

# Tongues:

## A Biblical View

By Ovid Need, Jr.

*"The beautiful packaging and excitement of the Charismatic movement ensnares sincere born-again Christians, but what are they getting into? Is this movement making its huge inroads into good Bible-believing churches simply because God's people don't know the Scriptures or because they want something that makes them feel good, or is there more to it? If one attempts to say anything against this movement, he is accused of sinning against the "Holy Ghost." But is he? "*

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## Introduction

Please keep the following in mind as we examine some things from Scripture concerning the modern day Charismatic Movement:

First, I do not believe the dividing line for Scriptural fellowship in our day can be drawn at "the gifts." Rather, the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ should be the measure of fellowship; world-wide judgment is coming over the issue of "**WHO IS LORD?**": Christ, the state, self, or any one of the many gods of this world? Second, this study is in no way an attack upon anyone; there are many

people who believe in "the gifts" with whom we have stood side by side on many issues. The issue is not "the gifts" but "**WHO IS LORD OVER EVERYTHING?**" Third, the purpose of this study is to closely examine God's word in our confusing age of many doctrines (Acts 17:11. Note that they searched the OT Scriptures. We could avoid a lot of false doctrine if we did so as well). Fourth, we do not believe (as some do) that those who practice "the gifts" are, as a rule, doing it under demonic influence, but history clearly reveals that tongues (ecstatic speech) can result from demonic activity; therefore, this can be a danger (can you imagine having so much of the Holy Spirit that there is a danger of demonic activity?). We feel that much of the practice of "the gifts" (tongues; also healing other than as described in Ja 5) stems from an emotional experience. We will develop the reasons for this belief in the following pages.

This booklet contains a study which I was compelled to do here at Linden Baptist Church. We had a young couple visit our services with another young couple. When they came a couple of Sundays and didn't come back, another man and I went by to see them; they told us this story:

His mother went to a "charismatic" church. When

she found out that her children had come to visit with us, she started inviting them over for dinner on Sunday if they would attend her church. Up until this time she had had nothing to do with them, but suddenly, as soon as they showed an interest in the Lord, she swooped down on them like a vulture.

The thing which upset me and brought about this study was that as soon as she found out they had come to visit us, she sent her pastor by to see them. He went by on a Sunday afternoon and spent two hours explaining to the couple the importance of speaking in tongues. He never once mentioned the importance of salvation or of serving God; his only message was "speak in tongues." (Since then he was sent to prison for defrauding a bank out of about \$500,000.00.) When we went by to see them, they both told me about his visit. We shared the gospel with them, and as a result, they both professed trust in Christ. They came back to LBC a couple more times, but they were unable to endure his mother's pressure; she would not leave them alone. It was easier for them to go nowhere at all than to face the "tongues" pressure, so now they are nowhere. When they quit coming here, she subsequently lost interest in them.

I realize this incident probably is not typical with all charismatic, but we have found it typical. The **BIG QUESTION** is "tongues;" if you don't participate, you aren't as spiritual as you could and should be. As I said, this situation drove me to do some diligent research on the matter, so here we are.

This study is divided into five sections: first, the history of the movement; I must confess that much of the historical material is not original with me. I used several resources to develop the history of the charismatic movement which are still available, which I highly recommend: The Corinthian Catastrophe by George E. Gardiner, Kregel Publishing. We also used Mr. Gardiner's series of tapes on the spiritual gifts, recorded at Bangor Baptist Church, Bangor, ME 04401. Mr. Gardiner was involved in the movement for several years; therefore, he speaks from inside knowledge. In '73, he was pastor of Calvary Church in Grand Rapids, MI. Another resource would be Charismatic Gift of Tongues by Ronald E. Baxter, also by Kregel Publishing.

If involvement in the "Charismatic Movement" is a prerequisite for dealing with this issue, then I am by no means an expert; I have never been involved. But does one have to be involved in

something to know how God speaks concerning the issue? Therefore, let me lay this basic foundation for this study: The **WORD OF GOD** must be our basis for what we need to confront. The **WORD OF GOD** alone **MUST** be the basis of all we believe and practice, not our own experiences (2 Tim 3:16).

Chapter one deals with the secular history of the modern tongues movement; Chapter two deals with the NT background from Acts; Chapter three deals with the historical background from Corinthians; Chapter four examines the OT usage of tongues; Chapter five defines "What is spiritual?"; and finally Chapter six draws some obvious Biblical conclusions.

Let me close the Introduction with this statement: from what I have observed, if those involved in the charismatic movement were as concerned that others were saved and working to advance the kingdom of God (Mat 6:33 & 28:19, 20) as they are concerned that they "have the gifts," we would see revival and America turned back to God. Furthermore, let me define salvation here as total and complete trust in the redemptive work of Christ (See [The Other Jesus](#), by this author).

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## Chapter One

### Secular History of Modern Tongues.

#### Observations

It seems as though we are being bombarded with the charismatic movement everywhere: on the job, from our friends and neighbors, and via the media. Due to Mr. Baxter's exceptionally good introduction to this movement, I will paraphrase what he says: [1](#)

Because the Charismatic movement is experience-oriented, it adapts itself very well to the electronic show place; there is always a smiling Johnny Carson style host; audience involvement is encouraged; applause and phone banks are shown and heard; viewers are urged to phone in their requests for prayer or counseling or to tell of a miracle; there is an air of excitement and activity; it is kept very up-beat; the guests are as varied and prominent as possible, and the music is a cross-section in taste.

Everything is joyful, intense, emotional and studiously child-

like; **AND IT WORKS.** "Funds" flow in like water, but is it spontaneous? Is it a movement of God or a result of man's production and organizational genius?

Furthermore, Mr. Baxter gives a good statement by one whose sympathies lie with the Charismatic movement: "The movement is man-inspired, if not man-made;" it "cannot claim complete spontaneity." Thus, even those within to the movement admit that it is not a spontaneous movement of the Spirit of God; it is man-induced.

In living rooms across America sit confused people who, by the means of the electronic media and an exceptionally good advertising campaign, are bombarded daily by this movement with its big churches and beautiful facilities; it looks and sounds exciting when contrasted with their dull day to day existence. Those who are watching or listening wonder, "Could this marvelous exciting experience be for me also?" And they send their money in, hoping they can become part of it.

Its beauty

The beautiful packaging and excitement ensnares sincere born-again Christians, but what are they getting into? Is this movement making its huge inroads into good Bible-believing churches because God's people don't know the Scriptures or because they want something that makes them feel good (and this does make one feel good)? Furthermore, if one attempts to say anything against this movement, he is accused of sinning against the "Holy Ghost." But is he?

Those promoting this movement can "tie most Christians up in knots" with the few Scriptures they know; they can emphasize the emotional things of God's word, yet many times the total of God's law-word and His requirements upon His people are completely unknown to them. Many "Charismatics" can quote Acts 2 and 1

Corinthians 12, 13 & 14, but if one tries to question them concerning 2 Peter 2:1-3; Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 27-31, he gets little response. Of course, this characteristic is not unique with Charismatics; most Christians are well studied in their "pet" doctrine while almost totally ignorant of God's total law.

Along with the rise of the "Charismatic experience oriented" movement is also a rise in occult, witchcraft, Eastern mystic religions and a "myself" oriented Christianity in general. If tongues were actually a sign of being "filled with the Holy Spirit," then these ungodly things would be on the decrease as the "gifts" increase. Generally, in both Charismatic Christianity and Eastern religions, there is a "turning in," a dealing with and satisfying of "my emotions," "my feelings" and "my self." The emphasis of modern Christianity (Charismatic in particular) and Eastern religions is on the individual's experience rather than upon the word of God.

## Europe

It is important that we understand some historical background so we can see where we are and why it has influenced some of our major doctrines. Therefore, at this point we will cover a brief history of the current day Charismatic movement. Since "the gifts" as we know them first appeared in Europe, we will start with their European appearances and trace them into the U.S.

From the death of the Apostle John (about 100-110 A.D.) to the early 1800's, there was only one other instance in church history of this type of movement. The outbreak occurred under the teachings of Montanus about 156 A.D., while Polycarp, a disciple of John, was still alive and pastor at Smyrna. The "supernatural" outbreak occurred even though Polycarp said the gifts of the apostles had ceased. (It was carried on by two women who left their husbands to follow Montanus.) The early church completely rejected Montanus'

teachings and the phenomena ceased. [2](#)

"The gifts" remained silent until the early 1800's and Edward Irving. By the age of sixteen, Irving was a licensed Presbyterian minister (1815) with an M. A. Degree from Edinburg University. [3](#)

Also about this time another man named John Darby came into prominence; he was a founder of the Plymouth Brethren movement and counts many famous men as his followers, including C.I. Scofield. Darby was ordained an Anglican priest at the age of twenty (1826), having graduated from Trinity College at the age of eighteen. In 1825, a group of people had become completely fed up with the dead formal Protestant Church of Ireland and England; therefore, in the town of Plymouth, they started home Bible-study and prayer groups. Darby, also disenchanted with the Anglican Church in Ireland, started meeting with these groups in 1827. Their first project was to attack the deadness and formalism of the organized Anglican Church and the corrupted ordained ministry. These groups adopted the name Plymouth Brethren after the town where they were organized, Plymouth. [4](#)

Until the time of John Darby there was no dispensational teaching as we know it today other than what was taught by Marcion in the middle of the second century A.D. This was also dealt with as a heresy by the early church. [5](#)

In 1826, a wealthy banker Henry Drummond sponsored a series of prophetic conferences at his villa at Albury Park, England (1826-1830). Irving came to these meetings and presented his prophetic views which included his views of the renewal of "the gifts." At the Albury Conference, he heard of a charismatic revival of "the gifts" which had broken out in Ireland and became ecstatic. From the Albury Conference, there was a delegation sent to investigate. In addition, throughout the fall of 1830, there were prayer meetings held in private homes in London seeking an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. One of these homes was the home of J.B. Cardale, the leader of the delegation to Scotland to investigate the charismatic

revival, where the first known case of speaking in tongues in England occurred. A short time later the Cardales joined Irving's church (Incredible, pg. 28).

The "tongues and prophesying" soon became a regular occurrence in Irving's Presbyterian Church. The trustees responded by voting and locking him out of the church. Undaunted, he went down the street and started his own church, The Catholic Apostolic Church. It was after his tract that his home church (Presbyterian) voted to withdraw his ordination. He was so convinced that his doctrine of Christ's nature was correct that the vote devastated him and he died shortly thereafter.

The 1830 charismatic revival investigated by the Cardales in Scotland was at Port Glasgow. It was Margaret McDonald's "word of prophecy" which, for the first time in church history, divided the second advent of Christ into two parts: the "rapture of the church" (her vision has since become known as the "Pre-trib rapture of the church"). Margaret's friend, Mary Campbell, was the first person to speak in unknown tongues, Sunday evening, March 28, 1830, and Margaret's brothers spoke in unknown tongues on Friday, April 6, 1830. Then Margaret herself spoke in unknown tongues from her sick bed, "With her word of prophecy" (Ibid, pgs. 52-56). About two months later, one of Margaret's older sisters wrote to Robert Norton of Margaret undergoing another "outpouring of the spirit" followed the same day by her brother James' endowment of the spirit and Margaret's "supernatural" healing from her illness. Her recovery made her a much sought-after speaker.

