



The Spiritual
Gift of
Tongues

A Biblical Response to
Modern Day Tongues

Moses C. Onwubiko

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OF
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MODERN DAY TONGUES**

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“Buy Truth, and do not sell it.”

(Proverbs 23:23a)

Are you aware that sound Bible teaching is a precious and a priceless piece of spiritual jewelry? Indeed, Church History has shown how difficult it is to come by, especially in Christianity today! So when God, from His jewel box of grace, exposes us to pearls of Truth in His infallible and inerrant Word, we ought to embrace and cherish them without reserve. Sound Bible teaching and its application are the treasures that hold our capacity to enjoy abundant life, maximum happiness, friendship, marriage, business, and the source of our unprecedented blessing for today, tomorrow and eternity. Therefore my beloved, “buy Truth” [stay rooted in sound Bible teaching], for Truth “... *is better than jewels; and all desirable things cannot compare with her [it]*” (Proverbs 8:11).

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Moses C. Onwubiko

Message Of Hope

The information in this book is of no benefit to you unless you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The good news is that, if you have not trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation from your sins, you can do so right now and be eternally saved! Salvation is a free gift! It's easy to obtain! To acquire it is as easy as ABC! In the Bible, a Roman jailer, desperate to secure his eternal destiny, asks: "Sirs what must I do to be saved?" The Scripture alone gives the answer:

And they [i.e. Paul and Silas] said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household [if they too would believe]" (Acts 16:31 NASB).

It's that simple!

The apostle John affirmed the same:

But these [facts including the seven unprecedented miracles recorded by John] have been written [recorded in Scripture] so that you may [have a solid ground to] believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have [eternal] life in His name (John 20:31 NASB).

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ [the Savior] is born of God (1 John 5:1a).

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten [uniquely born] Son, that whoever [including you— whoever] believes in Him shall not perish, but [will] have eternal life" (John 3:16 NASB).

And, Paul wrote:

For by grace you have been saved *through faith*; and that not of yourselves, it is the *gift* of God, *not as a result of works*, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9 NASB).

It is faith alone in Christ alone! That's grace!

Right now, you may wish to pause and pay attention to the message of the Holy Spirit:

For He [God] says, “At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you,” *behold, now is...THE DAY OF SALVATION* (2 Corinthians 6:2 NASB).

You can have this great and awesome gift by anchoring your faith in Christ alone plus nothing, minus nothing.

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey [the command to believe] will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36 NASB).

Restoration to Fellowship

Sin ruptures our fellowship with God. If you are already a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you need to ensure that you are in fellowship with God. This allows the Greatest Teacher of all time, namely God the Holy Spirit, to enlighten you regarding the Truth contained in this book. With this in mind, you can pause, search your soul, and acknowledge all known sins to God the Father. He stands by His word:

“If we confess our [known] sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our [known] sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [unknown or forgotten sins]” (I John 1:9 NASB).

Preface

Speaking in tongues or receiving what charismatics call the “second blessing” is spreading like wildfire today, more than at any time in the history of Christianity. The cover of Christianity Today Magazine, April 2006,¹ asks the question “What will it take for this world phenomenon to stay vibrant for another 100 years?” They are referring to Pentecostalism, and to the global charismatic movement.

Another 100 years?

What happened to the 1900 years gone by in the history of Christianity without this so-called global phenomenon?

The same magazine noted that this movement is growing at an annual rate of 19 million, that’s 54,000 converts per day! Some researchers predict 1 billion members by 2025.

This should be cause for great concern! There is a purpose behind everything God does! God had a purpose in the creation of angels; He had a purpose in the creation of man; He had a purpose in calling Abraham out from Haran; He had a purpose in choosing Israel out from other nations; He had a purpose for His Son, Jesus Christ, coming to earth as a man; He had a purpose for the institution of the Age of the Church; *He also had a purpose for the spiritual gift of tongues.*

Knowing this, a serious student of God’s Word would be compelled to ask some thought provoking questions:

- What is the purpose of speaking in tongues?
- Is speaking in tongues an evidence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?
- Is it a manifestation of the baptism, or the filling of, the Holy Spirit?
- Is this experience a measure of one’s spiritual growth?
- Was the gift of tongues meant for every believer?
- Why did the Apostle Paul refer to Isaiah 28:11 in his dissertation on tongues in the book of 1 Corinthians?
- Why is speaking in tongues called a sign to the unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22)?
- Who are the unbelievers in the context of 1 Corinthians 14:22?
- What are the benefits of speaking in tongues?

