tongues, voice, sign, linguistic, Holy Spirit, prophet.

## Discussion and Interpretation:

In the letter to Hebrews 1:3 Apostle Paul makes it clear that God upholds and controls things, the whole universe by the word of His power. Here, we must note and understand the basic and fundamental difference of God's language and power. The fact is that God's words contain power both to cause and to effect as is evident in creation. Whereas, human words do not possess power and authority like that of God in translating both the realms. Although, to some extent, if God permits, depending on the need and crisis of man.

It is through the speech and language the things are communicated and made intelligible to human mind. The very means of communication has expressed itself in various forms across the world, over a period of 6000 years it is important to examine and consider what has happened with the languages? Where did they originate? What was the purpose behind the language diversity in the world?

In this context the Holy Bible gives us much in detail about dealings of God with languages of men. There are scores of references that help find and locate some interventions from God in speech development and has affected changes in it that I wish to constitute and analyze in this paper.

We find God has related and contacted man at various situations, circumstances and incidences, events, specifically where the role of language became significant one. The places such as where Adam was told to name the things in Genesis 2; at the tower of Babel, when God confounded the speeches of its builders; when God wanted to deliver His message to servants the prophets; lastly, the prophecy of Christ about 'new languages' and the day of Pentecost are the major events which stand to appeal the reader to delve deep into it to signify what it can mean to us.

At the very beginning in Genesis 1:1 we are informed that God called out the creation into existence that was not. In John 1:1 we are revealed that God is Word. And, therefore, He engages Himself with language by uttering His Voice. In furtherance, we find Adam His best masterpiece of creation, wanting to invest authority and rule over the earth breathed His Spirit into his nostrils and told Adam to name the creation. Ever since, the naming of things by Adam's progeny has not ended. Adam received a unique gift of word expression so whatever he attributed a thing became the name of it. No other creature is endowed with such a wonderful blessing of uttering words. Here we find the real purpose with which God created Adam to have fellowship with him in which God would teach Adam the hidden wisdom of God. God would come to visit him and speak with him whenever He wished. Thus, we can conclude that everyone can talk in prayer to God and God could talk to everyone in return. His infinite ability to listen to billions of

souls and answer them is surpassingly great and mysterious. So we see the world of man possessing language and engaged in conversations while relating to each other in various mundane matters.

With the use of language man began to venture big projects and imagine unthinkable. This is what exactly took place as narrated in Genesis 11, the ambitious men engineered a plan of constructing a tower that could reach heaven itself in their prideful feat. As united and determined they looked in their understanding it seemed nothing difficult to reach that height of heaven. And the project advanced speedily to the highest peak because of their smooth and efficient coordinated effort. It was not too late to the understanding of the Almighty, their movement, when He suddenly descended upon them heavily filling their mouths with strange tongues not able to understand each other's language. Whole world of theirs was fallen apart. To a brick some called by name they did not understand its meaning (if people from different language groups speak unintelligently each other's language can result in a meaningless sound, a mere babble. Same was the situation at the Tower of Babel). Its result was the dispersion and mixing of codes which they could not follow or read. The incident accounts for the origins of various languages that they had no prior knowledge or its understanding. The Almighty had enthralled men by exhibiting His power over languages in an extraordinary way.

Saussure had considered language as "...both a social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions..." (9). But the language as a social construct without giving place to God's will had proved itself a great disastrous endeavor. The linguistic construction implied just the play of difference without God at its centrality of meaning. The will of God was excluded from their agenda of the puffed up minds. Therefore, the project collapsed with a great crash. Language as a social construct was impossible on its own. It should have been in line with God's objective will. God wanted men to follow His word and will. And the need of obedient servants who would carry out His commands was required as well as to dictate the message and the will of God to His people to lead them in the right path.

God, then and now sent the messengers for His word, the men chosen from among men became the translators of God's message and will. God began speaking to His servants in varieties of ways. When Moses met God His voice from the bush came to shepherd the Israelites. Then further it is written of Moses that he spoke face to face with God but could not see His face.

Exodus 33:11, 20

"so the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend..."

v 20 "And the Lord said, "You cannot see My face;..."