**Observe:** 1) 1828, Irving felt the apostolic gifts were for the present age. This idea was not new with him; the early church had dealt with it as heresy. 2) Irving was involved in the Albury prophetic conference in England. 3) To this conference came the word of the charismatic revival in Port-Glasgow, Scotland, where the McDonalds were speaking "the word of prophecy," tongues and

healings. As was Irving, the McDonalds were a Presbyterian family. 4) A delegation headed by Cardale is sent from the Albury Conference to investigate "the outpouring" at Port-Glasglow. A group of people in Irving's church spends the fall of 1830 seeking the same "outpouring." 5) Cardale's wife speaks in tongues; the Cardales join Irving's church. 6) Because of Irving's views concerning the nature of Christ and of the "gifts," his Presbyterian Church locks him and his followers out. 7) Irving starts his own church, The Catholic Apostolic Church, which, with its continued emphasis on tongues, exists to this day.

Also at the Albury Park meetings was the wealthy widow, Lady Powerscourt. Her increased interest in prophecy caused her to establish her own prophetic meetings in her home, Powerscourt House, Dublin, Ireland (1830's) (Ibed, pgs. 26-36). John Darby (a founder of the Plymouth Brethren), with his dispensationalism, became the leader of these meetings.

Irving had received hand-written copies of Margaret's revelations and Darby, upon hearing of what was taking place, had visited her personally in her home (Ibed, pg. 196). (Irving also held the idea that disease was a sin and that no man with faith in the Lord should be overpowered by it. We see this doctrine still around today.) Therefore, in addition to Darby's dispensational views, he also brought with him to the Powerscourt meetings Margaret's word of prophecy concerning the "secret Pre-trib rapture" which came out of her revival of the charismatic gifts of tongues, prophecy and healing.

(Irving said of his movement: "This outpouring is known in Scriptures as the latter rain... (Charismatic Gift of Tongues, pg. 117. In reference to this, please check Paul's words of Acts 14:17, where he identifies Christ as the latter rain which brings forth fruit in its season, filling our hearts with good and gladness)." There is so much more which took place in Irving's Apostolic Church which is still with us that we can't even begin to go into it. From its humble beginnings with Irving, the movement went world-wide. Irving

passed off the scene, but Darby was around for many more years. Darby came to the U.S. [1877] promoting the prophetic views which he acquired from McDonald and Irving, but being a lawyer, he knew better than to reveal the origin of his theories. <sup>6</sup>

## The U.S.A.

Now let's trace "the gifts" in the U.S. Pastor George Gardiner <sup>7</sup> picks up the history of the movement from the late 1800's when the preaching in the U.S. had become very dead. In 1896, a Southern Baptist preacher in N.C., Richard Sparling, said the first century gifts were now back in the world. Out of Sparling's revival came the Thomplison Brothers, founders of the Southern Church of God whose college is now on the old Bob Jones campus (Lee College). No doubt it is only a consequence that Sparling came to his conclusion just after Darby's visit to the U.S.

In 1901, there was a small Bible college in Topeka, Kansas, named Bethel Bible College, operated by a man named Charles Parham (in trouble most of the time). Mr. Parham encouraged his few students to try to find gifts which were now being restored. On Jan. 1, 1901, a young lady named Angus Ausman went into the prayer tower and came down after midnight saying that she had received the first century gift of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and had spoken in tongues. Soon the whole student body became involved and began to spread the "good news" across the country. The word spread to Houston, TX, to a black Nazarene evangelist named W.J. Seymore, who was caught up and "received the experience."

Seymore ended up in Los Angeles at a Nazarene church on Bonny Bray Street where he opened his meeting by giving the testimony of his experience. Although the elders of the Nazarene church closed the meeting, wanting nothing to do with this, the congregation was very interested; Seymore and the people went down the street to a closed up Methodist church on Azusa Street, opened it, and he preached his experience. This is still widely known and talked about in Charismatic circles as the "Azusa Street

Revival." The meeting went on for years as people came from all over the world while the "word" of the renewal of "the gifts" spread, and there were many strange things which took place in this meeting. In fact, there is not one thing taking place today different from what took place in the late 1800's and early 1900's in these meetings (This is adapted from George Garner's tape series).

From 1907-1940 there was a rapid growth in the Charismatic movement but very little unity; it was badly split and divided among themselves. Some believed that one must receive Christ then tarry until baptized with the Holy Spirit; others believed one is saved first then must be entirely sanctified because the Holy Spirit would never indwell a life not entirely sanctified; still others believed that one must be saved and then baptized in the name of Jesus in order to be fully saved, and then later, one could be sanctified and thus ready for baptism in the Holy Spirit.

In Detroit, a lady named Mrs. Beal started a work handing out "spiritual gifts" enmass, including the gift of sending people to hell and speaking in the unknown language (unknown to the speaker) of whatever country one happened to be in. These meetings sometimes went on for days with no breaks for food or rest. As a result, some folks suffered nervous breakdowns and suicides, but there were thinking people who saw there was something wrong with all of this, and the movement began to decrease in numbers.

After WW II came tent meetings and Oral Roberts with his followers, one of whom was a very important man to the movement, Damus Shacarian. He came from a very rich family in California, had been involved in the Azusa St. Revival, and was the "set-up" man for Oral Roberts in the 50's and 60's. The timing was perfect for an exciting, experience-oriented religion: it was right after the war with much social unrest (comparable to the time of Richard Sparling and the Bethel Bible College), dead churches and a great spiritual hunger. Damus saw the opportunity, so he

approached Oral Roberts pointing out that they were not reaching his (Damas' upper-class) society; they were reaching the older society yet not making any inroads into the established churches. He told Roberts that he had an idea. "Why not," he said, "go around the churches directly to the people, especially to the business community?" Keep in mind that he is talking of reaching people in dead formal churches, tired of getting the "power of positive thinking" messages. Shacarian realized that the deadness was leaving a tremendous vacuum in the land, so he said, "Let's reach this group of people. Let's hire a hotel room, get these business people together, let them have a drink or cigarette if they want to and give them the 'good news' that they can have instant communication with God through the 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit.'" Oral Roberts led their first meeting in L.A. with 21 in attendance. This meeting started "The Full Gospel Businessmen Association," which has financed the whole movement.

## The "Holy Ghost" Corrupted

It is important to see that this "Baptism" is offered apart from personal holiness and obedience to *every word which proceeds from the mouth of God*. Is it any wonder that it has been so well financed as it draws in a vast number of folks who want this "baptism" apart from holiness. (The FGBA uses first class promotion; their publications are slick & beautiful because of their unlimited funding.) These business people went back and talked to other church members whom they brought back to the meetings; the meetings grew, and soon the preachers were affected.

In Mt. Vernon, N.Y., a minister in The Reform Church of America, Herold Breedenson, heard of the movement and became involved. He led the revival at Yale with Protestants, Catholics, Jews, infidels and agnostics in attendance; they all had the same experience of speaking in tongues. The Charismatic cry is, "all people and denominations are involved in this movement," and in a broad

sense, they are.

Wheaton College, in its "Spiritual Emphasis Week" several few years ago, brought back a former professor to speak, Dr. Gorden. In his remarks he said, "I am a committed, practicing Charismatic," and for a week at Wheaton, he preached this to the student body.

Consider the unholy unity.

The Charismatics are no longer called "Holy Rollers;" their long dresses are gone, and they are now the "in-crowd," all inclusive and beautifully packaged. Furthermore, the movement looks real, appeals to the flesh and equates gain with godliness; Paul clearly tells us how to respond to those who promote this doctrine (1 Tim 6:5). Yet there is a desperate problem: people who make no profession of God or Christ (even deny His deity) are receiving the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" with speaking in tongues. Can this be the Holy Spirit as revealed in God's Holy Word?

In 1973, at Notre Dame University, Cardinal Suens of Belgium said that since he had received the experience of the "Baptism with speaking in tongues," his allegiance to the holy father as the one Vicar of Christ in the world had been strengthened, his appreciation of the Mass as the sacrifice of Christ had been heightened and he saw in the movement the heads of all churches uniting together and coming back to the Mother Church. How can anyone who knows Scripture even remotely agree with Suens?

In this movement, we see all Bible doctrine laid aside as the common ground for unity, replaced with a common experience (2 Jn 10); there are numerous quotes by people involved in this movement calling "common experience" the ground for unity regardless of the doctrinal stand of those involved (1 Jn. 2:20-26).

## Conclusion for us

What can we learn from this movement? First, enjoy our liberty in the gospel. Have we surrounded the genuine good news (salvation, freedom, &c.) with so much ceremony that we have taken the enjoyment out of it? In Romans 6:17, Paul discusses three areas: obeyed.. will and action; *from the heart..* emotions, and *form of doctrine..*, the mind. God has given us a will, emotions and mind; He wants all three areas saved and serving Him. We need to learn to honestly praise the Lord. The sad-faced people who claim to have the truth would be enough to drive anyone to anything with some excitement in it, regardless of the Scriptures. Second, we must learn to accept Scripture over experience; we must learn to examine all things in the light of all Scripture. Third, we must learn to look past the glamour of personalities. Far too often, behind "charismatic" personalities lies some very greedy folks. One of Oral Roberts' former employees said of Mr. Roberts, "It's hard to save souls from a Rolls," making one wonder about the motivation.

We need to learn to praise the Lord and to enjoy our freedom in Christ from sin and guilt, but we must avoid being carried away by some experience. When folks set out to look for a good emotional experience over doctrinal soundness, they will find it from the wrong source.

## Footnotes

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1. Charismatic Gift of Tongues, pgs. 123-4. [Back](#)
2. See The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, J. Hastings, 1915,

Vol. VIII, pgs. 828-831, for a complete treatment of Montanus. Also, Schaff's History--, Vol. II, pgs. 415-427. [Back](#)

**3. The Incredible Cover-up**, pg. 27, by Dave McPherson. Logos Books. He became a well-known preacher in London, drawing thousands to his prophetic conferences (1826-1833). His congregation grew so much that he had to build a new church in 1827. As early as 1828, Irving had decided that the spiritual gifts of the apostolic age really belonged to the church of all ages and that they had largely disappeared because of a lack of faith. (He has been called "The father of modern Pentecostalism." Ibed, page 28.) In 1833, Irving wrote a tract asserting that Jesus had a fallen nature kept in control by the Holy Spirit; shortly after that tongues broke out in his congregation. Heresy proceedings were started against him and he was removed from the pastorate in 1833. He died shortly thereafter in 1834. See The Incredible Cover-up. [Back](#)

**4. A note in passing:** Darbyism is another name for dispensationalism. [Back](#)

**5. Five Books against MARCION.** The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. III, pgs. 269-475, Eerdmans. [Back](#)

**6. Incredible**, pgs. 78-79. See our Darby vs The Baptist. [Back](#)

**7. Tape #1, History of the Charismatic Movement**. [Back](#)

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### Chapter Two NT History From Acts

With a sigh of relief for some, we have the historical background of the modern charismatic movement out of the way. Now let us move into the Scriptures.

