

Glossolalia Or Xenolalia It's Still Not Real!

By David Lee Burris

1 Cor 13:1-3

- NIV -

13:1 **Hypothesis:** No matter what I say, ... without love ... I am a noise
If I speak with the tongues of men
and of angels,
but do not have love,
I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

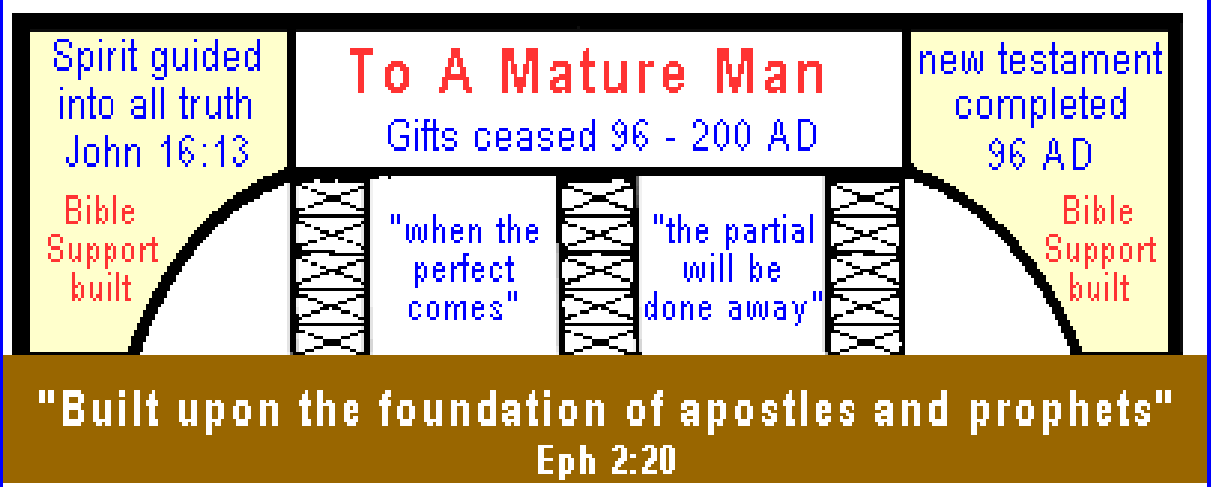
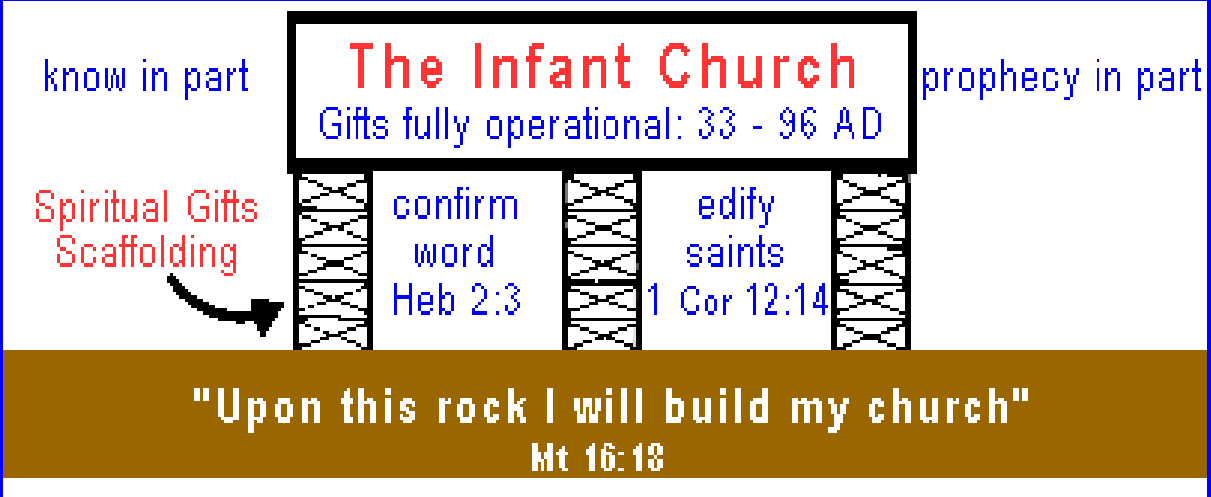
13:2 **Hypothesis:** No matter what I may have, without love, I am nothing
If I have [the gift of] prophecy
and can fathom all mysteries
and all knowledge,
and if
and if I have a faith that can move mountains,
but do not have love,
I am nothing.

13:3 **Hypothesis:** No matter what I give, without love, I gain nothing.
If I give all I possess [to the poor,^a]
and give over my body to hardship [NASB: *to be burned*] that I may boast,
but do not have love,
I gain nothing.

a. [the gift of] Not found in the Greek NT
b. [to the poor] Not found in the Greek NT (NASB employs italics)

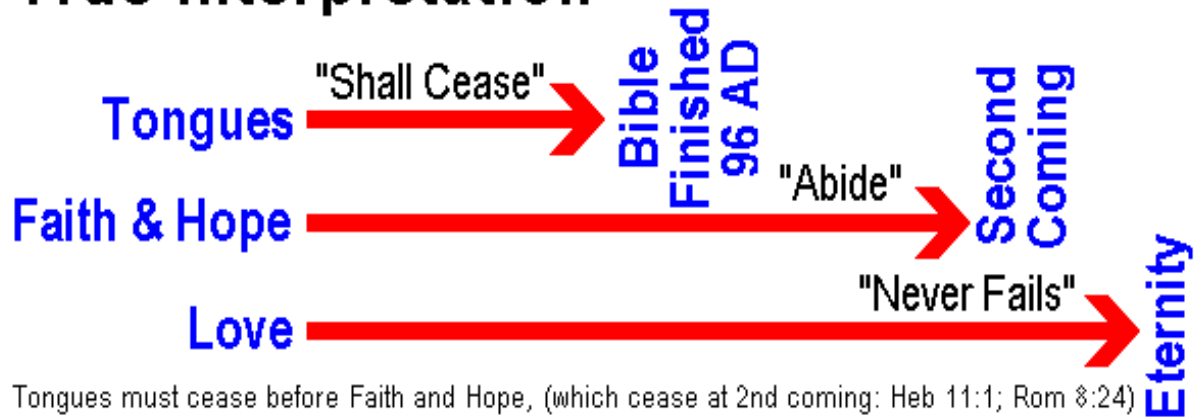
1 Corinthians 13:8-13

(Spiritual Gifts, Scaffolding and Bridge Building illustration)

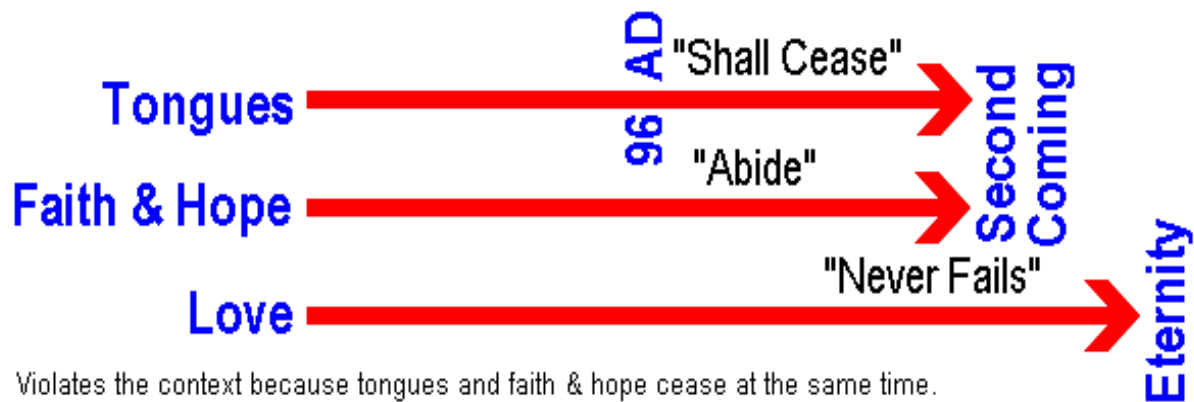


1 Corinthians 13:8-13

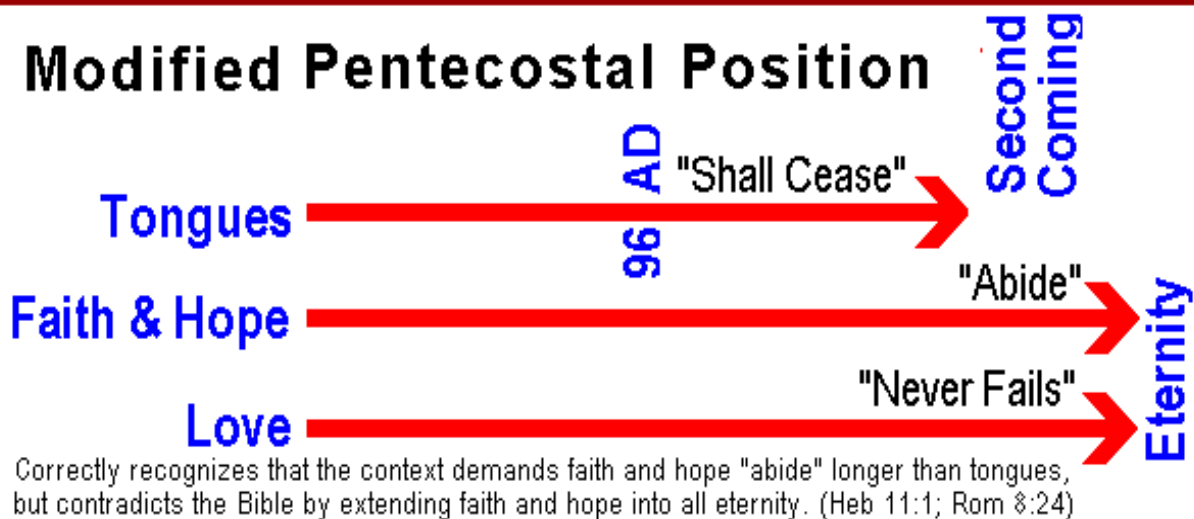
True Interpretation



False Pentecostal Interpretation



Modified Pentecostal Position



For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth.