¹ Grant McClung; Christianity Today, April 2006

- Can the tongues speaker be self-edified?
- Why is the gift of tongues not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament except in Acts and 1 Corinthians?
- Where is the origin of the modern day tongues movement?
- What role does experience play in the interpretation of God’s Word or in the spiritual life?
- If the gift of tongues is meant for our spiritual growth why did God leave the Church without it for almost 2,000 years?

You may ask, “Why are you devoting your time to this subject?” This topic has always been of great interest at pastors conferences. Over the years thousands of ministers and church members have had these questions answered from Scripture which released them from bondage. Since then they have relentlessly requested that I assemble these teachings into book form. I am indebted to them and their ceaseless cry and pray that the Truths contained in these pages may be a source of freedom for you as it was for them.

Believers in Christ today are living in the Church Age, a most unique time of human history—a period when every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is indwelt by each member of the Trinity.

1. God the Father - Ephesians 2:22, 2 Corinthians 6:16
2. God the Son - Colossians 1:27, Galatians 2:20, Romans 8:10, John 7:23
3. God the Holy Spirit - 2 Corinthians 2:22, Romans 8:9, 11, James 4:5

It is also a most critical time in history—a time when heresies and apostasies have skyrocketed. Satan has been very successful in seducing millions of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ away from the Truth. He has deceived many to accept speaking in tongues as the criterion for determining spirituality or spiritual maturity.

This deception has derailed many believers, and sets the stage for spiritual failure which leads to divine discipline from God. Many lose sight of the purpose of the Church and do not master the plan of God for their life. Hosea bitterly declared:

My people [believers] are destroyed [punished] for lack of knowledge [Bible doctrine]. Because you have rejected knowledge [Sound Bible teaching], I will reject you from being My priest [nation] (Hosea 4:6a NASB).

God does not use carnal believers: those who are out of harmony with His plan. Today many believers go to church, engage in prayer meetings, and participate in other church activities without understanding that they are not in fellowship with God. This is exactly what Hosea meant. What is the root cause? Rejection of sound Bible teaching!

John wrote beautifully:

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32 NIV).

As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, are you ready to keep an open mind and let God the Holy Spirit teach you the Truth? If God the Holy Spirit clearly reveals the Truth to you about speaking in tongues at the end of this teaching, are you willing to be humble enough to rethink your future? The choice to change or not to change is always yours. This is a moment of Truth!

Heavenly Father,

I lift up my eyes to Your glorious throne. I recognize that You are the author of Truth. You are the Perfecter of our salvation. I know that Your plan is perfect. I equally realize that Satan has worked hard to distort the wonderful plan that was drafted in eternity past. Therefore, Father, I pray for the individual who is about to study this Truth, that Your Holy Spirit will illuminate his mind so that he may behold Your Infallible Word and, if need be, set free from Satan's bondage. I pray also that God the Holy Spirit will guide me as I write. Thank You Father for answering my prayer in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Chapter One

Introduction

All Scripture is inspired by God [God-breathed] and profitable for *teaching*, for reproof, *for correction*, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NASB).

When it comes to the interpretation of Scripture, Bible communicators tend to build their doctrines on one of two bedrocks—human experience or the infallible Word of God. Our choice is crystal clear! Our study will be based solely on the infallible Word of God. It's a well known principle of hermeneutics (the science of the interpretation of Scripture) that Scripture alone interprets Scripture! But, we shall not ignore the work of other expositors when their contributions are in alignment with Scripture. God in wisdom and grace designed the entire Scripture for our benefit. Scripture must harmonize with Scripture! We do well to examine each iota of His Word with the deep insight of our Mentor, God the Holy Spirit—comparing Scripture with Scripture, a chapter with a chapter, a verse with a verse, and finally an individual verse with the entire Bible. That's hermeneutics. The more we expose ourselves to the standards of God through sound Bible teaching, the more we can know if we are off course from His plan for us. The Church Age is unique and so is His plan for Church Age believers. We run a reckless spiritual race if we fail to embrace the whole realm of God's Word. The Apostle Paul wasn't reckless, and so he firmly stated:

Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; ...so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified [for the prize!] (1 Corinthians 9:26-27 NASB).

Whatever was a source of concern for Paul (the greatest Apostle the world has ever known) ought to be of great concern to us as well!