Tongues are mentioned twenty-nine times in the NT, twenty in I Corinthians 12, 13, 14, once in the gospels (Mk 16:17), three times in Acts and none in the Revelation. In Acts 2 we see that when Peter stood up to speak, all could understand him;

he spoke in specific dialects. Therefore, to duplicate Peter's actions in any part, one must be able to go to any busy downtown street of any multi-language city, preach the gospel of Christ's death, burial, resurrection and enthronement in heaven, and his hearers understand his message (which was spoken in English) in their native tongue.

Moreover, notice that in the NT there were no "tarrying meetings." The disciples had been commanded to wait, but instead of being on their knees praying and/or agonizing, they were probably sitting (Lk 24:49, same word as in 1 Cor 10:7). In addition, nowhere in the NT are Christians commanded to seek the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit."

## Acts

The church in Acts, which gives us a history of the doctrine of the early church as well as its beginning, was Jewish; Acts records tongues as confirming the new message of the gospel as it spread for the first time. Note the three references to tongues in Acts:

**First, Acts 2:4 identifies tongues as specific dialects or languages, and this identification will**

remain consistent throughout Acts. They were given to confirm the fulfillment of the Scriptural prophecy of the gospel being for all who would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:15-20 with Joel 2:28). This is the first time since the resurrection that the gospel was preached to the Jews; in Peter's first use of the keys (Mat 16:19), he unlocks the door of the kingdom of God to the Jews. The wonders, signs and miracles performed through the apostles fulfilled Joel 2, laying the foundation for *whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*, Acts 2:21. <sup>1</sup>

The next mention of tongues is in Acts 10:45, 46, where they confirmed that the gospel was to go to the Gentiles. Peter again used the keys to unlock the kingdom, this time for the Gentiles. He was called on the carpet for taking the gospel to the Gentiles, and he referred to the Gentiles supernaturally speaking in tongues to confirm God's direction in taking the gospel to them (Acts 11:15). Note that there had been eight years between the first Jewish convert (Pentecost) and the first Gentile convert (Cornelius), yet when Peter defended his presentation of the gospel to the Gentiles, he had to point all the way back to what happened at Pentecost eight years previously to confirm God's hand in his action. Obviously, there had not been a continuous use

of tongues in the early church; the "gift" had been silent for eight years, or Peter would not have had to refer to something eight years previously for confirmation. Pentecost (tongues) was a historical event, not the beginning of a continuing event, or Peter would have said, "As we have been doing since Pentecost." Rather, Peter said, *As on us at the beginning..*, the beginning of the Jewish church and the preaching of the glorious gospel at Pentecost. Compare Acts 2:21-36 Acts 11:15.

Follow closely: Peter clearly says in Acts 11:15, 16, that what happened at Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4) was prophesied by our Lord when He said, *John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence*, which Christ did, Acts 2 (Acts 1:5). John the Baptist looked forward to Pentecost and the supernatural baptism with the Holy Ghost (Mat 3:11, etc); Peter looked back to it, and Paul used it as a reference point (1 Cor 12:13). The event of the day of Pentecost, tongues (specific dialects, or languages), is always used as the reference point of true tongues, as well as the reference for the "baptism of the Holy Ghost." At Pentecost, all heard the preaching in their own language (Acts 2:8). Pentecost, according to John the Baptist, Christ, Peter and Paul, fulfilled being "Baptized with the Holy Spirit with tongues." Pentecost was

unique! It cannot be a repeated, nor can it be a continuing event any more than Calvary; both are a historical event. Furthermore, the first church council took "tongues" as the confirmation that the gospel was to go to the Gentiles (Acts 11:16-18).

The third mention of tongues is Acts 19:6: about twelve men had only experienced the baptism of John and had not heard of the Holy Ghost. The question is asked in v. 2: "Have you received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?" They answered, "Holy Spirit! What are you talking about?" Paul then asked them, "Whose message did you respond to? Who baptized you?" They answered, "John." In other words: Paul: "Are you saved? Do you have the Holy Spirit?" (Rom. 8:9 - The Holy Spirit is a result of salvation since Christ). The answer: "All we know about is John and his message. We don't know anything about any Holy Spirit." Paul then tells them, "John preached about the kingdom and the Messiah to come. The Messiah came, named Jesus Christ, and now you need to believe on the Messiah."

In addition, note the phrase, "baptism in Jesus' name." All the ones who were baptized in Jesus' name were those who were either Jews or were looking for the Jewish Messiah; therefore, baptism in Jesus' name was a sign that they had trusted

Christ as the Jewish Messiah. In addition, we are told in Acts 2:40 that with many other words did Peter testify and exhort. Thus, we only have a brief outline of Peter's message in Acts 2, and no reason to doubt (and every reason to suppose) that Peter used the words of our Lord as found in Matt. 28:19, 20.

What do we have thus far? First, one receives the Holy Ghost at conversion. In each instance of tongues, Acts 2, 10 & 19 - Pentecost, Cornelius and the disciples of John - an apostle was present. Observe that the gospel goes to the Samaritans, Acts. 8:14-17 (who also looked for the Messiah; therefore, they were also baptized in Jesus' name - John 4:25), and the apostles laid hands upon them, but we have no record of tongues.

Note these two additional points from Acts: first, we have no record of tongues (or "The Baptism of the Holy Spirit") as the result of the laying on of the hands of an apostle. It would appear that Timothy, James, Titus or others of these first ministers would have been instructed to lay hands on others for "the Baptism of the Holy Spirit" and tongues if the practice was to be carried on past the Apostles, but Paul gives them (nor any other pastor) no such instructions. In addition, if the

practice was to be continued, men such as Polycarp, Justin Marter, Hermas, &c. would not only have practiced this but would have encouraged others in this experience.

Second, we see that the apostles were only a vehicle for the receiving of the Holy Spirit and passing Him on in special cases. If only those whom they laid their hands on and prayed for received the Holy Spirit, there would have been a problem. Can you imagine Peter trying to lay his hands on and praying for each of the five to ten thousand converts on the first day of preaching the gospel?

We have looked at the three accounts of tongues in the book of Acts. In each instance, an apostle was present and the tongues confirmed "a new thing."

## Footnotes

**1. Note:** That great and notable day of the Lord refers to the coming destruction of Jerusalem. The Lord is calling the Jews that will be saved unto Himself before the nation is destroyed.

[Barnes' Notes on Acts 2.](#) [Back](#)

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# Tongues:

## A Biblical View

By Ovid Need, Jr.

### Chapter Three Corinthians History

The primary Scriptural support for the modern charismatic movement comes from Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church, particularly chapters 12-14, which we will look at, along with the meanings of the words, in our next chapter. But first we need to look at the historical background of Corinth; as we do, we will see some circumstances which would discourage us from using this church as an example.

The first thing we need to notice is that Corinth was the only NT church to record the use of tongues, which was not practiced by the churches of Rome, Jerusalem, Colossi, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica and others. What was there about the church at Corinth that it alone should have this unique "experience?"

The city of Corinth.

Corinth was the well-known, exceedingly wealthy capital city of the Roman province of Achaia.

Not only was it an ideal location between two harbors, but it also was beside the highway from mainland Greece to Peloponnesus. The Isthmian games were held close to the city every four years along with many Greek festivals. High on a hill overlooking the city was the beautiful temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and fertility, where one thousand priestesses practiced prostitution as a religious rite. <sup>1</sup>

(In fulfillment of vows to the false gods, women war captives were placed here as prostitutes by the ones who financed the victorious military campaign.) Paul refers to a common sight on the streets of Corinth: long-haired male prostitutes (female prostitutes had short hair), 1 Cor 11:14.

"The city was famous for its immorality, much of which was vented under the guise of religion in the temple of Aphrodite. There temple prostitutes engaged in ritualized sexual orgies, often whipping themselves up into ecstatic frenzies. In the midst of these orgies, these frenetic women would utter ecstatic "tongues" in dedication to heathen gods." [The Charismatic Gift of Tongues, pg. 38.]

We should mention in passing that the Encyclopedia Britannica (Vol. 22) cites numerous instances of speaking with "tongues" among pagan cults (Corinthian ecstatic utterance). Paul refers to the mysteries in 13:2 and 14:2 because the Corinthian church was strongly influenced by the ancient Greek and Roman mysteries. The ecstatic speech of the worshipper played an important role in the Corinthian pagan temples; it was regarded as the sign of the god's favor upon the worshipper. Each devotee who uttered these "tongues" believed he was in intimate conversational contact with his god. Though the meaning of what he was saying was unknown to the worshipper, his words were supposedly known by the god or spirit to whom he prayed.

The same superstition (ecstatic utterance) which occurred in the worship of Aphrodite in her temple had invaded the church at Corinth. The lack of maturity and knowledge of the word of God (OT) permitted the believers at Corinth to attribute a spiritual meaning to pagan ecstatic utterances which had no meaning. True tongues were clear, distinct and easily understood; what was taking place in this church was a jumbled up mess wasted in the air (1 Cor 14:6-11; Acts 2, 10, 13).

Furthermore, the girl in Acts 16:16,17 under demonic control spoke praises to Jesus (God) and was soundly rebuked. Many times we hear a "spirit" identified as godly because it praises the Lord; obviously, praise is not necessarily a mark of a godly spirit (Mk 3:11; 1 Ki 22:21-23).

Paul did not want to come to Corinth from Athens and only came after the Lord assured him of His presence and protection. At Corinth he met the tent makers, Aquila and Priscilla, joined with them and stayed in their home. Silas and Timothy joined Paul, and they preached in the Synagogue where two important men were converted, Justus and Crispus, and a local church was started. This church was made up of a cross-section of people: male and female, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, as well as slave masters. Paul stayed here about

two years teaching, preaching and organizing the church, and then he moved to Ephesus. Letters came to him from the people at Corinth asking his advice on marriage and meat offered to idols. Furthermore, Paul received disturbing reports of the decaying conditions in the church. Therefore, as he answered their questions on marriage and meat, he also dealt with the decaying conditions. Paul's first letter to Corinth is directed to a group of people founded on the firm foundation of good teaching and example, but now infiltrated with worldliness.

## Spiritual disease

The city of Corinth presented a tremendous opportunity for the church to witness world-wide for the risen Christ, but the church failed; instead of a witness, they were a shame; instead of evangelism, they deserved ridicule. Ironically, the wrong people were evangelized: the church was evangelized by the pagans. Paul, in chastising this worldly church, describes for us the symptoms of a serious spiritual disease which has been called "Corinthianism". <sup>2</sup>

Far too many of these symptoms are prevalent in 20th-century churches, regardless of the denomination or lack of denomination. (I am glad

for the difficulties which this church had because Paul was forced to write Scriptural instructions to deal with them, but I sure would not want to hold up this church at Corinth as a model church. From what we read, this church was at the "bottom." God gives us these books for a warning, "Beware of Corinthianism!")