Psalms 33:4

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

CEASED WHEN PERFECTION CAME: THE NEW TESTAMENT

Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

1 Corinthians 13:8-10

By Al Shannon © alshannonky@hotmail.com 2019

IS BIBLICAL SPEAKING IN TONGUES SUPPOSED TO BE GIBBERISH? Gibberish is a false form of speaking in tongues and it is just another phony teaching infiltrating the Christian Church today. If it is going to be a true gift of the Holy Spirit, which is itself a debate about whether those gifts are still even functioning for Christians today, it has to be a known language. I didn't say that; it comes from the Bible in Acts 2 about when the tongues went forth. There, the word is "glossolalia" in the Greek, meaning "languages." So, biblical speaking in tongues was specific languages and not gibberish. The people in Acts 2 heard the tongues in their own languages.

WHAT IS

GLOSSOLALIA



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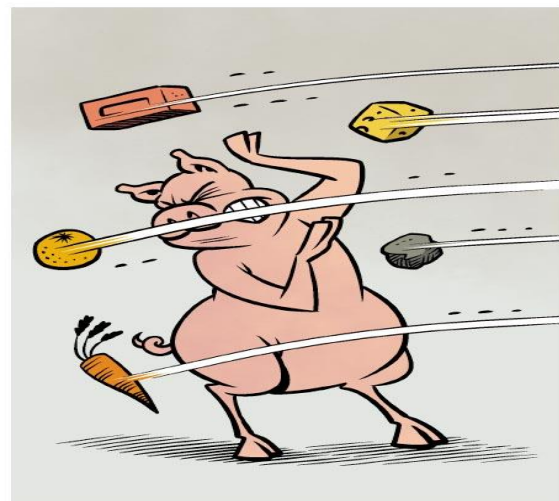



PENTECOSTAL GIBBERISH

Muppets literally produce more meaningful noises than the so-called "speaking in tongues" of the Pentecostals. (1Co 14:23)



SPEAKING IN TONGUES





Sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists believe this phenomenon takes place in the participant when he/she has dissociated him/herself from his/her conscious mind and his/her physical surroundings. In other words, the phenomenon takes place when a glossolalic has by mimicry or learning, internalized a set sequence or pattern of randomly grouped vowels and consonants and, while in a dissociated state, spews forth these utterances in a rapid and fluent manner. The result, according to the professions listed above, is *glossolalia*.


Glossolalia & Xenolalia

Glossolalia: In general application, coming from the Greek, "glossolalia" can refer to 1) speaking in either a variety of different languages or rather 2) speaking in incomprehensible sounds/gibberish/non-real life languages. Specifically, "glossolalia" in common English properly refers to 1) making noises, including bodily noises, sighs, moans... or 2) speaking in gibberish/non-real languages.

Xenolalia: "xenolalia" refers to speaking in many real languages. In apostolic times, this would always refer to having an infused gift/learning of a language/number of languages (see Acts 2). In current times, "xenolalia" refers to the ability to learn foreign languages; some individuals learn non-native languages with ease while others struggle/find it impossible. Those who find it relatively easy/accessible are said to have the gift of "xenolalia." It can be considered a subcategory of the general term "glossolalia," but for the sake of specific usage, "glossolalia" and "xenolalia" denote two different things.

St. Paul did not have this distinction, so interpretation of the passages in which he refers to speaking in tongues must use surrounding context, both textual & Christian, to determine which type of tongues he speaks about.

- wiktionary.org

A blue decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, semi-transparent rectangular shapes that create a layered, geometric effect. The colors range from a deep blue to a lighter, almost white blue.

Socioculturalists believe glossolalia is a learned, internalized behavior. They believe a person learns to speak in tongues much the same way a baby learns to speak his/her language. At first, the participant starts speaking or "glossolaling" with a few syllables and consonants. After repeated utterances, the person expands the original utterance by perhaps repeating the original phrase many times very rapidly as to sound like a foreign language. Many think glossolalics unconsciously form rhymes or alliterations with the original segment. This would result in sentences and even entire dialogues.

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Empirical and experimental studies of glossolalia

Empirical study of glossolalia begins with the assumption that glossolalia is a kind of loud utterance that can be registered, tape-recorded and analyzed. According to the study glossolalia is automatic speech and production of sounds; the intonation pattern is repetitive, rhythmic and melodic. Vocalization occurs in the state of dissociation, which trance-like represents a neuropsychological correlate of a dream. That speech is not productive, it is non-communicative in a formal sense, since it does not transmit any message. In order to form a real language out of the speaking, the language should be formed in the system of resonant symbols organized into patterns of systematic series of vowels & consonants arbitrarily related to outer world, and with the main function to exchange the information. In glossolalia there are rudimentary language-like structures, but there is no constant relation between the words and there is no meaning for common listeners. In other words, there might be a phonological structure, which is considered the real language by the speaker, but in fact it is not any known or extinct language, although it can be similar to some of them. It happens mostly because the speaker unconsciously imitates his basic language. It is mainly praising the Lord, and therefore it need not to be interpreted. It is about angelic languages, which originate from God, i.e. it is unnotional prayer, an array of sounds with no meaning to us, but transmitting the message directly to Lord. Among the listeners there is usually a person with the gift of interpreting the language and he/she interprets the message or the prayer that were said. The interpreter intuitively knows what was said, although they do not understand it. In fact, he/she interprets the emotional content of the message. The phonetic inventory varies somewhat from group to group, but is stereotyped & rigid within the group. Glossolalists' behavior depends on social expectations of their community. Some have convulsions, or lose consciousness; others dramatically fall into a trance, or have amnesia of speaking. There is also a possibility of group induction in a kind of domino effect. – **Research Abstract**

“What is taking place in Pentecostal, charismatic, and other churches that claim to still have the gift of tongues? Since the Bible tells us that speaking in tongues was speaking in known languages and that this gift has ceased, I believe that what is today practiced as the gift of tongues is a deception. The “tongues” spoken are not known languages. They are simply nonsense. Similar phenomena of speaking in gibberish occur in the religious rites of non-Christian religions, such as Paganism, Shamanism, Spiritism, and Voodoo.

Linguists have studied glossolalia on a number of occasions. Their findings are quite revealing. One wrote that glossolalia is “only a façade of language” (William J. Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels: The Religious Language of Pentecostalism*. Macmillan, New York, 1972, 128). They have found that speaking in tongues is a learned behavior, and that tongues-speaking congregations imitate the particular glossolalia style of their leaders, or will even take on the style of prominent visiting speakers (Samarin, 73; Virginia H. Hine: “Pentecostal Glossolalia toward a Functional Interpretation.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 8, 2: [1969] 211–226: quote on 211; Nicholas P. Spanos, Wendy P. Cross, Mark Lepage, Marjorie Coristine: “Glossolalia as learned behavior: An experimental demonstration.” *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*: 1986 Feb Vol 95[1] 21–23). Researchers have even found that activity in the language centers of people while they are speaking in tongues decreases and activity in the emotional centers increases (Andrew Newberg, Nancy Wintering and Donna Morgan: “Cerebral blood flow during the complex vocalization task of glossolalia,” *J Nucl Med. Meeting Abstracts* 2006; 47 [Supplement 1]:316P; *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging*, Volume 148, Issue 1, 22 November 2006, 67-71).

Certainly, this is weighty evidence that modern tongues-speaking is not a gift of the Holy Spirit and has nothing to do with the speaking in tongues mentioned in the Bible. As such, it must be admitted to be a delusion or deception, and it cannot be considered to be harmless. It is absolutely not wrong to test the spirits, and, in fact, we are commanded to do so ([1 John 4:1](#)) and the implication is that we are to reject what is not from God. If today’s speaking in tongues is not from God, and I believe that both biblical and non-biblical evidence shows that it is not, then it must be rejected. Those who ignore this do so at the peril of opening themselves up to even greater deception.” – Peter Ditzel



“Many people are often interested in what facilitates the occurrence of glossolalia. The Pentecostals believe the Holy Spirit facilitates the occurrence of glossolalia, but there are other opinions which deserve mentioning. Some say the rhythmical beats of clapping, stomping and drumming creates a *psychologically* induced state in which a participant's unconscious mind takes precedence over the conscious mind. Faking, or trying to make other people within the church believe that one has the gift of tongues when one does not is also a possibility.”

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New Psychological Study of Tongue-Speaking

Readers of this journal are no doubt well aware of the biblical teaching on miracles (including glossolalia or the ability to speak in languages other than one's native tongue). The Scriptures clearly teach that when such ability was present in New Testament days it was miraculous, consisting of the ability to speak in a known language which one hadn't studied and which could be understood by those who had learned that language; that it was available to apostles and to those upon whom they laid their hands; that its purpose was to confirm the speaker proclaimed a message from God; and that such confirming signs were temporary and would "fail, cease, and vanish" when God's revelation was complete (Acts 2:4-16; 8:12-19; Heb. 2:14; Mk. 16:14-20; 1 Cor. 13:8-13). These concepts are well-known to careful Bible students, and it is not the purpose of this article to discuss them.