We live in a very turbulent time in the history of Christendom, when Satan's assault on the Church has reached an all time high. In his well orchestrated, skillful plan of attack, he has found a way to slow many down in the spiritual race. He has managed to neutralize untold millions of believers with the distraction of the modern day "tongues movement."

Remember the statistic from Christianity Today, predicting 1 billion new converts to global charismatic Christianity, a movement that will effectively neutralize one billion members of the body of Christ by 2025. That furthers Satan's goal! But the bad news for him is that he has Jesus Christ, the God-Man, blocking his way! What a solace to hear the Words of our Savior afresh:

...I will build My church; and the gates of Hades [whatever neutralizing system Satan may come up with] will not overpower it (Matthew 16:18b NASB).

What a comfort to know that Satan has been defeated, now and forever!

It is awesome to watch God's faithfulness unfold in the records of Church history. As we approach this doctrine, distorted in present day Christendom, we do so with attentiveness.

Every student of Church history would agree that the Church has, in the course of time, suffered untold shipwrecks:

...False apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ...servants of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their work (2 Corinthians 11:13-15 NASB).

It is a joy to know that '*The gates of Hades shall not over power God's Church.*' No matter what! Not now, not then, not ever! God keeps His Word!

Sadly, for the past century or so, a part of the Church has been adrift on a stormy sea of speaking in tongues as a means of spiritual experience. This storm is threatening to tear apart the whole Church. It appears that the Church in its present state is heading for another shipwreck, being blown along by the charismatic movement. But, thanks be to God, that charismatic storm cannot prevail. What a soul comfort to know that our Captain is on board. He knows

when and how to say to the stormy sea of falsehood, “*Hush, be still*” (Mark 4:39b). With sound teaching, the Lord will rescue His people from this storm. The compelling question is: Are you willing to be rescued? Behold the Rescuer! “*You Shall Know the Truth and the Truth Shall Set You Free.*”

Someone may ask me: “Moses, why do you consider the modern day tongues movement a threat?” A careful examination will reveal its negative impact. As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you should be concerned if you are interested in honoring God and in seeing the Church flourish. Falsehood of any magnitude is indeed a threatening storm to every believer and to the whole Church!

Satan uses falsehood to his advantage! If you are a believer who truly loves the Lord and His infallible Word, you should be on the alert to notice any falsehood that interferes with Apostolic teachings. Any teaching to the contrary is always detrimental to the entire Church.

The age of the Church is an Era like no other in history whereby God has elected to manifest His power through each believer. Through the influential power of the Holy Spirit, every believer has the potential to make an impact just as the Apostles did (Acts 1:8).

“These [men] ... have turned the world upside down... ”
(Acts 17:6b NKJ).

These Apostles were empowered by God and He honored their work as they influenced the world of their day. We can too.

Today heretical teaching and apostasy have reached a new high as Satan manages to enslave millions of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has craftily turned them away from the Truth, deceiving many to accept the idea that speaking in tongues is a measure of spirituality or spiritual maturity

Currently, Christianity is anything but attractive. Over and over people say to me, “I prefer xyz religion to Christianity because...” Christianity has become unappealing because we have disengaged ourselves from the spiritual power that makes us “*a light to those who are in darkness (Romans 2:19b).*” We have exchanged our God-given power, the undiluted Word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for emotional experience. We have abandoned God’s plan for us. We have rejected the same spiritual power that turned the world of the early Church upside down.

The Apostasy of emotion has reached alarming proportions today! Why? Most churches are built on the foundation of emotionalism with emphasis on what we experience, rather than on solid Bible teaching. Emotion has no built-in thought system; it feels, it responds, but it cannot think.

Our thinking must be consistent with God's thinking (divine viewpoint). Let us not neglect the study of the Word of God for in it:

...we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16b NASB).

Knowing and applying God's thinking stabilizes us; but emotion lacks stabilizing power! Emotion itself is God-given and a beautiful gift. But it is not to be the basis of thoughts and decisions. Properly used, emotion responds to the gifts God gives us and adds joy to life. Emotion, however, gives no tools to stabilize our lives under pressure, much less any defense against the turbulent world of the enemy of the Cross. Sadly, emotion is what the charismatic movement operates on and tongues is a major means of expressing this emotion.