Let's quickly look at a few of the symptoms of this spiritual disease Corinthianism, briefly mentioning some of Paul's answers to these problems.

**1)** It was a charismatic church, 1 Cor 1:7; *gift* is the word *charisma*. Paul takes three chapters trying to correct this illness, 12, 13, 14. **2)** It was an immature church populated by baby Christians, 3:1. Paul deals with immaturity in 14:20; 16:13. **3)** It was an immoral church which accepted adultery, fornication and prostitution, 5: 6:15-18. Paul reminded them they are members of Christ and threatened them with physical destruction, 3:17, 18. **4)** Their love feasts proceeding the Lord's supper involved drunkenness, 11:21. Paul strongly rebukes and reminds them of the qualifications for the Lord's supper, 11:23-33. **5)** There was an overall attitude of pride and apathy concerning their relationship with the Lord, 5:2. Paul tells them to wake up out of their lazy indifference, 15:34. **6)** Rampant

heresy even went as far as to deny the resurrection of the dead, 11:19; 15:12. Paul mourns over their acceptance of false doctrine and tells them to examine their own salvation, 2 Cor 11:3; 13:5. Furthermore, the false teachers were undermining Paul's authority, 14:15; Paul responds in 9:1. **7)** Corinth, a divided church, was choosing sides, 1:10; 11:18. Paul's rebuke is in 1:13. **8)** Great eloquent speakers swayed immature Christians with swelling words of man's wisdom: "You can know God through worldly wisdom (Greek Philosophy)", 2:1 (Isa 55:8-9). **9)** The Corinthian church was lazy, judgmental and puffed up with pride over "the gifts" ("My gift is better than yours; you are not right with God because you can't do what I can do, speak in tongues."), 4:1-7. Paul points out that brotherly love is above all things, not the "gifts", chp 13. **10)** Confusion abounded because everyone wanted in the forefront, 14:26-33. **11)** They were taking one another to court and defrauding one another, 6:1-7. Everyone was doing his own thing, 6:12-13. **12)** False teaching about marriage and sex had infiltrated, 7:1. **13)** Divorce was rampant, 7:11. **14)** The weaker brother was disregarded, 8:7-13. **15)** Women were teaching, speaking and assuming authority in the church over men, 11:3; 14:34 (God deals with this important issue several times

in places such as 1 Tim 2:11-12). The style of the long-haired male prostitutes and the short-haired female prostitutes had crept into the church, 11:4-15. **17)** They lacked understanding of the spiritual gifts, 12:1, but were "gifted" with a short memory because they soon forgot the message that saved them, 15:1. Their emphasis was now elsewhere. **18)** They had fallen behind in their giving, 16:1. **19)** Most important, they yielded to social pressure, 16:13, and **20)** showed a lack of genuine love, 16:14.

In conclusion, it is safe to say that this church was "hindered in its development, charismatic in its practice, immoral in its living, and heretical in its doctrine."

When we examine the Church of Corinth and compare to other NT churches such as Ephesus, we see that the former is more typical of 20th-century Christianity. Instead of the church at Corinth overcoming the world and holding back corruption, corruption had overcome the church to the point that Paul had to tell it to remove the corrupted individuals and deliver them to the devil for the destruction of their flesh (5:1-6); Paul exhorts and warns against their corruption, worldliness and pride (3:17; 15:34, &c. Pride: 1:27-2:5; 4:6-7). In fact, Paul was later forced to remind

this same group that Christ had made them new creatures and that old things *were passed away*. (2 Cor 5:17).

Paul deals with their problem of immaturity with three examples. First, a building, 1 Cor chp. 3; an unfinished building is an eye-sore; finish what you begin! This church was an unfinished eye-sore. Second, a battle, chp. 9; an unfinished contest is a waste; continue on until the crown is obtained. Third, a body, chp. 12; a body which won't function properly is a tragedy; a non-cooperative body is suicide: "You are tearing the body apart by desiring the showy `gifts,'" Paul pleads. "That is not spirituality; that is selfishness and childish." In 1:7, he recognizes the presence of *charismata* among them, yet in v. 10 he is dealing with divisions among them. Therefore, we see that *charismata* and spirituality are not synonymous. If anything, according to the context, *charismata* and divisions go together far more than *charismata* and spirituality.

Even though this church had plenty of learning and good teaching, including Paul's teaching, Corinth was an immature ill church (1 Cor 2:12, 13). It had all of the gifts; it was well taught by the best teachers, yet its members were still carnal baby Christians. The symptoms of immaturity are

pointed out by Paul: selfishness, shown by suing one another (6:7); insisting on doing what they were free to do in Christ regardless of its effect on others (8:9; 11-13); divisions among themselves rather than division from the world; criticism of God's man, even Paul himself, and a tremendous toleration for evil.

Paul tried to correct the ills but failed. The church died with the city, a failure and a tragedy. We must beware of the spiritual disease called "Corinthianism." It is spreading like wildfire in the 20th-century.

## Footnotes

1. "Corinth was devoted, or dedicated thus to the goddess of love, or licentious passion; and the effect may be easily conceived." [Barnes' Notes](#). Barnes identifies the city's deity as Venus. [Back](#)
2. See the tape series mentioned above. Also, [the Corinthian Catastrophe](#). [Back](#)

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# Tongues:

## A Biblical View

By Ovid Need, Jr.

### Chapter Four

#### Tongues In the Old & New Testament

Even though this might appear to be a little misplaced at this point, we need to go ahead and develop the meaning of the word tongues as used by Paul in 1 Corinthians. This will be important for the rest of this study.

#### Meaning of the word

1 Cor 13:1-3: *tongues of men* refer to understandable human languages; the tongues of angels may refer to the medium by which angels communicate in heaven. Paul does not say that it is possible or desirable to speak with the *tongues of angels*; rather, he says that *if* such a thing were possible, it (nor any other "gift") is not the mark of the Spirit of Christ; genuine love is the mark (ch 13 describes Christian love).

14:1-3. There are three NT words translated *tongues* in our KJV: *heterai*, *glossai* and *glossa*. ***Heterai*** refers to specific dialects, or languages, other than what was known by the speaker, **Acts 2:4, 6, 8; 10:46 & 19:6**. ***Glossai***, when used in the plural with a singular pronoun, refers to ethnic languages, Mk 16:17; 1 Cor 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1, 8; 14:5, 6, 18, 22. ***Glossa***, when used for "tongue" in the singular, refers to the Corinthian ecstatic utterance which had invaded the church from the pagan worship so prevalent in the city, 1 Cor 14:2, 4, 13, 14, 19, 26, 27 (including all the verses having *unknown* added by the translators). Moreover, 1 Cor 14:9 refers to the physical tongue of man; 1 Cor 14:23, plural with a plural pronoun, refers to the Corinthian ecstatic utterances. <sup>1</sup>

Observe that chapter 14 contains a mixture of the word *tongues*: vs. 2, 4, 13, 19, 26 & 27, pagan ecstatic utterances; vs. 5, 6, 18 & 22, actual ethnic languages. Therefore, Paul says that he desires that they would indeed be able to supernaturally speak with other ethnic languages as he can, but on the other hand, he is soundly renouncing and rebuking the ecstatic utterances which are actually taking place in this church.

Let's make a quick overview of three main points

from chapters 12-14, which will be covered in more detail.

First, notice Paul anchors tongues firmly in the law of Moses by citing tongues OT foundation: time-frame and purpose, 14:21, 22 (we will develop this shortly). Furthermore, Paul refers to Moses' command for women to remain silent in the church assembly and to learn from their husband, 14:34, 35. <sup>2</sup>

This command is followed immediately with, If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that these things that Paul writes unto the church are the commandments of God, v. 37.

Second, notice Paul's list of "gifts," 12:8-10 and v. 28; tongues (ethnic languages) is listed last, showing that they were the least desirable of all the gifts, (cf 14:5). Whatever is done in the church is for one purpose only: to edify the church; the individual is to excel in building up the church, 14:12.

Paul is quite clear in 14:4: the Corinthian ecstatic utterance were for self-edification (and connected with the pride which Paul had to deal with in this letter). Paul makes a contrast: prophesying (preaching the whole counsel of God, Jesus

Christ in His entirety, Acts 20:27; Rev 19:10) edifies the church; ecstatic utterances edify the individual.

Third, we see that tongues (both ethnic languages & the Corinthian ecstatic utterance) **HAD TO BE** interpreted for the profit of the entire assembly, vs. 5, 13, 27, 28; thus, if there was no interpretation for what was spoken, neither ethnic languages nor ecstatic utterance was permitted. In addition, Paul clearly and absolutely forbids women from taking any part in the speaking or interpretation of tongues: it is confusion, 14:33-35. What is needed in the church is clear, distinct and easily understood speaking, 14:7-12. Therefore, Paul, without actually telling them to stop the ecstatic utterances, placed severe enough restriction on them that, if they would obey him, they would stop. Notice the connection which we will come back to, 14:8. He connects tongues with the trumpet which sounded the alarm as in the OT, Ezekiel 3 and 33, &c.

In Paul's first letter to Corinth, he is dealing with situations which developed in this church with "the gifts." In Chapter 12:1 Paul starts his address on the subject of spiritual gifts; thus, Chapter 13 cannot be taken out of context from Chapters 12 & 14. These three chapters (12-14) were written

to deal with the outside influence of the ecstatic utterances flooding into the church from the pagan temple worship of Aphrodite. We saw that Paul made it clear to the Corinthians that their speech (*glossa*) had no spiritual significance before the Christian God (1 Cor 14:6-11). Furthermore, in these three chapters, Paul points out the difference between the real tongues and the ecstatic utterance which was taking place. Obviously, what was going on at Corinth was causing problems because Paul, in 12-14, is not exhorting its practice; rather, he lists its restrictions and regulations.

## Paul defines Spiritual

It is important to understand that these three chapters are dealing with a problem: misunderstood spiritually. Paul, in 12:1, *spiritual*, follows the same line of thought as he did in Gal 6:1; these Corinthians were misunderstanding what it meant to be spiritual. Because of the carry-over of the pagan idea of worship (and thus spirituality), they were associating the pagan ecstatic utterance with spirituality and communion with the Heavenly Father. Notice that the word *gifts* is added by the translators; therefore, Paul writes the whole passage (chps 12-14) to clear up the misunderstanding associated with spirituality.

(True spirituality is defined in chapter 13.)

## OT & Tongues

Paul firmly anchored tongues (ethnic languages) in the OT law; therefore, we need to do the same. Tongues, a warning to unbelieving Jews, 14: 21, 22: were a sign. Here, as in all places, our final authority for all that is believed, said and practiced must be the word of God (2 Tim 3:16); Christ Himself commanded us to search the Scriptures (Jn 5:39, 46, 47). Both Paul and Christ were referring to searching the OT Scriptures to confirm any and every doctrine because there were no NT Scriptures when Christ spoke and Paul wrote. The OT, as we presently have it, was safely kept in the Synagogues. The Bereans were commended as being more noble than those in Thessalonica because they searched the OT Scriptures daily to confirm what they were being taught by Paul (Acts 17:11); might we do the same. Any doctrine which cannot be clearly confirmed from the OT is a false doctrine; therefore, we must reach back to the OT, as Paul does here, to find the true purpose of tongues.