However, one is sometimes confronted with the claims of a cheap imitation of New Testament miracles in the form of modern-day "tongue-speakers." An argument frequently made by "speakers" of the gibberish or pseudo-languages which they pass off as "tongues" is that "it works," that is, that many people can learn to speak such "languages" without training. Thus, it is argued, such ability to "speak" must be construed as being produced by the Holy Spirit never mind that it is still not a true, understandable language as in the New Testament.

A recent study by Canadian psychologists puts the lie to such claims. The study is reported in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* (95: 1), February 1986, pp. 21-23. Psychologists at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario invited practiced glossolalists into a sound studio, where they recorded their utterances.

These tapes (audio and video) were “obtained from speakers who defined their glossolalia as religious activity, belonged to religious groups that encouraged glossolalia, and had been speaking glossolalia, regularly for over two years” (p. 22). The psychologists assembled a volunteer group of 60 Carleton University undergraduates (ages 18-44 years). Of the 36 men and 24 women, “none spoke glossolalia or had heard it spoken,” and several students who had heard or spoken glossolalia were excluded from the group. This group of non-glossolalists was then given the following assignment:

Your task today is to listen to a 1 -minute tape of a person speaking pseudo language. As you listen to the tape, try to get a sense of the language rather than trying to memorize certain phrases. Notice any rhythm, repetitions, or patterns in the utterances. Immediately afterward you will be asked to produce pseudo language yourself for a 30 second period. This will be taped. Pay close attention.

After listening to a sixty-second taped sample of glossolalia, the subjects were asked “to do their best to speak pseudo language continuously for 30 seconds.” These “baseline” attempts were likewise tape-recorded. Half of the subjects (having previously been designated as a “control group”), were then dismissed and asked to return in several days. The other half began immediately to undergo the first of several training periods, in which they listened to further samples of glossolalia, by both male and female demonstrators, using both audio-tape & video-tape. Modeling and “how-to-do-it” type instructions were given, and then the subjects were asked to try to speak pseudo language themselves for thirty seconds, during which they received encouragement and direct instruction and feedback from the experimenter.

A second training session several days later followed similar procedures, but utilized demonstration samples from different speakers. In both training sessions, the subjects in that group were allowed a “practice” session to see how well they could imitate or speak in pseudo language.

Following their own training sessions, each person in the experimental group was asked to make a final attempt to produce a thirty-second sample of glossolalia. The control group, which heard only the initial demonstration and had not been trained in the interim, returned and heard only a final one-minute sample, following which each individual was asked to produce a thirty-second continuous sample of pseudo language.

Then the “baseline” sample (taken from everyone in the control group and experimental group alike) and the final sample from all the subjects were judged by two judges, one of whom was blind to the subjects’ treatment or session, rated each baseline & post-test pseudolanguage segment. Both judges who were experienced listeners of religious glossolalia, and in addition, the judge who was blind to subjects’ treatment or session had, for over a year, been a speaker of religious glossolalia.

The results are intriguing. The present findings are consistent with the social learning hypothesis that glossolalia, can be acquired with relative ease by almost anyone with the requisite motivations. All subjects were unfamiliar with glossolalia, prior to their participation in this study. Nevertheless, after only two brief training sessions including practice at glossolalia, modeling, and encouragement, 70 percent of them spoke fluent glossolalia throughout the entire post-test trial and all of the remainder spoke recognizable glossolalia throughout most of the post-test interval. Importantly, 21 percent of our subjects spoke fluent glossolalia. after their one baseline exposure.

This finding is consistent with reports indicating that, in religious groups, some individuals begin speaking glossolalia on their first try and after only brief exposure to other glossolalics (Samarin, 1972).

Although our post-test was only 30 seconds long, it is worth noting that in naturalistic religious settings, even experienced tongue speakers often maintain uninterrupted glossolalia for only relatively short intervals, and they frequently intersperse their glossolalia with meaningful utterances of varying length (e.g., thanks or praises to God; Samarin, 1972). Moreover, glossolalia invariably involves a high level of redundancy. By periodically reorganizing relatively few basic sounds, even the novice speakers can continue glossolalia for extended periods of time if they choose (Samarin, 1972). For example, the two experimenters in the present study learned glossolalia pre-experimentally by using the same procedures that were later administered to subjects. With relatively little practice, both the experimenters found it easy to maintain fluent glossolalia for as long as they wished.

Our findings that glossolalia can be easily learned through direct instruction, along with demonstrations that tongue speakers can initiate and terminate glossolalia upon request and can exhibit glossolalia in the absence of any indexes of trance (Samarin, 1972; Spanos & Hewitt, 1979), support the hypothesis glossolalic utterances are goal-directed actions rather than involuntary happenings.

The references cited in the articles include William J. Samarin's interesting books, *Tongues of Men and Angels. The Religious Language of Pentecostalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1972). As is often the case with psychological research, this study merely confirms in "scientific" dress what many individuals who have observed glossolalia or otherwise dealt with modern-day tongue-speakers already knew by observation or even intuition: Twentieth-century pseudo-languages are learned behavior, acquired through motivation to imitate practiced glossolalists. They are not even biblical in the sense that what is uttered is not true language, but pseudolanguage – and not even this can be attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit, but rather to the "desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph. 2:3). – *Guardian of Truth*

Can Christians Speak in Tongues Today?

By [Wayne Jackson](#)



“Would you explain the ‘speaking in tongues,’ as this practice took place in the early church? What was the nature of those ‘tongues’?”

Literally speaking, the tongue is an organ of taste and speech within the mouth (cf. Lk. 16:24). By metaphorical (figurative) extension, however, the term is used commonly in literature for a **human language** (see Rev. 5:9; 7:9, etc.).

Herodotus, for example, used the expressions “language of Pelasgi” and “the tongue spoken by Pelasgi” interchangeably (*History* 1.57). The Bible student, therefore, must interpret the term “tongue” (when used of human speech) in this light, unless there is **contextual evidence** to demand that the word is being employed in some unusual sense.

Shortly before his ascension back into heaven, Christ promised his disciples that one of the gifts that would accompany believers, confirming the validity of their messages, would be the ability to speak with “new tongues” (Mk. 16:17). The term “new” (Grk. *kainos*) signifies a fresh mode of speaking, not a new language previously unknown to the human family (see: “New” in Vine [1997](#)).

As D. Edmond Heibert observed, “this can mean only languages not before known to the speakers” (485).

In the New Testament, the gift of “tongues” was one of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor. 12:8-11).

Two Views of the Gift of Tongues

There are two major views within the community of Christendom relative to the nature of these tongues.

The Pentecostals or charismatics contend that the gift of tongues constituted a type of heavenly language that consists of a series of unintelligible sounds unrelated to normal human speech.

By way of contrast, others argue with much greater force, that the gift of a tongue was simply the divinely imposed ability to communicate the gospel of Christ in a human language that the speaker had not been taught by the ordinary education process.

The human language view is supported overwhelmingly by the biblical evidence. This may be demonstrated by a consideration of the following points:

Tongues in Acts 2

On the day of Pentecost, the phenomenon of speaking in tongues was identified decisively as the supernatural employment of human languages. Note how the words “tongues” and “language” are used interchangeably in the opening section of Acts 2.

“And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to **speak with other tongues**, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and

were confounded, because that every man heard them **speaking in his own language**. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans? And how hear we, every man **in our own language** wherein we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judaea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them **speaking in our tongues** the mighty works of God” (bold emphasis added).

If we let the Bible explain itself, unquestionably the tongues of this text are ordinary human languages. The apostles were supernaturally endowed with the ability to speak these languages, though they had never known them before.

The Corinthian Tongues

It is sometimes claimed, though, that whereas the tongues of Acts 2 were ordinary human languages, elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g., 1 Corinthians 14) “tongues” were ecstatic utterances, that is, mysterious sounds unknown to anyone except to the speaker and God. The evidence, however, from the Corinthian context demonstrates otherwise.

Consider the following points with reference to the data in 1 Corinthians 14.

The tongue of this context was a gift that provided **edification** (v. 4) and **instruction** (v. 19). Mere inarticulate sounds do not.

In a church assembly composed of various nationalities, a Christian was forbidden to use his tongue-gift before an alien audience unless someone was present who could “interpret.” (vv. 5, 13, 27-28). The Greek word for interpret is **diemeneuo**, which normally means to translate from one language to another (see Spicq 312).

Compare Acts 9:36, where the name “Tabitha” is **translated** as “Dorcus”—the former being an Aramaic name, the latter the Greek version.

Paul says that if one speaks in a tongue and others do not **understand the language**, the speaker would sound like a “barbarian” (v. 11). This term

signifies a one who speaks a “foreign tongue” (Danker 166; see also Acts 28:2). This is another indication that **human languages** are in view.

The expression “strange tongues” (v. 21), is taken from Isaiah 28:11. The reference is to the language of the Assyrians (a nation that would invade Israel). This use by Paul further demonstrates that the nature of tongues is foreign languages in the Corinthian context.

Paul gave instructions regulating one who possessed the gift of a tongue. If those within the church assembly did not understand the particular tongue he was able to speak, he either must use an interpreter (i.e., translator; see above), if one was available or else he was to remain silent (vv. 27-28).

Those who claim to speak in tongues today jabber on irrespective of the composition of the audience. Their practice does not conform to the New Testament standard.

Conclusion

As we conclude, we must emphasize this fact. The Scriptures teach that the gift of tongues was to cease with the completion of the New Testament canon (1 Cor. 13:8ff).