The charismatic movement is to be commended for their desire to utilize the power of the Holy Spirit *"to take the gospel into the whole world, making disciples of all the nations"* (Matthew 28:19). Our charismatic brothers and sisters in the Lord truly have grasped this command. It would be a devastating blow to Christianity at large, to allow the emphasis on tongues to neutralize this strong evangelizing arm of the Church.

We will examine the modern charismatic movement, and tongues specifically. A brief explanation is necessary first for understanding the definition of tongues as used in this book. Speaking for edification, in an unknown tongue, an unknown language (not a foreign language), is not an idea found in Scripture. Tongues in the context of our study simply means a foreign language. Speaking in tongues is a spiritual gift whereby God the Holy Spirit enables the believers to communicate fluently in a language they do not know, and have not studied. As you objectively follow this work on the subject, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we pray that you will sooner or later say "Thank You, God, for bringing this needed Truth to light!"

Modern Day Tongues

“*You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?*”(Galatians 3:1). My charismatic friend, I am tempted to say to you the same thing the Apostle Paul said to the Galatians, but let me refrain.

When taking a seminary course on Church History years ago, I doubled my attention, soaking everything in—particularly on the subject of tongues—hoping one day to write a book. To my great amazement, I could only find mere traces of information, barely enough to fill a half page on a term paper, much less a whole book on the tongues movement of the post-Apostolic Era. I couldn’t find more information because there wasn’t any!

I ask you: If tongues is such a blessed experience, why would a just and loving God withhold this experience from believers for over 1,900 years only to reintroduce it in recent history? Does it mean that believers, even those of the Protestant Reformation who never had this blessed experience, operated in total darkness? No, they did not!

The Church was initiated on the day of Pentecost in 30 AD. On this day and every day after, the Church has never operated without the Lord in control (Matthew 28:20). Likewise, the influential and dynamic power of the Holy Spirit has always been with the Church. He indwells every believer permanently (John 14:16).²

It has taken Satan years of distraction and deception to finally hit upon yet another master scheme to neutralize the Church! Early in the 20th century, Satan discovered the emotional force of the charismatic movement could derail the church and keep it off track. We are still comforted to know that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church*.

God in His wisdom provided for the recording of Church History and the writings of the Church fathers! You may ask, “Who are the Church fathers?” They were renowned men, church-leaders, who were either alive during the time of the Apostles, or were born

²Moses C. Onwubiko: *The Dynamic Power of the Holy Spirit*

shortly after the Apostolic Era. These men were acutely aware of the church movement from the onset of Pentecost. Their writings tell us that tongues had been used during the Pre-canon Era of the Church—the time before Scripture was totally in writing—but the gift of tongues was long gone after the canon was completed. That’s exactly what the Scripture said would happen. The Apostle Paul tells us:

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; *where there are tongues, they will be stilled*; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophecy in part, but when perfection [the completion of the canon] comes, the imperfect [temporary gifts used to achieve the completion of the canon] disappears (1 Corinthians 13:8-10 NIV).

The Church fathers knew the epistle to the Corinthians, and its testimony, proclaiming that the gift of tongues had completely vanished when its purpose as a sign was accomplished. Dr. Mal Couch, founder of Tyndale Theological Seminary, has compiled some of the comments of these fathers showing that:

1. The gift of tongues did occur.
2. Tongues used to occur but no longer takes place.
3. Tongues was for a sign and then passed away.
4. Tongues can be sponsored by Satan.

1) Irenaeus - (120-202 AD) - The Church father Irenaeus wrote about 1 Corinthians: [Paul] calling these people “immature” who have received the Spirit of God to speak in all languages, as he himself used to speak. In like manner we do also hear [now of] many brothers in the church, who possess prophetic gifts, who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages,... (Against Heresies, vol. I.)

2) Chrysostom - (345-407 AD) - On 1 Corinthians 12 he writes: This entire passage is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur, but now no longer take place. (Homilies On First Corinthians, vol. XII)

3) Augustine - (354-430 AD) - In the earliest time, “the Holy Spirit fell upon them that believed; and they spake with tongues, which they had not learned, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, to shew that the Gospel of God was run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing [tongues] was done for a sign, and it passed away. (Ten Homilies On The First Epistle of John, Vol. VII).