Isaiah says that if anyone speaks not according to the law and to the testimony (of the prophets), there is no light in them (Isa 8:20. See also Lk

24:44-48); Therefore, we have no choice but, as Paul does, to go back into the OT to find the reason for the tongues of Acts 2, 10, 19; I Cor 12, 13 and 14. Paul rebukes the Corinthians for not understanding the OT Scriptures in their use of "the gift of tongues" by quoting Isaiah 28:11-12, 1 Cor 14:20-22.

## Isaiah & Tongues

Isa 28 takes place in the latter years of Hezekiah, king of Judah, 705-701 B.C. Before his rule (722 B.C.), Assyria invaded Palestine and the Northern kingdom; Ephraim was destroyed. Now, many years later, Isaiah warns the people of the Southern kingdom, Judah, that the same thing will happen to them (cf. Jer 3:7-10). But instead of trusting in the Lord for their deliverance from Assyria, Judah makes a deal with Egypt. Their unity with pagan Egypt brings an influx of heathen practices into the congregation of the Lord, and their hearts turn from Him. In vs. 7, 8, the prophet Isaiah points to the leaders of Judah and tells the world that they are involved in wicked evil practices: a drunken party. The leaders mock Isaiah and his warning concerning their spiritual condition. Not liking to be addressed as irresponsible children, even though they are childish, they call his teaching childishly simple.

As far as they are concerned, Isaiah, a fundamental legalist preacher, speaks down to them as one would to a minor, and, considering themselves "free adults," they resent Isaiah . . . they sneer at his warning.

Isaiah, vs. 11-13, deals with them in the very point of their sarcasm (he continues to speak to them as children, using their scorn for God's word against them) as he makes his prophetic announcement of coming judgment, v. 14ff. Since the people will not listen to God as He speaks to them in the plain and simple language which they understand and use daily, He will now speak to them in a language they cannot understand, Assyrian. Now they will need an interpreter to understand the other "tongues," languages, 10:5-6. When they hear the *stammering lips and another tongue* on the streets of Jerusalem, as well as all through the land (the Assyrian language which they understood not), they will know that God's judgment is upon them according to Isaiah's warning. The *another tongue* will be a sure sign pointing them directly back to Isaiah's warning of the coming judgment which they had mocked and sneered at.

## Moses & Tongues

The warning goes back even farther than Isaiah. We find the basic law which was the foundation for Isaiah's (and Paul's) warning in Deuteronomy 28:15-68 (36, 49). There Moses points out to the congregation of the Lord (the seed of Israel) that one of the results of God's people rejecting the Lord as their King will be servitude to a people whose tongue (language) they will not understand. If God's people refuse to serve God as their King, they will serve the heathen, 47-48. Therefore, let us not suppose for a moment that the rebellious Jews that Isaiah and Paul spoke to didn't make this connection of Deut 28:45-68; there is no way they could have missed it, but knowing human nature as we do (we have it), they ignored the facts. "Other tongues" was the result of rejecting God's rule (Authority) over them. This is established in the law of God and will not change.

Deut 28:15-68 was fulfilled at least twice: it was fulfilled when Assyria moved against the Jewish nation in fulfillment of Isaiah's warning. (Note that even though God exalted Assyria as the rod of His anger, an instrument of chastising His people, when Assyria in its pagan pride exalted itself, God destroyed Assyria completely. God's people are still here; Assyria is nothing but dust today. Furthermore, one of the symbols of Assyria was a

winged lion. See Deut 28:49.) Moses' prophecy was fulfilled again in 70 A.D. as Rome, under Titus, came against Jerusalem. Both Rome's and Hitler's ensign was an eagle. Deut 28:15-68 has been completely fulfilled (See our extensive study on Mat 21-24). The *stammering lips* and *another tongue* was God's judicial sign of judgment upon the Jews because they hardened their hearts against the simple truths which Moses and the prophet Isaiah spoke.

In Isaiah's day, the judgment came in the form of Assyria, and the speaking of the Assyrian language on the streets of Judah pointed to Isaiah's prophecy being fulfilled; they could not understand the language without an interpreter. In Paul's day, the Jews had again degenerated into an apostate nation and had rejected the true prophet, Christ the Messiah, and His warnings. No doubt if He had come as a worldly king or as an elite man of some kind, they might have listened to Him, but He didn't. He came as a humble servant of God; He came with a simple and plain message which the common man could readily understand, identify with and accept, and the elite rejected and killed Him. Christ warned of the horrible judgment which would come as the result of their rejection of the Son, Matthew 21-24. In fact, He said that the former judgments would

be nothing compared to the one which was coming, 24:21, 22; Assyria, as terrible as it was, would pale compared to the punishment in store for Christ's crucifixion.

## Signs & Tongues

After the crucifixion of the Son of God and before the final destruction of the Jewish nation, the sign of tongues re-appears. To the Jews who knew the law (Deut 28) and the prophets (Isa 28), this meant only one thing, judgment. *Other tongues* (ethnic languages) were not new to them; it happened in the past. (Remember, if it is new, it's not true; if it is true, it's not new.) In the middle of Paul's significant warning concerning the proper use of tongues (chp. 14), we have his reference to Isaiah, 14:21. Paul clearly identifies tongues in the same context as did Isaiah: a sure sign of judgment for rejecting the warning of God and the Roman language would be spoken on the streets of Jerusalem; they could not understand the language without an interpreter.

Observe the similarities of circumstances.

Something which is quite amazing here is the context in which Paul quotes Isaiah's warning and the resistance (even anger) put forward by the

Jewish leaders against Isaiah, accusing him of treating them like children (let me strongly urge you to read Isaiah 28 because it is basic, or Paul would not have used it here). Both Isaiah and Paul are dealing with immature people who claimed to be the God's people; they were children whose pride and rebellion caused them to harden against being treated and spoken to as children.

## Children

Our Lord said, *except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven*(Mk 10:15). It is not hard at all to follow this thought as the gospel of the kingdom goes out from the very first day that Christ taught it to the last days of Paul as he taught it (Mat 3:2; Acts 28:31). The idea of becoming as a child would have struck at the very heart of the rebellious nation as once again these religious leaders get hostile at the thought of being treated like children. In fact, having to put on the spirit of a child is enough to make any "natural man" hostile. But not only is this required in order to enter into the kingdom, but it is required to advance in His kingdom. Stephen told

the religious leaders (as did every other preacher of the gospel, including Christ) that they were the same pious, rebellious, stiff-necked, proud, hardhearted, hypocritical men as were their fathers who mocked and sneered at Isaiah's instruction. This did not win friends and influence people for Stephen any more than it did for Christ (Acts 7:51-60).

Let's move to the middle of Paul's instruction in chp. 14, v. 20, where he warns them against childishness. Paul's warning fits in with the situation in which Isaiah spoke (1 Cor 14:21-Isa 28:11). Isaiah was rejected by the Jewish leaders because he was treating them like children; Paul here tells the folks at Corinth, "Don't continue in your childish attitudes as your fathers did in Isaiah's time. Grow up! Remember, the reason for *other tongues* is to speak to a rebellious, stubborn, stiff-necked people who will not hear me, *saieth the Lord*. When your fathers rejected the clear plain message of repentance toward God, then they had to listen to *other tongues*: an ethnic and unintelligible language of a foreign invader. Your fathers needed an interpreter to understand what was being said." Paul's thought continues, "The *another tongues* had nothing to do with salvation or with being spiritual; rather, it is a sign of judgment which is either already here or is

coming."

Also, notice Paul's indictment against this church for being childish, 1 Cor 13:11; 14:20. The Supernatural ability to speak an unknown (to the speaker) foreign language was being used with pride as a child would be lifted up with pride over abilities which he had and considered superior to another's abilities. Paul points out that childishness is only commendable in the matter of malice, not in understanding, and tells them to grow up. Again, the connection is significant as he moves from this exhortation into the quote from Isaiah. The context of both Paul and Isaiah has to do with childishness and maturity. (Note that the Romans, as they moved in judgment against this rebellious nation, camped at the place which was called, "The Camp of Assyrians." Furthermore, neither the Jews nor the Romans could understand each other; therefore, both needed an interpreter to understand the other. Josephus acted as an interpreter (Book V, chp. VII, sec. 2; chp. ix, sec. 2).

## Paul's 13 guidelines

Now let's examine some points made by Paul as he tries to instruct this worldly, immature and childish church concerning the proper use of

tongues; keep in mind that the ecstatic utterances from the pagan worship had infiltrated this church and was being mistaken for something Godly and spiritual. We have already noted Paul's distinction between their ecstatic speech and true spirituality. We will not cover the whole chapter (1 Cor 14) but will mention thirteen guidelines which Paul establishes for the proper use of tongues.

1) Let us be reminded *other tongues* as used in ch 14 would be the power given by the Holy Spirit to speak in a foreign language which would not be known to the speaker. This fact will be obvious as we go through this passage. Let's refer back to either the situation with the Assyrians or with the Romans; the context of ch 14 would be something like this: the people did not understand the Roman speech, it was unknown; a person who does not know the Roman speech is given the power (by God) to speak in the Roman language; those around him do not understand the Roman language either, so he needs an interpreter to translate the Roman language into the Jew's language so those around him can understand what he is saying. Paul says it's crazy to speak in the Roman language which requires an interpreter when you could speak in the Jews language and be a blessing to all, 1 Cor 14:1-6.

Then Paul mentions the gift of interpretation, 12:10: the supernatural power of understanding a foreign tongue without ever having studied or learned it. Paul shows us here in this assembled Corinthian church one speaking in *tongues*, a literal language unknown to either the speaker or the assembly. Present in this assembly is a Jew whose native language is something other than the common language of the assembly (maybe Italian). In order for the assembly to understand what the speaker is saying (he is speaking in Italian), there had to be an interpreter present who could interpret what was being said in the visiting Jew's language for the rest of the people present.

Tongues in both cases, Assyria and Rome, would have been a foreign language for which the assembly would need an interpreter to understand, Deut 28:49; Isa 28:11 (Confirmed by all of Acts, esp chp. 2). Anything other than this scenario would have to be the ecstatic speech carried over from paganism which Paul is writing against. He tells these immature Christians to quit seeking these childish things and grow up. "Sure it makes one feel good to be able to supernaturally speak in a foreign language not understood by others, but what good is it to speak in mysteries which only God can understand? It's so much better to speak in the common language

of those present." Paul tells the Corinthians what he thinks of ecstatic utterances by saying that he would rather speak five words in easily understood language than ten thousand words ecstatically which cannot be understood by the hearers, 1 Cor 14:19.

[I find it amusing that those who claim the supernatural gift of being able to speak foreign languages which they have never learned have to have someone to interpret or translate for them when they go to a foreign country to preach. How can they claim the supernatural gift of tongues is from God if they can't even preach the gospel in the native tongue?]