Likewise, there are many instances God coming in the midst of Israelites and speaking to His servants. As for the prophet Samuel God spoke to him in an audible voice as he was lying down,

"Now the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel!

Samuel!" And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears." (1 Samuel 3:10)

One of the ways in which God spoke to His servant was the language of visions, through which God communicated the message and gave revelations of Himself. He also heard the voiced words of God that He spoke to Ezekiel as can be read in Ezekiel 1:4-25.

Another person who understood the language of God was Job. Job described some ways in which God speaks to man. According to Job God speaks to men in a dream, vision or when man falls asleep or in slumbering,

"For God may speak in one way, or in another,

Yet man does not perceive it.

In a dream, in a vision of the night,

When deep sleep falls upon men,

While slumbering on their beds,

Then He opens the ears of men,

And search their instruction” (Job 33:14-16)

There can be subtle deception in understanding the meanings of the dreams. Therefore a dream requires a proper context in which the meaning should be interpreted. The context can be immediate past, present and future course of actions that the dream stands to illustrate within which the meaning should be sought and located.

Thundering is another way in which God asserts His presence and sends the message.

2 Samuel 22:14,

“The Lord thundered from heaven,  
And the Most High uttered His voice.”

(also see Revelation 19:6)

Then at the end, we have the absolute and ultimate voice from heaven, the ‘transcendental signified’, the Lord Jesus Christ, the center of everything that exists. Who declared in John 6:63, that

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.

The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life.”

Here, we meet the language of all life and essences spoken in Christ’s words. He is the one who heralded the prophecy of ‘new languages.’

In Mark 16:17 Christ spoke about many missions to His apostles among them one was the baptism of the Holy Spirit, in which the believers would speak ‘new tongues’ is mentioned.

“The fact that Jesus said these new tongues or languages, would be a “sign” indicates that the ability to speak them would not come as the result of normal linguistic study” (Batchelor 6).

Since then the Church has witnessed the evolution of thousands of languages emerging from various parts of the world. This prophecy is being fulfilled.

There was something more to this that Christ had promised the Pentecost. The apostles and believers had hardly any clear knowledge of it. But when this awesome promise was poured on them, it dawned a new beginning of an era full of heavenly light. In the event of Pentecost a very significant change was manifested. The artificial language learning was put aside and a direct utterance of new words was given through the power of the Holy Spirit. J. Massingberd Ford opines that

“The gift of tongues could be regarded as a concrete sign, by the giving of an unlearned language, that thus the function of speech is re-created, a symbol of divine inspiration given again to man” (22).

It was a total parabolic reversal to the incident of the tower of Babel, wherein, God had confounded the speeches of men. But in Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended from heaven as described in Acts 2:3-12 a direct injection of the Holy Spirit empowered and enabled the believers to speak in any language according to Spirit’s will of which the person may never have its acquaintance.

The phenomenon was further well explained by apostle Paul thoroughly in his letters to the church of Corinthians. And gave a final remark on languages saying in Corinthians 14:10,

“There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world,  
and none of them is without significance.”

In reference to the Holy Spirit school of languages he reveals the purpose of the heavenly tongues. On the Pentecost Day we meet at the crossroads of earthly languages and pure heavenly tongues. Here the dispensation of the artificial schools of languages had taken effect. And a new construction in the spiritual history of mankind had begun. What the purpose of new construction was explicated by Paul in many ways,

1. 1 Corinthians 2:13 it is spoken to expresses the will of God,
2. 1 Corinthians 14:2 to utter mysteries of God.
3. 1 Corinthians 12:1,4 to give revelation in words not permitted to natural mind,
4. John 3:3-8 to establish our spiritual identity of being born again.

5. To translate the higher and unseen realm, and
6. To understand the supernatural world of spirits.

In conclusion I would like to stress that heavens constitute a new world, therefore, it requires to understand in new terms, words, and expressions. And the gift of tongues opens up the heavenly realm and reads into its mysteries, interprets and explains them. That which is concealed is revealed to us for our future guidance. For example, the book of Revelation gives us an eschatological view. The languages of the earthly living may not find its perfect vocabulary in dictionaries which is limited by time. Thus, anyone thinking of heavenly subject will also find and know its language for description.

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