4) Eusebius - (275-339 AD) - This church father writes about an ascetic, Montanus (126-180 AD), whom some labeled as a demon-possessed heretic: A recent convert, Montanus by name, through his unquenchable desire for leadership, gave the adversary opportunity against him. And he became beside himself, and being suddenly in a sort of frenzy and ecstasy, he raved, and began to babble and utter strange things, prophesying in a manner contrary to the constant custom of the Church handed down by tradition from the beginning. Some of those who heard his spurious utterances at that time were indignant, and they rebuked him as one that was possessed,...And he stirred up besides two women, and filled them with the false spirit, so that they talked wildly and unreasonably and strangely,... (*Church History Vol. I.*)³

When Americans read United States history, they are reading the history of a nation that is just over 250 years old. Some of the historical records were written by those who were alive when America was founded. Others were written by those who were born later and obtained information by way of oral tradition and research.

Americans view their history as if it were penned yesterday! That’s how we should view Church history.

With this in mind, we have retraced the information given by the Church fathers to see their record on tongues. There is little recorded information to be found. That demonstrates that tongues was not a problem during the Apostolic Era, when the gift was properly used, nor afterward when it ceased. Are we surprised? We shouldn’t be. The carnal church of Corinth was the only exception. Nowhere else in the entire New Testament was tongues considered a troublesome matter! Nowhere, except in the immoral church of Corinth, as we will study in detail in Chapter Four!

³Mal Couch: *The Biblical Doctrine of The Holy Spirit* (Tyndale Biblical Institute)

No wonder these church fathers didn't have much to report other than *“that thing [tongues] was done for a sign, and it passed away,”* and that some believers who view 1 Corinthians as an obscure passage do so because of their *“ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur, but now no longer take place.”*

Chrysostom and Augustine wrote perhaps 300-400 years after the Apostolic Era. Irenaeus' record was as fresh as it can get, perhaps 50 years from the close of the canon of Scripture.

But that is not all they recorded. Eusebius also mentioned Montanus' weird experience which was attributed to demon possession. Yes! Demon possession!

The Origin of Modern Day Tongues

Why do we call today's tongues “modern day”? Why don't we have “modern day” indwelling of the Holy Spirit as well? As far as we know from Scripture, Holy Spirit indwelling occurs the instant anyone anchors their trust in Christ (Galatians 3:14; Ephesians 1:13; Acts 11:17; cf. 19:2), and there's never been a delay or temporary withdrawal of this promised gift. The unsettling question is: Why was the gift of tongues withdrawn, or delayed for almost 2,000 years, and suddenly reintroduced? Reconsider the question posed on the cover of the Christianity Today, April 2006: “What will it take for this world phenomenon to stay vibrant for another 100 years?” It will take the fuel of falsehood to maintain the heat and keep it vibrant! Without that, the flame will quickly go out.

Topeka, Kansas, U.S.A. was the birthplace of this “world phenomenon.” Ironically, it was not a global phenomenon during the early Church. Why then is speaking in tongues at the forefront of the Church today? It has spread into almost every denomination with an alarming speed.

What does the Bible have to say about who is behind this movement?

- Is God the sponsor of this movement?
- Is Satan, the master counterfeiter, the driving force behind this movement?

- Can we compare Charles Parham with Montanus whose speaking in tongues was attributed to demonic activity by Eusebias?

You be the judge!

In 1900 Charles F. Parham opened the Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas. Under his teaching and ministry, Miss Agnes Ozman was influenced to speak in “tongues”. Within a short time a dozen more students had this experience. In 1906 the Azusa Street Assembly in Los Angeles experienced a revival with heavy emphasis on “seeking one’s Pentecost.” The resultant Pentecostal movement became a powerful religious force in America during the first half of the 20th century. A number of large denominations were formed and have flourished, including the Assembly of God, Four Square Gospel Church, Church of God in Christ, United Pentecostal Church and many other smaller groups. These groups have received a steady stream of “converts” from main line denominations.⁴ Some Roman Catholic and Protestant churches where members have claimed this experience have even become involved in promoting speaking in tongues.

I ask: Can we dogmatically say that the church is better since the inception of this charismatic movement?

- Has it brought believers closer to Christ?
- Has it brought unity among believers?
- Has it brought genuine love among brethren?

Love, not speaking in tongues, is the core doctrine of the Church (1 Corinthians 13; John 13: 34-35). The Apostle John puts it best,

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. (1 John 3:14 NIV).

This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you (John 15:12 NASB).