As W. E. Vine wrote: “With the completion of Apostolic testimony and the completion of the Scriptures of truth (‘the faith once for all delivered to the saints,’ Jude 3, RV), ‘that which is perfect’ had come, and the temporary gifts were done away” (1951, 184).

We have provided a detailed study of this context in 1st Corinthians; see: [What Does the Bible Say About Miracles?](#)

Finally, there is this very telling point.

Those who profess to speak in tongues today reveal a woeful inconsistency. In their mission training schools, they must teach their missionaries to speak in the tongues of those nations they seek to evangelize. This practice demolishes their contention of being in possession of the miraculous gift of tongues as exhibited on the day of Pentecost.

**THE TEMPORARY NATURE OF MIRACLES
IN CORINTH AND EPHESUS**

1 Corinthians 12-14	Ephesians 4
“Gifts” (12:4,9, 28,30,31)	“Gifts” (4:7-8)
“no schism in the body” (12:25)	“joined and knit together” (4:16)
“one body, many members” (12:12,14,18-20,27)	“whole body, every part” (4:16)
“apostles, prophets, teachers” (12:29)	“apostles, prophets, pastor-teachers” (4:11)
“prophecies, knowledge” (13:8)	“prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers” (4:11)
“fail, cease, vanish, done away” (13:8-10)	“until” (4:13) “we come to the unity of the faith” (4:13)
“when perfect comes” (13:10)	“the knowledge/the fullness of Christ” (4:13)
“shall know” (13:12)	“the knowledge/the fullness of Christ” (4:13)
“child” (13:11)	“children” (4:14)
“man” (13:11)	“man” (4:13)
“put away childish things” (13:11)	“grow up” (4:15)
“love” (13:1-8)	“love” (4:15-16)
“edification of the church” (14:3-5,12,17)	“edifying the body of Christ” (4:12)

What Are the “Tongues of Angels” in 1st Corinthians 13:1?

By **Wayne Jackson**

“In one of your web site articles, [Can Christians Speak in Tongues Today?](#), you stated that when Christians of the early church spoke in ‘tongues,’ they only spoke in foreign languages that were native to certain nationalities. You suggested that the ‘tongue speaking’ of the Pentecostal movement, in which certain ‘sounds’ of no known language are spoken, is not in harmony with the Bible. I attend a Pentecostal church, and though I’ve never spoken in tongues, I am told that Paul’s statement about the ‘tongues of angels’ (1 Cor. 13:1) implies a heavenly language, distinct from the languages of men. Would you comment on this?”

With all due respect, Paul’s reference to the “tongues ... of angels” (1 Cor. 13:1) affords no evidence for the so-called “Pentecostal experience,” in which the uttering a series of rapidly-spoken, indiscernible syllables is alleged to reflect a “heavenly” tongue of an inexplicable variety. The following lines of evidence discredit the Pentecostal theory.

Tongues: Intelligible Language

In an effort to exhort the Corinthian Christians toward a greater level of concern for one another in their use of “spiritual gifts,” Paul wrote this admonition. “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become a sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1).

If it can be established that the term “tongues,” when employed with reference to men, has to do with intelligent communication (and such can be demonstrated: see the article referenced above), then it must be conceded that the word “tongues,” when used of angels, similarly signifies an understandable language.

In order for the “Pentecostal” view to be valid, there would have to be some compelling contextual evidence to indicate that the term “tongues” is used in **two different senses** in this passage, and there simply is none.

Unintelligible Tongues Are Unloving

In chapter 14 of the first Corinthian letter, one of Paul's major points of emphasis is this. If one employs his gift of tongues before an audience that **cannot understand** the language spoken, and no interpreter is present to translate the message, such would be a violation of God's will. In fact, it would be an act of vanity, and not a demonstration of love for the listener.

This is the precise point of 13:1 as well. To speak in a tongue, when no one can understand the words, is an act **void of love**. Such would be nothing more than a sound (an irritating noise); it would not be an instructive message.

The implication behind the argument is this. If the gift **were exercised properly**, i.e., in conjunction with an interpreter, the audience **could understand** the instruction, and such would evince the speaker's love.

But the **identical point** is made whether the allusion is to "the tongues of men" or to the "tongues of angels." Even the tongues of angels, if it were possible to exercise such in an appropriate way, could be understood. There is nothing here suggesting a "gibberish" sort of utterance; just the opposite is the case.

Angels Always Spoke Understandably

There are numerous Bible examples of angels speaking to men. In not a single instance do they communicate in anything except in languages that are perfectly understandable — a communication that the recipient can process readily. There is not one shred of **biblical evidence** to suggest that angels speak in disjointed, incomprehensible sounds. As one scholar astutely observed:

With respect to the words of angels which are recorded in the Scriptures, nothing can be plainer, more direct, and, we may say, more unimpassioned. They seem to say with the utmost conceivable plainness what they have been commissioned to say, and nothing more. No words are less the words of ecstasy than theirs (Sadler, 217).

Angel's Tongues: Hyperbole

Paul's appeal to "angels" in 13:1 is a form of hyperbole (an exaggeration for emphasis' sake) that is designed to accentuate his argument.

Consider a similar use of this figurative expression in the apostle's letter to the Galatians. He wrote:

"But though we, **or an angel from heaven**, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:8; emphasis added).

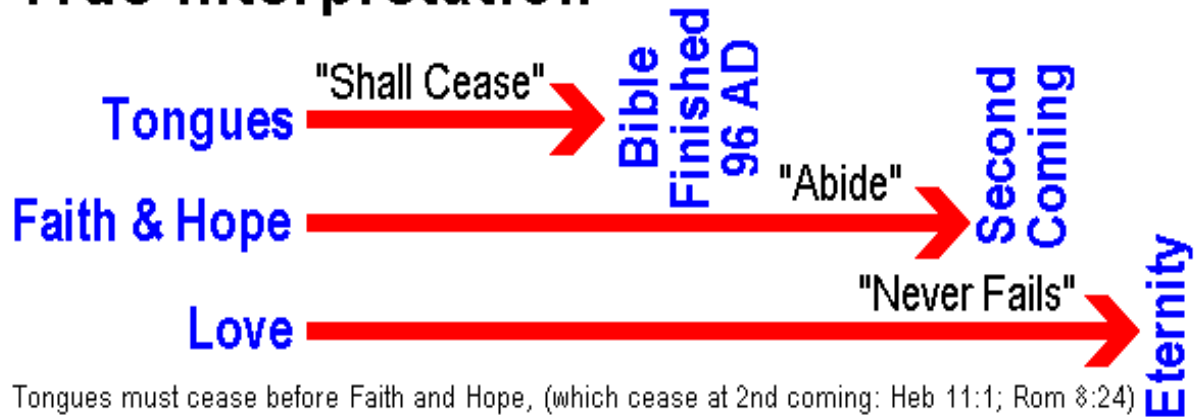
The apostle is not suggesting that an angel actually is likely to proclaim a different gospel; the point is one of emphasis. **Even if** an angel were to preach a different gospel, there would be no validity in it, and he would fall victim to divine wrath.

So similarly, in 1 Corinthians 13:1, Paul is not indicating that some Christians speak an "angelic" (ecstatic) language. Rather, he is merely saying that even if one could ascend to a new height, and communicate on the level of angels, if he did not exercise love by speaking in an understandable fashion, he still would be nothing but a distracting noise. The apostle's argument does not hint of a mysterious, unintelligible utterance; in fact, it reflects just the opposite.

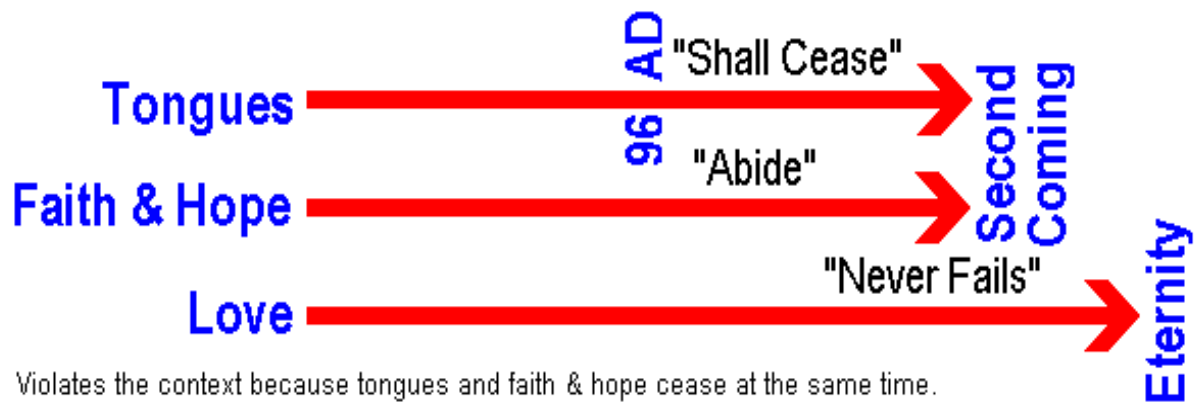
When all the data is considered, there is no basis in 1 Corinthians 13:1 for the notion that there is a heavenly, ecstatic "glossolalia" that some saints are able to access, whereby they speak to God alone.