**2)** Paul's second restriction: prophecy, not tongues, was to be desired, 14:1-5. The desirable thing is the ability to explain the principles of God's word and how to apply them to life; this will build the church. Everything done within the church is to be for the benefit of the body of believers; the purpose of the public assembly is to admonish one another, to build up and strengthen one another, and to be an encouragement and help, Heb 10:25. When we consider the true purpose of tongues (warning of judgment upon the rebellious Jewish nation), we can see how tongues would not "edify" a church. They would

edify an individual and lead to vast amounts of pride: "I'm special because God is using me to speak to that person about judgment to come." (Yes, I see 14:5, *except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. We'll see more of this as we go on. Ed.*) **3)** Tongues were not spontaneous, 14:2, 28, 32, &c. There were several conditions which HAD to be met. **4)** 14:8 is an interesting comparison; speech is compared to a trumpet which sounds an alarm (Num 10:5; Jer 4:19; Jer 6:17; Jer 42:14). Paul calls tongues an uncertain trumpet, alarm for battle. In fact, anything not easily understood would leave the people unprepared for battle. **5)** *tongues were for a sign... to them which believe not.* When the unbelieving Jew heard the tongues (supernatural speaking in a foreign language which was his native tongue), the tongues would speak to him of the coming judgment against his hardness and rebellion because he would know both Moses and Isaiah, v. 22. **6)** But to the unlearned (those not knowing the law of Moses) and to the unbelieving Gentile (who also would not know the law), tongues would be madness, v. 23. **7)** It would be the preaching of the gospel of Christ and of eternal judgment to come which would cause the visitor to believe, v. 24. It is the proclamation of the gospel which reveals the heart (v.24), causing

conviction and conversion, v. 25 (Heb 4:12, 13).

As we look through Acts, we see that in every instance of tongues there were unbelieving Jews present: unbelieving in the sense of not believing the gospel (Acts 2), unbelieving in the Holy Spirit (we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost, Acts 19:2), or unbelieving that the gospel should go to the Gentiles (Acts 10).

The purpose of Paul's instruction in I Cor chps 12-14 is to clear up the misunderstanding of what is spiritual. The Corinthians were under the delusion that the ecstatic utterances from pagan worship were a sign of being in close fellowship with the Holy God of heaven and earth. **First**, Paul said the supernatural ability to speak in an unlearned and unknown foreign language was the least important of all the gifts. Why do we need to speak in a foreign tongue when our message can be so much more effective in the common language? Paul's second guideline was to only use that which will edify the complete body of believers within the church; the ability to speak in a foreign tongue edified only the speaker. **Third**, tongues (ethnic languages) must be interpreted by the MAN who speaks them because a message in a foreign language which cannot be understood by the hearers is useless. It would be

crazy to use a supernatural ability to speak in another language that the hearers cannot comprehend, 14:5. **Fourth**, the ability to speak in an unknown foreign language was to warn the hardened unbelieving Jews that judgment was on its way, that soon he would witness on the streets of his own hometown an invading army whose language for which he would need an interpreter. This was backed up by the law and the prophets. Judgment was coming upon the Jewish nation for rejecting the plain, clear, child-like message of God (The Messiah) which had been in their own language and easily understood. Obviously then, there had to be an unbelieving Jew present for tongues to be of God.

Continuing with Paul's instructions: **8)** Speaking in a foreign language could not be uncontrolled; it had to be planned, orderly and always subject to the speaker, vs. 32-34, 40. **9)** At the most, there could only be three speakers, and then only one at a time, vs. 2, 27. **10)** Furthermore, there had to be a person present who could translate what was said into the common language of the assembly, 14:28. If there was no one who could translate (explain) what was said, then either the speaker had to do it (v. 5), or he had to keep quiet. **11)** As already mentioned, there had to be an unbelieving Jew present because when the speaker spoke in

the foreign language of that Jew's birth, that unbelieving Jew would understand and know from the law and the prophets about the judgment to come against his unbelief, v. 22. As the speaker spoke in the unbelieving Jew's language, for the rest of the church to understand, either an interpreter or the speaker himself must explain what was said.

**12)** Probably one of the more important restrictions which Paul places on the use of tongues is found in vs. 34, 35: tongues were, without exception, absolutely forbidden to women in the churches. The purpose of tongues was to "preach" to the unbelieving (yet knowledgeable of Moses) Jews, and he would know that women were forbidden to take any speaking or leadership authority in the church; they were required to be under subjection to their own husbands in their homes (Eph 5:22-24; 1 Tim 2:11-12). The situation at the city of Corinth makes this a very important point: Corinth was famous for its immorality with its temple prostitutes (one thousand were kept in the temple). One of the signs that these prostitutes (priestesses) were in close communion with their gods was their ecstatic utterances during the temple rituals of sexual orgies. Notice the firmness of Paul's statement, *for it is a shame for women to speak in*

*church*, v. 35; the reference would be to either preaching or usurping authority over the men of the church (of course, preaching is the exercise of authority based upon God's word). The ability to speak in the foreign language of that unbelieving Jew's birth was a sign to him, but to that unbelieving Jew, a woman was little better than a slave. (Only Christianity elevated women to the status of respect and honor - 1 Pet 3:7). Under no circumstances would a Jew in Paul's day have listened to a woman speak from any position in a church; for a woman to speak would completely destroy the purpose of tongues. (The Jewish man thanked God for three things every day: that he wasn't a publican; that he wasn't a Gentile and that he wasn't a woman.)

**13)** Tongues were not to be forbidden, 14:39. In Paul's day, before the judgment against Jerusalem of which they spoke, tongues were needed, and to forbid them would be to forbid the Spirit of God from expressing His message through His chosen vessel. Judgment was at the door; Jerusalem was on the very threshold of being completely overturned, heaped up in a pile, burned and, as Josephus says, the foundations plowed with a yoke of oxen. The Jewish race was on the verge of extinction, so God continued to send warnings to them right up to the day

Jerusalem was sealed by Rome with millions inside.

## Pray

In addition, notice these two points about v. 14: first, *pray* in this verse does not mean "addressed to God" as in Mt:21:22, &c.; rather, it means "*to offer prayers, to pray, (everywhere of prayers to the gods, or to God)*" as in Mt 6:5 where the Pharisees depended on their loud, long public prayers to be heard by the Lord (cf Mr 12:40). The word ***pray*** (1 Cor 14:14) can refer to either empty words spoken into the air or meaningful words; it is used twice in Mt 6:5, once for proper and once for improper prayer (See The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, pg. 545). Therefore, claiming that *pray* (ecstatic utterance) in v. 14 is words spoken to the Father stretches the context beyond Scriptural recognition. Scripture is clear: there is no direct approach to the Father through words or any other means. All who come to the Father must come through Christ, John 14:6, 13 &c. Therefore, the only prayer which the Father hears is through Christ. Second, *my spirit*, not the Holy Spirit; In other words, "*My spirit* can, by some circumstance, be moved to an utterance." As we saw in the introduction, the charismatic movement's leaders know how to use emotions to

produce their desired effect: ecstatic utterances. (Note Paul's final remark on this subject, vs. 37, 38.)

The best thing is to testify of Christ; preach the gospel; apply His principles of life to the whole of life, and don't forbid tongues **AS LONG AS THEY MEET THE CONDITIONS** laid down by Paul to prevent their misuse, chps. 12-14. Of course, those conditions cannot be met today, but if tongues would be "active" today, they no doubt would be something like 14:18: Paul, as he traveled around into the many foreign lands, undoubtedly did not know all of the languages of those nations, so God gave him the ability to sound the alarm for battle for God by preaching in languages he did not know.

Ecstatic utterances were a carry-over from the pagan temple worship. Biblical tongues was the supernatural ability to speak an unknown foreign language. As that message was delivered in the assembled church, it would speak to the heart of the unbelieving Jewish hearer; the result would be the repentance of sin and turning to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul said, "You are proud of your spirituality, but let me show you what true spirituality really is."

Then he moves into chp. 13: true spirituality is humility and love for one another shown by actions, not by any "supernatural ability" one might think he has (Read all of I Jn). Love is shown by rejoicing over someone's salvation, by encouraging others when the person takes a stand for Christ, by unity among the body of Christ, by a willingness to do for one another, and by a genuine family spirit among the body of believers, 12:12-31; 13:1-13.

The pagan's definition of close spiritual contact with their gods (ecstatic utterances) had crept into the church at Corinth, and the church claimed spirituality and love for God because they could imitate the pagans. Paul points out that what they had was not true spirituality, ch 13.

What will we go out of our way to do for our family? How much will we overlook in a physical brother, sister or child... a brother or sister in Christ? What kind of spirit do we exhibit? Do we show as much love, concern and patience for fellow Christians as we do for our family? Do we show family unity in our actions and attitude one toward another or disunity, envy, jealousy and schisms? Everyone can see our spiritual condition, and it is not by what our mouth claims as spirituality.

## Footnotes

1. See [The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible](#), by Spiros Zodhiates, pg. 1404, 5. [Back](#)

2. A result of the fall is that the husband is commanded to instruct his wife, Gen 3:16; Eph 5:22; 1 Pet 3:1. Thus, for the woman to instruct the man in the church is a direct effort to overthrow the word of God. [Back](#)

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# Tongues:

## A Biblical View

By Ovid Need, Jr.

### Chapter Five Spiritual Defined

Have the Biblical tongues, such as recorded in Acts and 1 Corinthians, ceased? We have looked at the historical and Scriptural background; now let's put it all together.

One cannot deny that the major foundation for the current day movement is experience: "You **CANNOT** deny my **EXPERIENCE**." (Most, if not all, of the cults which come to our doors are trying to persuade us to accept their experience.) No doubt experiences are real, but experience cannot

overshadow the word of God. So again we are reminded, **THE WORD OF GOD** must be our only authority; we are not permitted to accept experiences as final confirmation of correct activity.

God (through the apostle Paul) clearly tells Timothy that *in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron,* 1 Timothy 4:1-2. Moreover, in his second letter to Timothy, Paul states that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable: 1) for doctrine, 2) for reproof, 3) for correction and 4) for instruction in righteousness, 2 Tim 3:16. Paul further instructs Timothy: *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,* II Tim. 2:15. Obviously, Paul is referring to the OT Scriptures; there was as yet no NT. Of course, the application is all Scripture, Genesis through Revelation, but Paul's instruction to Timothy is quite clear: the OT gives the basis of all doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness (right living). Therefore, all teaching must have its foundation in the OT. (Cf. the Lord's instruction, Jn 5:39-47.)

Thus, we see that a person who accepts experience over the word of God would be one of those referred to by Paul in 1 Tim 4:1-2: first, he has departed from the faith, listening to seducing spirits and devils; he speaks lies and has his conscience seared, "I don't care what the Scriptural facts are, I enjoy the experience." The one who accepts experience, emotion or personal feeling of what he thinks is best over the word of God is a victim of seducing spirits, regardless of his denomination. When one says, "I just don't see it that way," in spite of the clear proclamation of the word of God, he is one of the victims of seducing spirits, 1 Tim 4:1, 2. We are commanded to depart from those who leave the final authority of the Scriptures for experience or feelings, *For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words (not bad or evil) and fair speech (appealing to the flesh) deceive the hearts of the simple,* Romans 16:17, 18.