The true test of a Spirit-filled life is love. If you are a charismatic, you may want to ask yourself the following questions:

⁴E.L. Bynum: *TONGUES Glossolalia & Charismatic Renewal in The Light of The Bible*

- Do you have an unconditional love for every believer, even those outside your own local assembly?
- Has your speaking in tongues experience caused your spiritual life to become attractive to outsiders?
- Do you still live a lifestyle of maligning, judging, gossiping and condemning others?
- Do you hate anyone for any reason?

If so, consider the words of the Apostle John:

Anyone who hates his brother is [the same as] a murderer
(1 John 3:15a NIV).

As a youth I was a member in a church where speaking in tongues was heavily emphasized. In that congregation I witnessed more discord than I ever did as an unbeliever. During one service everyone had been worked up emotionally through singing and dancing and suddenly most everyone in the church erupted with speaking in tongues. Afterward the pastor gave a sermon directed at discord in the church. At the end he called the members to public confession. You couldn't believe your ears; horrible sins were confessed by those who had just danced with enthusiasm, and spoken in tongues only minutes before. The new convert I had invited to church went home depressed and never came back. I didn't blame him. The outpouring of bitterness in itself was enough to drive new members away for good! The stark contrast of that outburst compared to their prior songs of worship and shouts of "Hallelujah!" "Praise the Lord!" and speaking in tongues made it painfully obvious that no real spiritual change was effected by these seemingly "spiritual acts."

Does speaking in tongues make a church better? What effect did it have in the church at Corinth? You may wish to read the entire book of Corinthians so that you will be equipped to answer the question. Before we get into the heart of our study, let's examine the effect of falsehood on divinely ordered existence.

Effect of Falsehood on Divine Order

Three decades ago, Nigeria, my native country, was solid—grounded in and guided by Biblical principles. The Nigerians had widely accepted the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the teaching of solid Bible Truth, brought by the British just after the turn of the century. This Biblical orientation produced divinely established order within the country. The economy was rock-solid, the currency was twice the value of the U.S. dollar.

As I remember, this golden period of Nigerian history lasted way into the mid-eighties. I was just a lad then, but old enough to know what was happening around me. Nigerians had no desire to leave their country for another. Why would they? The country was a small heaven. Integrity was at its highest; crime at its lowest. Corruption was just a word. Believers in Christ were respected and admired by all. A community needing a man of integrity looked for a believer in their vicinity. Many people often slept outside, or with their doors wide open. There was no fear of a neighbor robbing a neighbor. It sounds too good to be true, but that was our life.

During these years, the Scripture Union held an evangelistic meeting at our village. It was there that I put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. I still dream of that period of Nigerian history and I pray that one day it will return to that glory.

Upon careful examination of this once prosperous and well managed nation, it became apparent that sound evangelical Bible teaching and its spiritual influence was the taproot providing such stability, causing the nation to thrive. The Bible is so clear on this very important Biblical principle:

Righteousness exalts a nation (Proverbs 14:34a NASB).

God exalted the nation right before my very eyes because it was solidly established on divine principles.

Believers were dedicated to their faith and energized by it; they were preoccupied, not with materialism, but with the things of God. People would walk 20 miles if need be, to spread the Gospel or attend Bible study. Sound evangelical Bible teaching and application of God's Word revolutionized the whole country. God's Word in the souls of thousands of believers multiplied the blessings poured out upon Nigeria.

When it goes well with the righteous the city rejoices...by the blessing of the upright a city is exhalted (Proverbs11:10a, 11a NASB).

The impact was amazing. If the charismatic movement was around at all it was still in the formative stage. The false teaching of speaking in tongues was foreign to most; it had not yet become widespread. But Nigeria's golden era, resulting from correct teaching and application of Bible knowledge, was about to end.

Out of the West, a rising tide of the charismatic movement, with its practice of speaking in tongues, swept into the nation, washing through the corridors of denomination after denomination and church after church, eventually engulfing the nation. A new wave of preaching, focused on emotionalism, swept the country off its feet. Layer by layer, sound Bible teaching was washed away and substituted with the so-called "spiritual experience." Eventually there was a huge erosion of Truth, which plunged the nation into spiritual darkness. Corruption of every kind became widespread in every strata of society and was even prevalent in the church. Christians, once revered for their high character, were no longer trusted and respected. They no longer looked out for each other but became motivated by greed and a lust for power.

Nigeria is still deep in darkness. Bribery and corruption are no longer just words, they run rampant. No more sleeping outside, but inside—in fear, behind barred doors and windows. The whole country remains in darkness because of the absence of "light" which believers should radiate.