1 Corinthians 13:8-13

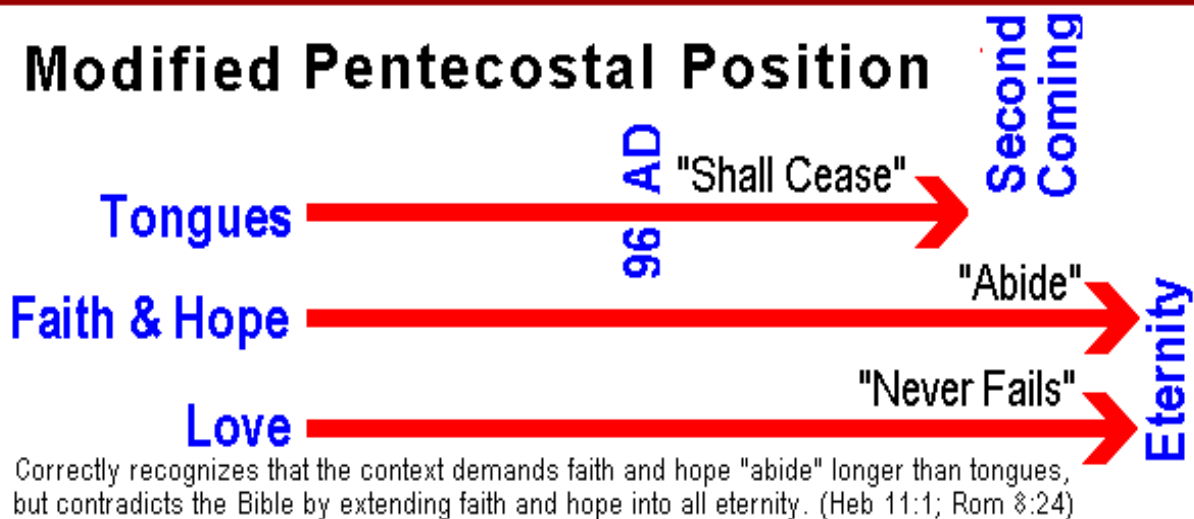
True Interpretation



False Pentecostal Interpretation



Modified Pentecostal Position



What Are the So-called “Mystery” Tongues of 1st Corinthians 14?

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

“I’ve just read your article, [What Are the Tongues of Angels in 1 Corinthians 13:1?](#) Your points are well made, but would you address 1st Corinthians 14:2 ‘For the one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands but in his spirit he speaks mysteries’? Would you also comment on 14:28: ‘but if there is no interpreter he must keep silent in the church and let him speak to himself and to God’?”

In order for the first question to be understood, the Bible student must get a picture of the overall context of 1 Corinthians 14, and the circumstances that prevailed in the assemblies of those Christians.

Information that is provided by several passages within the chapter reveals that some of the Corinthian saints, who possessed the divine gift of being able to speak in **foreign languages** [ordinary human tongues] in a **supernatural** manner, were abusing that gift. If, therefore, a person had the divinely bestowed gift of speaking in a “tongue,” he was to exercise that gift **only** in an assembly where the same language was known — unless there was an interpreter present.

Let us illustrate the matter more concretely. Suppose a brother had been granted the ability to speak the Punic language, as the people of Melita did (where Paul was shipwrecked — Acts 28:1). He could exercise that gift only in a setting where the people who spoke that tongue were present — unless there was another brother nearby who possessed the gift of interpretation. In such a case, the message could be conveyed intelligibly through the interpreter.

With this background in mind, consider now the fact that Paul, in 1 Corinthians 14:2, addresses an abuse of this procedure. If we may be permitted to expand and paraphrase the apostle’s admonition, this would be the sense of it.

For the one who speaks in a tongue [to an audience unfamiliar with his language], is not speaking to men [in any meaningful way], but to God [since only God would be able to know what was being said]; for no one [in this audience] would understand, but in his spirit he [the speaker] would be speaking mysteries [that which could not be understood due to the language barrier] to his alien audience.

In the circumstance just described, the group would hear a sound, but since they could not comprehend the message, nothing would be revealed; the message would remain a mystery (obscured).

The tongue thus contemplated was not some mysterious, ecstatic utterance by which the speaker personally communicated with God (as modern Pentecostals claim); instead, it was a language inaccessible to the audience by virtue of the circumstances, but one which the speaker might exercise in personally speaking to God in prayer.

Finally, verse 28 reiterates the same point. If the person who possesses the tongue gift is within an audience that is unacquainted with the language he is able to speak, and there is no interpreter available, he **must** keep silent. He may commune with God silently [i.e., mentally], but his speaking would be of no use to the congregation in such a situation as that contemplated above, and thus was prohibited.

These texts, then, properly understood, provide no support for the use of so-called ecstatic tongues.

What Was the Gift of Tongues?

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

“Please explain 1 Corinthians 14:2. Would not this indicate that the ‘tongue’ was a mysterious, spiritual utterance, known only to God, rather than a human language?”

No, it wouldn't. Note the following factors:

1. The term “unknown” is not in the original text. It was added by the King James translators. It is unwarranted and unnecessary.
1. The nature of the “tongues,” alluded to in this chapter, must be the same as those defined earlier in the New Testament, i.e., **human** languages (Acts 2:4-11), unless there is a compelling reason for assigning a different meaning to the expression. No such reason is indicated in 1 Corinthians 14.
1. Unless one understands the contextual background of this statement (1 Cor. 14:2), he will not interpret this passage correctly. A knowledge of this background is determined by an examination of the chapter as a whole.

Background Context of 1 Corinthians 14

Some in the Corinthian church were abusing the spiritual gifts they possessed. There was simultaneous chattering, thus creating confusion (cf. 1 Cor. 14:26-33).

In addition, some were exercising their gift of tongues before audiences of a different language, **without** the use of the corresponding gift of “interpretation” (1 Cor. 12:10). It is, therefore, in this light that the apostle's admonition is given.

In an expanded paraphrase, we may summarize Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 14:2 as follows:

For he who speaks in a foreign language [when no interpreter is present], is not speaking [meaningfully] to men, but [only] unto God; for no man [in the audience who is of an alien language] understands [what is being said]; he [the speaker] is speaking mysteries [that which the listener cannot comprehend by virtue of the language barrier], even though he speaks in the spirit.

This harmonizes beautifully with the context, and it does not force a bizarre meaning upon the term “tongues.”

A consideration of all the factors in this chapter, therefore, forces the careful student to the conclusion that the languages contemplated in this section of Scripture are **human** languages.

The gift of tongues allowed these languages to be spoken by those who had not learned them naturally, but who were empowered by the Spirit of God to speak in a supernatural fashion.

Those early saints were required to exercise their gifts within the bounds of divine propriety and this is the thrust of the apostle’s admonition.

Bible Tongues

Johnie Edwards
Bloomington, Indiana

There is much misunderstanding as to what the Bible teaches about tongue speaking. This misunderstanding is beginning to creep in among the people of God. Let me call to your attention eight things the Bible teaches about tongue speaking.

(1) **Bible Tongues Were Languages.** When the apostles spoke in tongues in Acts 2, "the multitude was confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6). There were several different languages represented as Jews had come from all nations to keep the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:51). They heard the apostles speak in their "own tongue, wherein they were born" (Acts 2:8). So, Bible tongues were not just a lot of jabbering but languages which were spoken at the time.

(2) **Bible Tongue Speaking Was Associated With The Baptism Of The Holy Spirit.** The Lord promised that He would send the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. "And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Lk. 24:49). The Lord renewed this promise in John 14:26. Jesus told the apostles, "Howbeit when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" (Jno. 16:13). In Acts 1:4, 5, 8, Jesus again tells the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. So they then wait in Jerusalem. According to Acts chapter 2, the Holy Spirit comes upon the apostles. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost; and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). Another example of tongue speaking being associated with the baptism of the Holy Spirit is in the case of Cornelius. Peter said, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15). As a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they spoke in tongues. (Acts 10:45-46).

For people today to be able to speak in tongues as was done in the first century, they would first have to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is impossible to receive today!

(3) Bible Tongue Speaking Was Associated With Spiritual Gifts.

There are nine spiritual gifts as recorded in 1 Corinthians 12. One of these was tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. (1 Cor. 12:10). These gifts were imparted only by an apostle by the laying on of his hands. There is a case in Acts 19 where Paul taught and baptized about twelve men. "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (Acts 19: 6). For people today to be able to speak in tongues as was done in Bible days, they would have to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit as we just noticed or have an apostle lay hands on them, neither of which can be done today! Here is proof-positive that Bible tongues do not exist today.

(4) Bible Tongues Were To Be Understood. Read 1 Corinthians 14:2-26. As you read these passages you will observe (a) "except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air" (v. 9) (b) "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (v. 19). If no one understands the tongue in which one is speaking, what good is accomplished?

(5) Purpose of Bible Tongue Speaking. When Jesus told the Apostles to carry out the great commission, he also told them that they could cast out devils, speak with new tongues, take up serpents, drink deadly things and not be hurt and recover the sick. (Mark 16:15-18) Now, what was the purpose of these things? "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16: 20). Tongue speaking along with these other miracles simply confirmed the revealed word. Paul told the Corinthians "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not. . ." (1Corinthians 14:22). Since the word has now been confirmed (Hebrews 2:3), we do not need tongue speaking to confirm it!

(6) Use Of An Interpreter. One of the spiritual gifts bestowed was "the interpretation of tongues" (1 Cor. 12: 10). Paul said, "Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret" (1 Cor. 14:13). Again, Paul said, when there was tongue speaking, "let one interpret.

But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God" (1 Cor. 14:27-28). If one spoke in a language others did not know and there was no interpreter, it became unfruitful. (1 Cor. 14: 14).

(7) **Bible Tongue Speaking Was Orderly.** "If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that, by course" (I Cor. 14:27). Again it is said, Let all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40). What little so called tongue speaking that I have heard, was everything but orderly!