I do not believe Paul is necessarily talking of breaking fellowship (as we mentioned in the introduction) with them, but when it comes to any kind of confrontation over their doctrinal error, then we are to avoid them as they would try to persuade us to follow them in their emotional experience over God's word, cf. 2 Jn 10.

Let us follow Paul through as he deals with the situation at Corinth. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul's first letter dealing with the sins of a very worldly church. As the Corinthians followed these worldly (sinful) practices, ecstatic utterances from the worship of Aphrodite entered, and these immature Christians accepted pagan practice without examining the OT Scriptures. This acceptance led to their giving a godly spiritual meaning to what was taking place.

Keep in mind that chapter and verse divisions were not in the original letters; they were added much latter, around the time of Wycliffe, for convenience in reading and study. Therefore, chapters 12-15 were all written as one unit dealing with the problem of the infiltrated ecstatic utterances being given a Spiritual meaning. This is confirmed in 12:1 as Paul opens his passage with *Now concerning spiritual* (gifts is added by the translators), *brethren, I would not have you ignorant*. In other words, "Now in regard to what is truly spiritual, I would not have you in the dark or misled (cf. Gal 6:1). Clearly, Paul is not referring to "spiritual gifts" at all. Moreover, in 14:1, 2 the words *gifts* and *unknown* are added to the text, confirming that Paul is not referring to spiritual gifts (which he does elsewhere); rather, his

reference is to spirituality, ie. what it means to be spiritual. What makes one Spiritual.. ecstatic speech or the attitudes and actions of Gal 5:22-26? Note that one of the problems of the modern "versions" of the Bible is their treatment of added words, such as these, as original text, which they are not.

Paul opens this passage dealing with what it means to be spiritual and closes this passage dealing with the misunderstanding and misuse of the "gifts" of the spirits; chapter 13 is the hub of this passage, and everything else revolves around it. Chp 13 deals with the true definition of what it means to be Spiritual, ie. love one for another.

To help draw all the loose ends together, let us give a quick run-down of what Paul says here dealing with a developed situation from this misunderstanding of what is spiritual. 1 Cor 12:7, every man had received his spiritual gift at salvation (cf. Rom 14, &c.). V. 11, *severally* or uniquely as the Spirit wills; not everyone has the same gift, but it is given according to what God wants the individual to have at salvation for **HIS** glory. Then Paul moves on into an illustration: the body, 12:14-26: no matter how much desire might be present, the liver cannot be the tongue; furthermore, it is a sin for the liver not to be the

best liver that it can be, for the glory of God, because the liver is just as important as the tongue although it does not receive the attention and recognition as does the tongue. V. 25, when the liver becomes content with its position and works properly and the tongue does the same, there will be no divisions or breakdowns, and the body will work effectively. The tongue will be more effective and so will the liver, each in its place, content with where God has placed it, and doing its very best.

Moving on to vs. 26-28: Paul shows the unity and points out that not everyone is an apostle, prophet, teacher, worker of miracles, healer, speaker in foreign languages or an interpreter of foreign tongues, no more than every body part is a liver, eye, mouth or an ear. It is not the person's choice, but God makes this choice at the person's salvation.

12:31, he tells them to covet the best gifts, then tells them what the best gifts are as he shows them a more excellent way: chapter 13. Paul shows us that a person controlled by the Holy Spirit produce the fruit of the Spirit, identified in Gal 5:22, **not** the "gifts" of the Spirit. Here in chp 13, he defines the most basic of fruit, love. As Paul defines love, obviously what was taking

place at Corinth was nothing like the godly fruit of the spirit, yet because of the pagan influence, they mistook their actions for the moving of the Spirit. Paul confronts them with facts backed up with Scriptural evidence: they evidenced all the "gifts," but were worldly; immorality was rampant; they were proud, backbiting, divided, drunken; their women were in rebellion against proper authority. Clearly, rather than being a light in the darkness around them, the darkness was putting out their light; they were asleep in their worldliness; their testimony was shot, and those around them were going to the devil, 1 Cor. 15:34. Yet amidst all of this wickedness, they were proud of their spirituality because they were able imitate the ecstatic speech from the pagan temples and supernaturally speak in unknown foreign languages.

Paul goes to the very root of true spirituality by describing love, ch 13. His description hits their worldliness "head on;" clearly, what they were claiming as spiritual was not. I will not go point by point through ch 13, but I will give an example of how Paul straightly confronts the problems in this church, 13:7: 13:5, *does not behave itself unseemly*, compared with the unseemly behavior at the Lord's supper table, 11:22; furthermore, ecstatic speech proved to themselves their claim

of spirituality, but Paul says that the mark of true spirituality is love and *love doth not behave itself unseemly*. They were well aware that there was drunkenness at the Lord's table, and this fact alone should have destroyed their confidence in their "spirituality." It would be an interesting study to compare the 15 things in 13:1-7 with the sins exposed by Paul's letter to this church at Corinth.

Will facts cause us to examine the truth about our own personal relationship with the Lord? Usually they will not because we can get so caught up in emotions, experience and personal opinions that the facts are left far in the background, so we go our own way. Many times we must plead guilty to the same sin as the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 15:33, 34.

Let's skip down to I Cor.13:8 where Paul sums up the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit will never fail: "The sense is, that while other endowments of the Holy Spirit must soon cease and be valueless, love would abide, and would always exist. The argument is, that we ought to seek that which is of enduring value; and that, therefore, love should be preferred to those endowments of the Spirit on which so high a value had been set by the Corinthians." 1

But *prophecies, they shall fail, ...tongues, they*

*shall cease, knowledge, it shall vanish away* (note that he does not say they shall stop or depart for a season, then return). Paul does not link prophecies, tongues and knowledge all together here in one package; rather, he says that knowledge and prophecies will continue until something else takes place to cause them to cease. *The definition of prophecy is:* "discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purpose of God, whether by reproof and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing the things hidden; esp. by foretelling future events." <sup>2</sup>

As we follow *prophecies* on through in the Greek Concordance, we find other uses of this word which is found in v. 8; in every usage of *prophecies* we have the reference to Divine inspiration. <sup>3</sup> There are other words translated *prophecy* or *to prophesy*, but the word Paul uses in v. 8 always refers to a Divine supernatural ability to foretell the future given to confirm the new message which God was delivering through His messengers. The other word for *prophets* would fit within several categories: not only to foretell the future, but preaching the already revealed truth of God. In other words, there are at least four Greek words translated into our English words, *prophet, prophecy, prophesy, &c* (The

New Englishman's Greek Concordance and Lexicon, Republished by AP&A, Lafayette, IN, 47903, pgs. 762-764). Paul tells us that supernatural prophecies will continue until something else happens replacing them. <sup>4</sup> Again, this supernatural ability to foretell the future was to confirm that the new message of the gospel was from the Lord according to the law, Deut 18:22.

*Fail* and *vanish* are the same word, v. 8: "To cause to cease, pass away, be done away." The thought behind this Greek word is to do away with after the job is completed (unemploy, to terminate); the goal is reached, the job is complete; therefore, they (supernatural prophecies and the supernatural ability to speak other languages [not ecstatic utterances which was dealt with as paganism]) have no more use. Their assigned task is terminated, so they now are idle and useless; therefore, they were discharged from their duty and have passed away. <sup>5</sup>

When something else happened after v.8, they were over and finished.

Now we come to a third word, *cease*: "To make to cease or desist: to restrain a thing or person from

something. To leave off" (Thayer's, pgs. 496-7). Therefore, we see that Paul is saying that knowledge and prophecies will continue until something else happens to cause them to stop; tongues, however, will cease, stop in and of themselves not needing anything to act upon them to cause them to cease. When will they simply stop? 1 Cor 14:20-22 gives us the answer. As we have already seen, when the OT prophesied purpose for tongues was fulfilled, they stopped.

## OT Reference

We cannot be reminded too often that we must view every NT doctrine and practice in the light of the OT. There are four OT passages which refer to the purpose of tongues: first, Deut. 28:36-49, where we see that a sign of God's judgment upon His rebellious, stubborn, stiff-necked people would be people marching through Israel speaking languages they would not understand (See Stephen's indictment against these people, Acts 7:51). Second, Isa 28:9-13 (cf. 2 Ki 17), the sign of God's judgment would be unintelligible foreign languages spoken on the streets of Israel sounding like stammering lips. Third, Isa 33:19 says that the stammering tongue (a tongue, language not understood by the average person)

is a sign of judgment upon God's people for rejecting His authority over them. Fourth, Jeremiah 5:11-15 gives the same warning as does Isaiah. Clearly, God is telling His people who have rejected Him that a sign of His judgment against them is a strange people within their land speaking in a language which they do not understand: a foreign invader. At least four times in the OT law and prophets, God points to a language which they cannot understand, for which they need an interpreter, as a sign of judgment upon His people Israel for rejecting His message to turn back to Him.

Notice the statement *will I speak unto this people*, 1 Cor. 14:21, 22; the message of judgment was specifically to the OT covenant people of Israel: the people of the circumcision. Tongues were never to anyone else but to Israel who had rejected God's messengers and message. Paul points out that the message of judgment, as represented by tongues, was only to the unbelieving Jew who knew the law and prophets, to the ones who could and would make the connection. The Messiah Himself took the message to this people, and they treated Him worse than they did the OT prophets by crucifying Him. There is no Scriptural hint that the message represented by tongues was ever meant for the

uncircumcised, the Gentiles or the NT church.

Paul's thought moves right from v. 21 to v. 22 with *Wherefore*, or because. *Tongues are for a sign.. to them that believe not.* When a Jew who had been brought up in the law and the prophets heard the other tongues (languages, not ecstatic utterances), they knew beyond any doubt it meant that judgment was coming according to the Scriptures. (Acts 2:37, they were pricked in their hearts [the Jewish hearers who knew the law and the prophets because they were gathered for the feast of Pentecost according to the law], and said...what shall we do. The tongues [and the message] brought conviction upon these learned Jews.)