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16 NASB).

Thousands of believers in the nation and yet no light? How can this be? Because there is no “light” in the charismatic movement. They lack “light” because they are devoid of the Truth taught to us by the Apostles of Jesus Christ. They have turned from the Truth and been deluded by the “doctrines of the demons.” (1 Timothy 4:1)

Nowadays, many view churches in Nigeria and elsewhere, as business centers. You can hardly walk through a street without finding half a dozen churches. Every Sunday, all across the country, you hear the noise of church “praise-and-worship” bands and emotional uproar drowning out sound Bible teaching. “Prosperity preachers” have taken over pulpits, exploiting the rich and the poor alike. I have watched the country over the years deteriorate as it moves from grace, to warning, to the suffering of discipline.

Today in America, many of the same symptoms are evident. There may be air conditioning so the noise may not be in the street—but inside it’s there, on the television it’s there. The Church is bending to the influence of the culture, rather than the Church shining its light and shaping the culture.

America was built on the bedrock of Biblical faith not emotionalism. During the second half of the last century the charismatic movement changed all this. Emotion took precedence over thinking. How one “feels” about something became more important than what one “thinks” about it. Look at the nation, and consider its recent history! What a change! Who says the charismatic movement is a blessing? When Scripture is carefully examined, who would responsibly call this movement a blessing? It is rather a curse brought to the Church through one man! Through him Satan was able to promote falsehood and obscure God’s light. Satan took advantage of the unsuspecting Charles Parham because of his lack of accurate Bible knowledge.

There is grave danger in falsehood. Satan is the author and chief promoter of it. He often enters the Church disguised as *an angel of light*, with his weapon of deceit and craftily disarms believers in their spiritual battle, causing them to become casualties on the spiritual battleground. To this effect the Apostle Paul warns:

And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve (2 Corinthians 11:14-15 NIV).

John sternly warns:

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this [sound] teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds [falsehood] (2 John 1:10-11 NASB).

You cannot be involved with a movement that is against sound, line by line, verse by verse, teaching of the inerrant Word of God and at the same time claim to be honoring God in your life! It is not possible!

You may ask, “How can this movement based on emotional experience have an adverse affect on Christianity?” Very simple! Emotion feeds on emotion. Thought and emotion are mutually exclusive. Emotion is the exact opposite of critical, logical thinking. Constructive, systematic exposition of the infallible Word of God is thought-provoking, rather than emotion-inducing. This explains why charismatic worshippers dedicate a large portion of their service time to “praise and worship,” healing, flamboyant, self-centered testimonies. These activities crowd out time for the study of the Word of Life, which is less time for fellowship with God Himself.

“God is Spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit [by means of the filling of the Holy Spirit] and truth [expository teaching of the Word]” (John 4:24 NASB).

Yes, by means of the Spirit and Truth!

With less emphasis on the life-changing Word of God, (that is the source of all spiritual nourishment and capacity for life), believers become spiritually weak and easy casualties on the spiritual battle field of life. It is rare to find a believer in the charismatic camp who studies exegetical, line-by-line, verse-by-verse teaching of God’s Word. These believers may even be antagonistic to the word *doctrine*, choosing feelings, rather than Truths from the word of God for their spiritual measuring gauge.

I know of two cousins, both believers. These men should be doubly close: cousins by physical birth, brothers by spiritual birth. Sadly, they are no longer speaking due to a disagreement about studying God's Word being more important and necessary than emotional experience.

During a phone conversation about this, the "experiences" believer interrupted his cousin and bluntly stated "I am not interested in Theology!"

The Bible student replied, "Do you really understand the implication of what you just said? Do you know the meaning of the word Theology? *Theo* = God, *logos* = Word? In essence, you are telling me, that you don't like the Biblical study of God."

Upon hearing this simple explanation of the word Theology, the "experiences" cousin became silent. The silence still exists to this day, for he no longer speaks to his own cousin, his brother in Christ.

That's just one example where the family of God is being torn apart rather than strengthened by emotional non-thinking. My friend, if you think that the charismatic movement is of the Lord, think again.

The purpose of this book is to cast God's light on the dark side of this movement. This lays down the groundwork for us to examine the charismatic movement in the church at Corinth and the Apostle Paul's reaction.