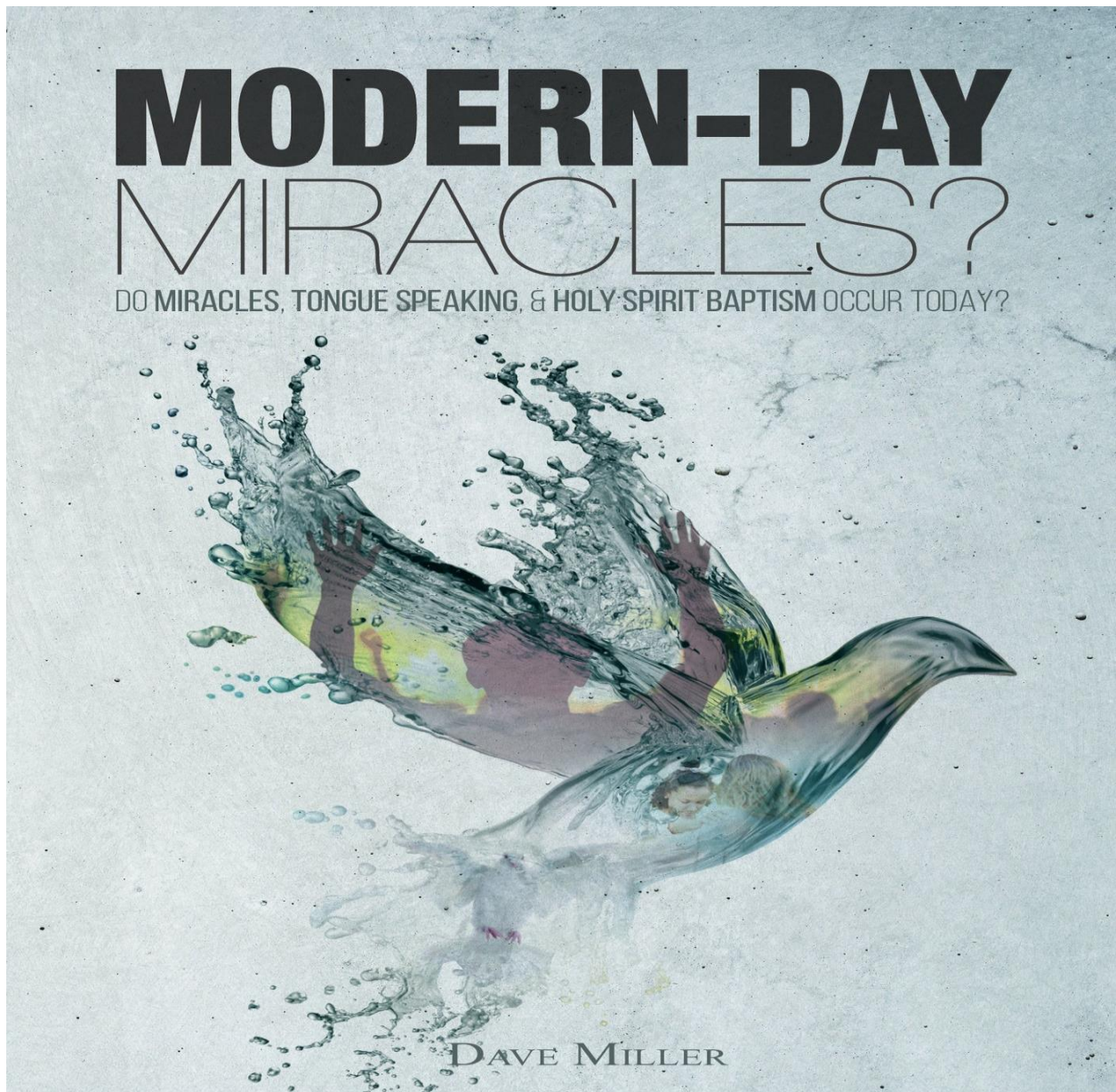
(8) **Bible Tongue Speaking Has Ceased.** Paul told the Corinthians that "whether there be tongues, they shall cease . . ." (1 Cor. 13-8) He further told them when tongue speaking would cease. He said that tongue speaking would cease "when that which is perfect is come" (1 Cor. 13: 10). That "which is perfect" to come is the word of God revealed in its completeness. (Jas. 1:25) Now that the Word of God has come, now that it has been completed, tongue speaking has ceased. This occurred about A.D. 96 and there has not been a case of Bible tongue speaking since.

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"NOTICE, THEY NEVER SPEAK IN TONGUES WHEN THEY'RE ASKING FOR MONEY."

Chapters From the Class Book
“MODERN-DAY MIRACLES?”
“Tongue-Speaking” & “Tongues of Angels”



Tongue-Speaking

First, in 1 Corinthians 14, the term “unknown” (in regard to tongues) was italicized in the KJV because it does not appear in the original Greek text (14:2,4,13-14,19,27). By inserting this word into their translation, the translators were attempting to aid the English reader. They undoubtedly were hoping to convey the idea that the languages to which Paul referred were **unknown** to the speaker, i.e., the speaker had no prior training by which to learn or know the language. He spoke the language strictly by God’s miraculous empowerment. “Unknown” certainly was not intended to convey the idea that the tongues were unknown **to all humans** and, as such, were non-earthly, non-human languages.

Second, the events reported at the very beginning of the Christian religion (Acts 2) set the precedent for understanding that tongue-speaking entailed no more than the ability to speak a foreign human language (which the speaker had not studied) to people from a variety of geographical locales (e.g., Parthians, Medes, Arabians—Acts 2:9-11). The unbiased Bible student must conclude that what is described in detail in Acts 2 is the same phenomenon alluded to in 1 Corinthians 14. All tongue-speaking in the Bible consisted of known human languages (ideally known to the very audience being addressed) that were unknown (i.e., unstudied, unlearned) by the one who was speaking the language.

Third, there is simply no such thing as an “ecstatic utterance” in the New Testament. The tongue-speaking of 1 Corinthians 14 entailed human language—not incoherent gibberish. A simple reading of the chapter demonstrates that known human languages are under consideration. For example, Paul paralleled tongue-speaking with the use of the trumpet in warfare. If the bugler sounded meaningless noise, the military would be thrown into confusion. It was imperative for the bugler to blow the proper notes and tones, i.e., meaningful musical “language,” so that the army would understand what was being communicated (whether to charge, engage, or retreat). Sound without sense fails to achieve the very purpose of tongue-speaking. Paul then stated:

So likewise ye, unless ye utter by the tongue speech easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye will be speaking into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages **in the world**, and no kind is without signification. If then I know not the meaning of the language, I shall be to him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh will be a barbarian unto me (1 Corinthians 14:9-11, emp. added).

Obviously, Paul was referring to human languages—those that exist “in the world.” He envisioned a scenario where two individuals, who spoke different languages, are attempting to communicate with each other. If one speaks in Spanish and the other in German, as they attempt to speak to one another, each would be a “foreigner” to the other. Neither would understand what the other was attempting to say. Hence the need for tongue-speaking, i.e., the ability to speak human language unknown to the speaker but known to the recipient.

Later in the chapter, Paul quoted Isaiah 28:11-12 where God threatened the Israelites with the fact that their failure to listen to Him (by means of the words spoken by His prophets) meant that He soon would be communicating to them through the language of their Assyrian conquerors—conquerors whom God would send against them.

This powerful illustration presupposes the fact that in both Isaiah and 1 Corinthians, human languages are under consideration. After quoting Isaiah, Paul drew the conclusion that tongue-speaking was intended by God to be directed to **un**believers. Why? Because it would prove to the unbeliever that the tongue-speaker, who did not possess the natural ability to speak that language, was being empowered by God to speak in the language spoken by the unbeliever. The unbeliever would recognize the divine origin of the tongue-speaker's ability, and thereby be willing to consider the words being spoken as the instructions of God. Again, an examination of 1 Corinthians 14 yields the result that no contextual justification exists for drawing the conclusion that the Bible refers to, let alone endorses, the notion of "ecstatic" speech.

Tongues of Angels?

But what about Paul's passing reference to the "tongues of angels" in 1 Corinthians 13:1? Would not this reference prove that tongue-speaking could involve languages beyond those spoken by humans? In the first place, consider the role, purpose, and activity of angels described in the Bible. The word "angel" (Greek—*angelos*; Hebrew—*malak*) simply means "messenger"—one who "speaks and acts in the place of the one who has sent him" (Bietenhard, 1975, 1:101; Botterweck, et al., 1997, 8:308; Grundmann, 1964, 1:74ff; Gesenius, 1847, p. 475; Arndt and Gingrich, 1957, p. 7). It does not mean merely "to send," but rather "to send a messenger/message" (Ringgren, 1997, 8:310). It is true that angels in both the Old and New Testaments carried out a wide range of activities beyond message-bearing, including: worshipping God (Revelation 5:11-12); comforting, aiding, and protecting (Daniel 6:22; Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43; Acts 5:19; Hebrews 1:14); and executing judgment and inflicting punishment and death (e.g., Matthew 13:49; Acts 12:23). But it still remains true to say that the meaning of the term "angel" is a messenger—one who communicates a spoken message. Therefore, their principal role in God's scheme of things was to function as messengers to humans (Grundmann, 1964, 1:74). Consequently, angels always are represented in Scripture as communicating in human language.

In the second place, what logical reason exists for humans to speak in an alleged "angelic" language that is different from human language? What would be the spiritual benefit? The Bible certainly makes no provision for humans to communicate with angels in such a language, nor would there be any need for an angel to communicate to a human in a non-earthly language. The whole point of 1 Corinthians 12-13 was to stress the need to function in the church in ways that were meaningful and understandable. Since God, by His very nature, never would do anything that is superfluous, unnecessary, or frivolous, it follows that He would not bestow upon a human being the ability to speak in a non-human language. The ability would serve no purpose! The Bible simply offers no rationale nor justification for identifying the "tongues of angels" in 1 Corinthians 13:1 with some heavenly, otherworldly, non-earthly languages.