Paul moves to v. 23 referring to the Jew who is unlearned in the law and the prophets and to the Greek (Gentile) who would be unlearned in the law and the prophets. When the unlearned heard the unintelligible foreign languages, they would say, "These people are mad." Thus, tongues were a sign for the people of Israel who were learned and knew the prophecies; they had nothing to do with the Gentiles or with the new church. To them, the tongues would be a mark of madness. In every case of tongues in the book of Acts we see an Israelite of the circumcision present and at

## least one Apostle.

In Romans 11, God broke off the natural olive branches because of their hardness and rebellion (unbelief) against their rightful King. He then grafted in the wild olive branch: the people who were not searching for God, the Gentiles (Rom 9:25, 26; 10:20, etc). God also included the promise that those of the circumcision could (and would, according to God's election) be grafted back into their own olive tree. (Notice that they must be grafted back in; they must turn from their hardness and unbelief to Christ just as the uncircumcised (Rom 11:23, 24). When threatened with judgment, these Israelites said, "Nay, God wouldn't do that to us. We are the seed of Abraham; therefore, the heirs according to God's promises to Abraham. He won't judge us because to do so would be to break the promise to Abraham." <sup>6</sup>

We also find this thought prevalent in the OT, eg. Jer 5:12. God, with tongues, reminds the hardened Jews of the sign which proves that He is about to judge their hardness by breaking off the natural branches for their rejection of His message and His Messiah. Then He is going to graft the church in their place through Christ, but if they will repent and turn from their unbelief, they

also can be grafted into the root (Christ). When Israel heard the foreign languages in Acts 2:11-12, it knew exactly what God was doing in light of Jer 5:11-15. Lk 20:16, because Israel rejected their true heir, the husbandmen were destroyed and the vineyard given to others, the church made up of both Jews and Gentiles. <sup>7</sup>

God used Titus to break Israel off in 70 A.D. When Titus destroyed Jerusalem (and the Jewish race), he scattered the remaining Jews over the whole earth, thereby completely fulfilling the OT prophecy of judgment for their unbelief.

1 Cor 13:8: tongues, they shall cease (never to return). The reason for tongues was completely fulfilled in 70 A.D.; therefore, tongues have ceased because God does not leave unneeded signs. They were not toys, but something very serious. When the need ceased, so did they. The "sign gifts" (as they are called), tongues, interpretation of tongues, healings (other than Ja 5), all ceased when the need was fulfilled; they were given to confirm the new message of the apostles (Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12). Furthermore, the Lord said that it was an evil generation which seeks after a sign (and only one sign was given- Lk 11:29). Paul goes even further saying that one who requires a sign cannot be saved (Rom 8:24).

The generation to whom Christ appeared and which the apostles warned, rejected the message and was judged.

In Matthew 24:24 Christ warned of the rash of false teachers and false prophets who would show great signs and wonders (Mk 13:22). Josephus points out that while Rome had Jerusalem closed up for destruction, there were many false prophets which appeared within the city, trying to convince the Jews who wanted to defect to Rome that the Messiah would soon appear and deliver the city from Rome (Again, see our paper on Mat 24). We see other warnings throughout Scripture. 2 Peter 2 warns of false teachers using fair words and good emotions to influence God's people away from the word of God.

The apostolic gifts were for a purpose, and when that purpose was fulfilled, they ceased. Corinth's ecstatic utterance was no more than an overflow from the prevailing pagan worship with no spiritual significance toward the God of heaven. The ecstatic utterance prevalent today is practiced by pagans and "Christians" alike; therefore, how can one say that it is a Holy God when the antichrist crowd practices the same thing? It is an ecstatic speech which anyone can take part in if the

conditions are right. (There was a sign in the front of a local church advertising classes in the use of the "spiritual gifts.")

## Footnotes

1. [Barnes' Notes](#), 1 Cor, pg. 252. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. [Back](#)

2. [Thayer's English Lexicon](#), Republished by AP&A, Lafayette, IN, 47903, pg. 5521. [Back](#)

3. Mat 13:14; Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:10; 13:2, 8; 14:6, 22; 1 Thes 5:20; 1 Tim 1:18; 4:14; 2 Pet 1:20, 21; Rev 1:3; 11:6; 19:10; 22:7, 10, 18, 19 (note the plagues promised to anyone who would attempt to add any "divine prophecies").[Back](#)

4. I make no claim whatsoever of being knowledgeable in language studies, but there are many books available dealing with the grammar in this text. Two sources are: [The Corinthian Catastrophe](#), pg. 34, "Far from linking tongues, prophecy and knowledge together, he separates tongues from the others by using the transitive and intransitive. In addition, even the voice is different. The statement about prophecy and knowledge are both in the passive voice whereas the statement concerning tongues is in the middle voice." & [Charismatic Gift of Tongues](#), pg. 57-64.

Spiros Zodhiates also has material dealing with the grammar and word usage in this passage.

5. [Thayer's](#), pg. 336. [New Englishman's Greek Concordance](#), pg. 476. [Back](#)

6. Mat 3:9; Lk 3:8; Jn chp. 8. Paul is dealing with this in all of Rom chp. 9, as well as Gal chp. 3. The Jewish pride in being the seed of Abraham is not hard to follow throughout the Scriptures. This was a major obstacle which Christ confronted.

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7. Mat 21:33-46. See our work on Mat 24 where we go into this in great detail, including the destruction by Titus. Also see 1 Pet, ch.2. [Back](#)

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# Tongues:

## A Biblical View

By Ovid Need, Jr.

## Chapter Six

### Conclusion

Finally, let us touch on a few Scriptures within Paul's instructions as found in 1 Cor 12-14. We will mention only a few because there are books on the market which do a much better job than we can. (See [Introduction](#).)

1 Cor 14:18, *I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all.* Paul was an apostle; the Jews were still in the land because judgment had not yet come. When judgment came and the Jews were removed, tongues' purpose was fulfilled, so they ceased in and of themselves.

*Knowledge and prophecy, 13:9, 10: both were in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. 2 Pet 1:19-21, we have also a more sure word of prophecy: the word of enscriptured word of God, breathed by God's Spirit. As the word of God was*

completed (John was probably the last one to write, and all the books completed before 70 A.D.

1) prophecy dropped off. (Prophecy defined as Divine inspiration for foretelling the future.) Prophecy dropped off and became more and more infrequent until John wrote *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen*. With this, all prophecy as a supernatural gift spoken of in 13:8 stopped.

## Prophecy today

Prophecy today is the use of the written word of God spoken in the power of the Holy Spirit, Revelation 19:10. The NT author's supernatural office of prophet disappeared as Scripture was completed, but the ministry of the prophet of exhorting and edifying from God's word is still with the church. God's prophet was His mouth-piece, and we now have the complete revelation of God in His Son and in His written word. Therefore, the supernatural gift of prophecy can no longer be in operation, for there is no further supernatural revelation from the Father or the Son although there is further illumination.

1 Cor 13:11, "*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I grew up and matured, I quit those*

childish things (cf. Eph 4). I now have the complete revelation of God in His word, but even that is as a dark glass which will not be done away with until I see Him face to face."

Furthermore, note 14:1: "You should desire to be spiritual (defined as love. Certainly, love will prophesy; it will teach and present Christ to and in the church in a manner that will build the hearers up in faith and obedience to the total law-word of God." Then chp 14 gives the guidelines for the use of *other tongues* because tongues were still active in the church. When Paul wrote, Israel was still in the land, but even then Paul gave guidelines for their use so that he might purge the pagan ecstatic speech from the worship of Aphrodite out of the church.

## Problems addressed

One of the main problems which is addressed here is pride, 12:12-31, because in chp 14, we see that they were practicing this in order to draw attention to themselves (to the speaker. The "spiritual temperature" was, "My, look how much contact he has with God," when the ecstatic speech had no spiritual significance). They were using tongues for their own self-edification, 14:1-14, when the true mark of spirituality was edifying the whole body of the church, vs. 4, 12. Paul

encourages them to prophesy, to speak the word of God in such a way as the whole church could easily understand it and apply its principles.

We see that what they were doing was incoherent, yet they were claiming it was something which revealed godly spiritually, 14:6-11. Paul tells them that they do not know the Scriptures and to go the better way and desire to prophesy, v. 1: teach the doctrine of sin and the whole counsel of God which brings conviction and repentance, v. 24. This Corinthian church was like barbarians talking back and forth, and those present couldn't understand a word they were saying; they had no consideration of those present. An example here would be us in a foreign country: I was in U.S. Navy Mobile Construction Battalion #7 for a little over three years. Our main objective at that time was upkeep and maintenance on overseas Naval bases: Cuba, Spain and Puerto Rico. On these bases there were usually many civilian employees who helped on some of the construction jobs or in the kitchen. I well remember building some new barracks in Cuba; many civilian workers were brought in from the surrounding islands (Haiti, &c.) and they would speak among themselves in their native tongue which we could not understand. Paul says he was not going to use

his supernatural gift of speaking in a foreign language because it was unfruitful; neither he nor those around him could understand his words, 14:14, 15.

Paul closes this chapter with a strong note, which we will close this booklet with: *If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.* "If any man claims to be spiritual, let him admit these things are true. If he refuses to admit and abide by these things, then ignore him and let him continue on in his ignorance," 14:37, 38.

Tongues (the supernatural ability to speak in a foreign language), as mentioned in Acts and Corinthians, are no longer needed. Their need was fulfilled in 70 A.D. when the judgment which they spoke of came upon Israel; therefore, this supernatural gift is gone. Prophecies and knowledge in the sense which Philip's daughter spoke are gone also, gradually replaced with the more sure word of prophecy and knowledge, the word of God (Acts 21:9). The Apostle John finished the word of God.

These people at Corinth evidently ignored Paul's instruction against the ecstatic speech which had

overwhelmed this church from the pagan worship. This church passed off the scene because they chose their emotional experience over the clear concise teaching of God's word. Good sincere people today are caught up in a similar Corinthian emotional experience: "My mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts. I have had this experience." No doubt one of the most difficult of all things is to lay aside personal experience, ideas and emotions for the foundation of God's word, but we have no choice.

## The Spirit of God

The Spirit of God gives the desire, wisdom and power to work for God, to understand His word and to apply it to every area of life. His Spirit gives the desire and power to obey His commands, thereby inheriting the blessings of God (Ex 28:3; 31:3; 35:21,31; Deut 28; Josh 1:7,8; Ph 2:13). One will not find any Biblical connection with the Spirit and emotions we are hearing so much about today (Ph 2:13; 2 Tim 1:7). Love is not defined by God as a feeling, but as action toward God and toward man; when love is defined as feeling, the door to all kinds of ungodliness and false doctrine is opened. The world is full of deceiving spirits of Antichrist willing to give good feelings, and the only method of recognizing them

is the total word of God (1 Tim 4:1; Heb 4:12, etc.. Also note that 1 John, chps. 2, 4, deals with this). Things may look, sound and feel good and draw in money by the truck load, but they cannot replace the authority of God's word.

One last point: as we hear and see the TV and radio charismatic movement in action, we hear testimonies of people telling how they have "received Christ into their life," or some variation of these salvationless false doctrines. As a rule, the electronic evangelists have no salvation message from the word of God of the substitutionary death, burial and resurrection (See ["The Gospel Perverted"](#)). 2 John 10, as well as Gal 1, clearly instructs us to avoid those who do not present the gospel of the substitutionary atoning work of Christ. When anyone, even an angel from heaven, emphasizes anything over the work of Christ, be warned! God identifies them as false teachers.

May God see fit to give light in the dark day of false teachers in every area of His word.

## Footnotes

1. See [The Beast of Revelation](#), pp 81-167, by Dr. Kenneth Gentry for dating the Book of Revelation.

ICE, Tyler, Texas. Also, the internal evidence is strong for an early dating, but this is not our study.

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