In the third place, if, in fact, the "tongues of angels" refers to known human languages, what was Paul's point? Since angels were God's appointed spokesmen, they naturally would perform their assignment in such a way that God would be represented as He would want to be. God's own angelic emissaries would have complied with their responsibility in such a way and manner that they would have God's approval. In other words, angels would naturally articulate God's message as well as it could be expressed (i.e., perfectly).

When God inspired mere humans to communicate His will, He integrated their own educational background, stylistic idiosyncrasies, and vocabulary into their oral and literary productions. No such need would have existed for angels. Their communications would have been unfiltered through human agency. Their announcements would have been the epitome and pinnacle of eloquence and oratorical skill.

Perhaps, then, Paul was not drawing a contrast between human and nonhuman languages at all. Before referring to the “tongues of angels,” he referred to “the tongues of men.” Why would Paul say, “Though I speak with the tongues of men”? After all, isn’t that precisely what all adult humans do? We humans speak at least one human language! Paul must have been referring, then, not to the ability to speak a human language, but to the ability to speak **all** human languages. No tongue-speaker in the first-century church had the ability to speak all human languages. In fact, the textual evidence indicates that most tongue-speakers probably had the ability to speak only one human language—which he, himself, did not understand—thus necessitating the need for an inspired interpreter (1 Corinthians 12:30; 14:26-28). Paul could apparently speak more languages than any of the others (1 Corinthians 14:18). If the “tongues of men” referred to the number of human languages (rather than referring to the ability to speak a human language), then the “tongues of angels” would refer—not to the ability to speak an angelic language—but to the ability to speak human languages **the way angels do**.

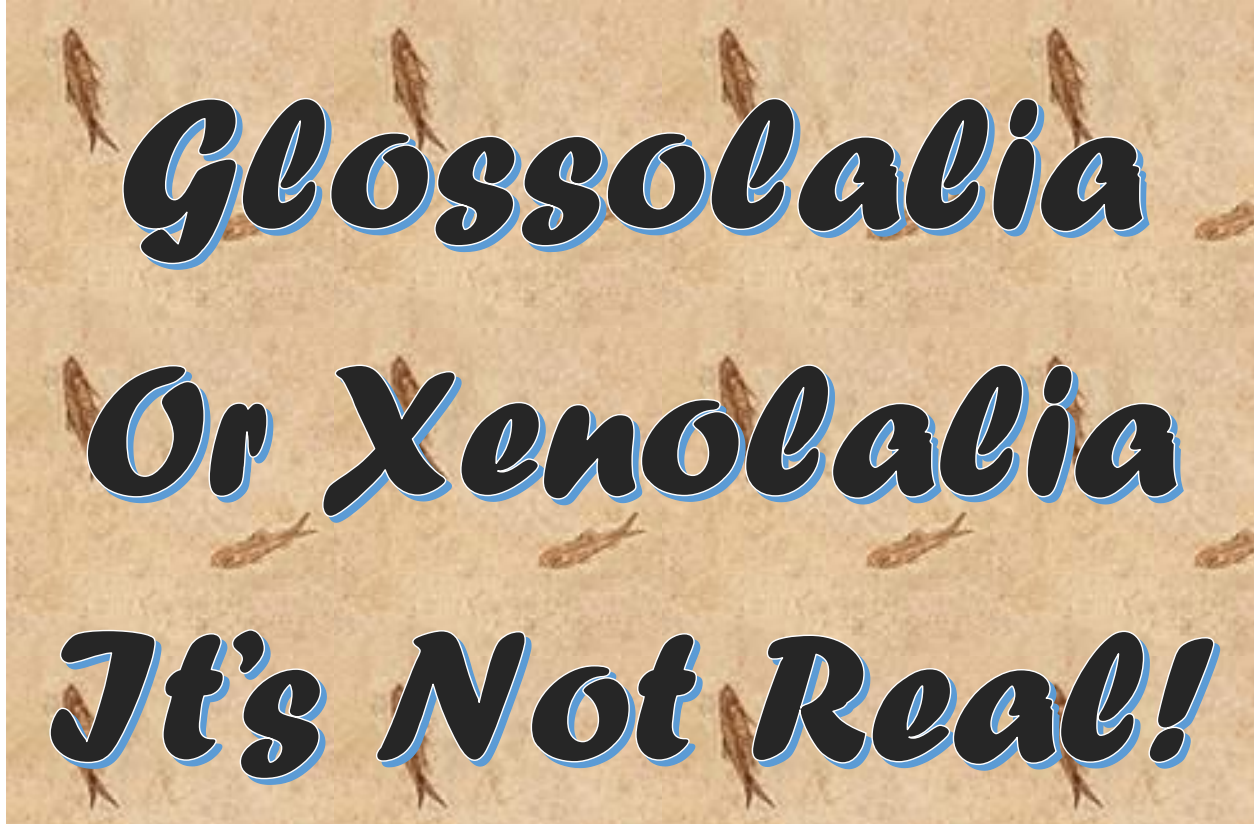
Here, then, would have been Paul’s point: even if a tongue-speaker could speak every human language known to man, and even if that tongue-speaker could speak those human languages with the efficiency, skill, and perfection that God’s angelic messengers have spoken them in history, without love, the ability would be wasted. With this understanding of the text, Paul was not contrasting human with nonhuman language. He was encompassing both the quantity (if I could speak all human languages) and the quality (if I could speak them perfectly) of speaking human language.

One final point on the matter of the “tongues of angels” merits mention. Even if the expression actually refers to angelic tongues that are nonhuman, it still is likely that tongue-speakers were incapable of speaking such languages. Why? Paul was speaking hypothetically and hyperbolically. No human being (with the exception of perhaps Jesus) has ever been able to speak in all human languages. For Paul to suggest such was to pose a hypothetical situation. It was to exaggerate the facts. So Paul’s meaning was: “even if I were capable of speaking all human languages—which I’m not.” Likewise, no human being has ever been able to speak the tongues of angels. So Paul’s meaning was: “even if I were capable of speaking the languages of angels—which I’m not.” This conclusion is supported further by the verse that follows the reference to the “tongues of angels.” There, Paul used two additional hypothetical events when he said, “if I...know all mysteries and all knowledge” and “if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains” (1 Corinthians 13:2). But no one on the planet (with the exception of deity) has understood all mysteries and all knowledge, nor has had faith that could literally remove mountains. Again, Paul was merely saying, “even if I could do such things—which I can’t.”

Fourth, Paul stated very clearly that tongue-speaking was a sign to **un**believers—not believers (14:22). Tongue-speaking was to be done in **their** presence, to convince **them** of the truth being spoken, i.e., to confirm the Word. The tongue-speaking being practiced today is done in the presence of those who **already believe** that tongue-speaking is occurring and, when an unbeliever, who is skeptical of the genuineness of the activity, makes an appearance in such an assembly, the claim often is made that tongue-speaking cannot occur because of the presence of unbelief. Once again, the New Testament teaches the very opposite of those who claim the ability to speak in tongues today.

Fifth, the recipient of a miraculous gift in the New Testament could control himself (14:32). He was not overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit so that he began to babble or flail about. Tongue-speaking today is frequently practiced in a setting where the individuals who claim to be exercising the gift are speaking uncontrollably at the very time that others are either doing the same thing or engaging in some other action. This overlapping activity is in direct violation of three of Paul's commands: (1) that each individual take their turn one at a time; (2) that no more than three tongue-speakers speak per service; and (3) that tongue-speakers remain silent if no interpreter is present (14:27-28).

The claim by many today to be able to speak in tongues is simply out of harmony with New Testament teaching. Anyone can babble, make up sounds, and claim he or she is speaking in tongues. But such conduct is no **sign** today. It is precisely the same phenomenon that pagan religions have practiced through the centuries. In the New Testament, however, no one questioned the authenticity of tongue-speaking. Why? The speaker was speaking a known human language that could be understood by those present who knew that language and knew that that particular speaker did not know that language beforehand. As McGarvey observed about Acts 2: "Not only did the apostles speak in foreign languages that were understood by the hearers, some understanding one and some another, but the fact that this was done by Galileans, who knew only their mother tongue, was the one significant fact that gave to Peter's speech which followed all of its power over the multitude" (1910, p. 318). If and when self-proclaimed tongue-speakers today demonstrate that genuine New Testament gift, their message could be accepted as being from God. But no one today has demonstrated that genuine New Testament gift.



**Glossolalia
Or Xenolalia
It's Not Real!**

APPENDIX: 30 ERRORS

Among the Errors of Modern Tongues Advocates We Note These 30:

1. They err in teaching that the unknown tongues are given by the Holy Spirit.

- In 1 Corinthians 14:2, “For he that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.” Verse 4, “He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth himself but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.”
- Verses 13-14, “Wherefore let him that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.”
- Verse 19, “Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an *unknown* tongue.”
- Verse 27, “If any man speak in an *unknown* tongue, let it be by two or at the most three (sentences) and that by course; and let one interpret.” The word *unknown* is italicized in the King James Version to indicate that no Greek word meaning *unknown* occurs in those verses.

2. They err in saying that tongues are for all believers.

According to the New Testament, the genuine gift of glossolalia was not imparted to or meant for, every believer. The same gifts are not given to all disciples, but the Holy Spirit bestows certain abilities upon individual Christians to enable each to fill his God-given place in the church.

- Romans 12:6-8 “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the profession of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”
- 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but the same God, which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gift of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another diversities of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.”

- Verse 18, “But now hath God set the members everyone of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”
- Verses 27-31, “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? Are all teachers? Have all the gifts of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.”

3. They err in contending that glossolalia is the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

- The Bible nowhere states or implies that speaking in tongues is the evidence of the Spirit’s baptism. Actually, it seems that glossolalics do not lose the ability to speak in tongues—the alleged evidence—when they backslide.

4. They err in overlooking the fact that the authentic gift of glossolalia, as demonstrated on the day of Pentecost, was the miraculous ability given to the disciples, to declare “the wonderful works of God” in a diversity of languages and dialects *known and spoken* in the Greco-Roman world.

- Acts 2:1-11, “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia. Phrygia, and Pamphylia in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.”

5. They err in overlooking the fact that in a number of instances where believers were filled with the Holy Spirit, no mention is made of speaking in tongues.

- Acts 4:8, “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit etc.” also 31, “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”
- Acts 7:55, “But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into the heaven, and saw the glory of God.”

- Acts 8:17, “Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”
- Acts 13:9, “Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Spirit, set his eyes on him.”

6. They err in failing to distinguish between the temporary signs and the permanent aspects of the Spirit’s work. Pentecost signified the inauguration of a new age in the Divine economy. It marked the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell the church, as Jesus had promised.

- John 14:16, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.”
- John 16:7, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”
- Acts 1:4-8, “And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they ask of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power, But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Pentecost occurred at a designated time for the purpose of bringing in a new order in God’s dealings with men.

- Acts 2:1, “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.”

Because Pentecost was an inaugural event, it was unrepeatable. All later manifestations of the Spirit are associated with the entrance of believers into the blessings of the new era, which was established at Pentecost.

- Acts 2:2-3, “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues of fire, and it sat upon each of them.”

These were special manifestations never to be repeated, any more than the visible phenomena which accompanied the giving of the Law at Sinai were to be repeated. (Ex 19:16-18; Heb 12:18-21)

7. They err in overlooking the significance of the three occasions when genuine glossolalia—explicit speech in foreign languages not learned by ordinary means—accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The glossolalia at Pentecost in Acts 2:4, was associated with the introduction of the age of the Spirit.

- “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

It emphasized the universality of the plan of salvation.

- Acts 2:8-11 and 21. “*And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*” Verse 21 tells us, “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

The commission was no longer limited to the Hebrew-Jewish people, as stated in:

- Matt. 15:24, “But he answered and said, I am not sent but to the house of Israel.”

From henceforth the gospel was to be declared to the whole world in the languages of all peoples.

- “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
- Matt. 28:19 also Luke 24:47, “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”
- Rev. 5:9, “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

The auditory and visible accompaniments of Pentecost were outward signs that the new era had begun.

They dramatized the connection between the Spirit and the world outreach of the church. The glossolalia at Caesarea like the wind, fire, and languages at Pentecost, was a witness to the Jews that the age of the Spirit had been fully introduced, and all the privileges of the gospel extended to the Gentiles.

- Acts 10:46, “For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.”

All these scriptures confirm this:

- Acts 10:45, 47, “And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (47) “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?” Paul speaks of this wonderful transition in his letter to the Ephesians.

- Eph. 2:11-22, “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the word: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who that broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law and the commandments contained in the ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them which were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” The glossolalia among the disciples of John the Baptizer at Ephesus—persons who, until Paul’s ministry among them, had only a partial knowledge of God’s plan.

- Acts 19:1-6 emphasizes the oneness of the New Testament church. “And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.”

The Baptizer’s work was preparatory according to:

- Matt. 3:11, “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea.”

When it reached its culmination, the forerunner’s disciples turned their allegiance completely to the Savior.

- John 3:30, tells us that, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

Acts 19:3-5 confirms this. Thus all the streams of Messianic hope converge in Jesus Christ, to whom the Holy Spirit bears witness.

- John 15:26, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.”

8. They do err in supposing that the modern phenomenon of ecstatic utterance is identical with the New Testament gift of glossolalia. No unknown tongues were spoken on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:4, 6, 8, 11) Paul definitely repudiates any expression of gibberish.

- “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye shall speak into the air.” 1 Cor. 14:8-9.

No where does the New Testament teach that the Holy Spirit motivates people to speak in *unknown* tongues. Whatever the Spirit imparts is intelligible.

9. They do err in overlooking the fact that the fruit of the Spirit is more important than the gifts.

- “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” Gal. 5:22-23.

10. They do err in supposing that the test of Christian experience is glossolaliaic rather than ethical. I Cor. 1:13.

11. They do err in saying that Jesus spoke in unknown tongues on the cross. Mark translates one of our Lord’s sayings at Calvary, then translates it into Greek.

- “And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? Which being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Mark 15:34 and also in Matt. 27:46, thus preserving the actual articulate utterance of Jesus.

The original was Aramaic, the provincial language of Palestine. Jesus received the Holy Spirit without measure according to John 3:34 for God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power. Acts 10:38 also verifies this power, “How that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.” Nowhere in the New Testament is there any evidence that Jesus spoke anything but meaningful speech.

12. They do err in concluding that Paul spoke in tongues when he received the Holy Spirit.

- Acts 9:17-18 “And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the

Holy Spirit. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose and was baptized.”

13. They do err in overlooking the fact that no manifestation energized by the Holy Spirit brings a person under an overpowering compulsion that suspends his freedom of action or speech.

- 1 Cor. 14:31-32, “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”

14. They do err in overlooking the fact that throughout the centuries since Pentecost thousands of Christians, including many of the church’s greatest leaders—without question Spirit-filled individuals—never spoke in tongues.

15. They do err in overlooking the necessity and permanence of love (agape) as the supreme and indispensable impartation of the Holy Spirit.

- 1 Cor. 12:31, which tells us to, “Covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.” Also the following 13th chapter relates this same truth. According to Rom. 5:5, “And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us.”

16. They do err in overlooking the fact that Paul’s purpose in dealing with the spiritual manifestations are corrective and regulatory. (1 Cor. 12:12–14) The apostle wanted to lead the Corinthian believers, who were new converts, completely away from every vestige of their former pagan worship.

- 1 Cor. 12:1 “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.” 1 Cor. 12:12-14 affirms this truth, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.”

17. They overlook the fact that Paul nowhere indicates that the genuine gift of glossolalia is anything other than the Divinely given ability to speak in unlearned foreign languages as delineated in Acts 2:4–11.

18. They err in overlooking the fact that if the genuine gift of glossolalia is manifested, it operates in the sphere of intelligibility. It is expressed by words which convey meaning.

- 1 Cor. 14:6, “ Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine.”

19. They do err in overlooking Paul’s hypothetical statements in 1 Corinthians 14. In that chapter the Apostle uses twelve “ifs” not statements of fact but supposable instances—to illustrate the points he is making.

20. They do err in taking the expression “no man understandeth him,” in the absolute sense. (1 Cor. 14:2). The context shows that the speaker would understand and could give the meaning (vs. 5, 13) or that an interpreter could do so. (vs. 26, 28) In order to benefit the listeners, what the speaker says must be intelligible. This is Paul’s emphasis and clarity in:

- 1 Corinthians 14:13-16. “Wherefore let him that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing in the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”

21. They do err in disregarding the apostolic injunction that uninterpreted foreign speech should not be permitted. If a message is given in a foreign language, and the speaker or a qualified interpreter does not give the meaning, the listeners are not edified.

- 1 Cor. 14:28 “But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.”

22. They do err in supposing that foreign languages are a sign with a *positive* effect. The very opposite is true. Unless they are interpreted, they are a sign which has a *negative* effect.

- I Cor. 14:22-23 “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?”

23. They err in claiming there is a “prayer language” in which the worshipper prays in utterances he does not understand. Romans 8:26 is often cited in support of such a theory.

- “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

But it should be remembered that prayer is communication, and communication involves intelligibility.

Furthermore, the groanings mentioned in Romans 8:26 are said by Paul to be unutterable—they cannot be vocalized in human expression. Then why should anyone claim to utter what the Apostle says cannot be uttered? The “groanings” refer to the Holy Spirit’s intercession, not to a believer’s “prayer language.”

24. They err in their method of seeking. With a mental set for “tongues,” the phenomenon is apparently quite easily induced.

25. They err in overlooking the fact that no expression motivated by the Holy Spirit brings disorder and confusion into a congregation of God’s people.

- 1 Cor. 14:33, “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” Also, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” 1 Cor. 14:40.

26. They err in overlooking the fact that glossolalia is not a phenomenon peculiar to Christianity. Pagan peoples since ancient times have spoken in tongues under the influence of spirits not of God. The Greek soothsayers, who were numerous in Corinth, observed their religious rites in a wild frenzy, which they believed indicated the power and possession of a god.

According to Paul, Christian worship is characterized by spiritual composure and clarity of thought.

- As previously related in I Cor. 14:15.

27. They err in trying to interpret the Scriptures on the basis of human experience, instead of interpreting human experience in the light of the scriptures.

- 2 Cor. 13:5 “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.”

28. They err in overlooking the fact that the recognition of an utterance as a known language is essential to any confirmation that genuine glossolalia had occurred. If only incoherent sounds were uttered, such phonation could not be verified as meaningful speech, hence any so-called “interpretation” would be a fraud.

29. They err in failing to realize that a demonstration for which there is no real Biblical basis can only be a supposed gift of the Spirit.

30. They err in failing to realize that practices not sanctioned by God’s Word open the door to deceptive and dangerous encroachments.

- “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the later times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” 1 Tim. 4:1.¹

¹ Blackwelder, B. W. (2005). [*Thirty Errors of Modern Tongues Advocates*](#). James L. Fleming.