Charismatic Movement at Corinth

God, in His marvelous plan, never intended the miraculous speaking in tongues experience, which occurred on the day of Pentecost, to be a movement continuing through the centuries. *It was a warning sign.* That's right! We shall, later, investigate tongues as a warning sign.

The Corinthians wanted to continue the tongues speaking experience and make it universal. But the Apostle Paul had to squelch this forerunner to the charismatic movement before it had any chance to take hold. In the Apostolic Era, this is the closest a congregation came to erroneously trying to make speaking in tongues something every believer should endeavor to experience. This blazing fire started by Satan was quickly extinguished by the Apostle Paul! Thank God for that! The compelling question is: If it was quenched outright then, as we shall see, from whence did the modern day speaking in tongue movement originate?

You may wish to pause and meditate on this question.

At this point, we need to take a close look at the spiritual condition of the Church of Corinth.

Paul's letter to the church at Corinth was based on a report he had received (1 Corinthians 1:11) Since he had not witnessed anything firsthand, Paul addressed every aspect of the complaints, including the complaint of speaking in tongues. He expected the letter to be circulated and for the Corinthians and others to apply whatever was pertinent to them. It was sort of a "users manual" instructing them on the proper use of the true gift of tongues, warning against abuse of the true gift and warning against false imitation.

The Carnal Church At Corinth

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly [carnal]. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly [carnal], and are you not walking like mere men [unbelievers]? (1 Corinthians 3:1-3 NASB).

Would you like your church to be named the “Carnal” Pentecostal Church of Christ? If you are surfing the Internet for a church to attend, and you come across such a name, would you consider paying them a Sunday visit? I don’t think so.

It’s an awesome challenge to comment on the spiritual life of the Corinthian church. Hands down, it was the most notoriously immoral church in the history of the Apostolic Era. It is important to remember that this church claimed to have the gift of tongues.

How would you react if a notorious prostitute, or an incestuous person in your church, stood up in the midst of a sermon and spoke in tongues? Would you be stunned? Or would you praise God for giving them the spiritual gift of tongues? Would you possibly call their experience demonic? In this chapter we will explore the origin of the power for this display of tongues in Corinth.

The Apostle Paul established the Church at Corinth on his second missionary journey. He wrote his first letter (epistle) to them around 56 AD. The second letter, now known as 2 Corinthians in our Bible, was written only months later.

Dr. Spiro, the chief editor of the New American Standard Bible made these interesting points about Corinth:

It was an important cosmopolitan Greek city located on a large isthmus about fifty miles west of Athens. It was one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire. Corinth was on a major trade route and had a thriving economy, and the vices of the East and West converged there. Greeks, Romans, Jews, and a mixed multitude of sailors and merchants flocked to this crossroads. Corinthian-style architecture was famous. The Isthmian athletic games were held biennially there. By the end of the second century, Corinth had become one of the richest cities in the world.

There was already a large Jewish presence in Corinth and Paul believed that it would be a strategic center of influence. (Think of it: Wouldn't such a super economic center of the world be an ideal place from which to spread the charismatic movement to other parts of the world?) But Paul said that Corinth was full of sin. That it was one of the most wicked cities of ancient times, adding that degradation, immorality, and heathen customs abounded. There were many religions represented, even a temple which offered a thousand sacred prostitutes. Pleasure was worshipped more than principle.

Paul began receiving reports about the congregation: an incestuous relationship, lawsuits between Christians in front of unbelievers, marriage problems, difficulties concerning meat offered to idols and matters of conscience, abuse in taking the Lord's Supper, disorderly conduct in the formal assemblies for worship, confusion about the role of women in the church, and heresies about the afterlife. Dr. Spiro's research concluded that many members were recently converted from pagan practices and they were having difficulty in adjusting to their new faith and breaking with the past.⁵

We can sympathize with this group of believers. It is difficult to change the concepts one grows up with.

Train a child in the way he should go, even when he is old
he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6 NASB).

That, however, is never an excuse for bad behavior. We are not here to judge these believers but to use Paul's epistle as background for our study of tongues.

Almost every chapter of the first epistle to this immoral church was written as a correction:

- **Chapters one and two:** the Apostle Paul handled the issues of water baptism, division in the church and reliance on human wisdom.
- **Chapter three:** Paul tackled their carnal lifestyle and warned about the eternal consequence of a spiritual quagmire (stalling out in your spiritual life due to being stuck in carnality).
- **Chapter four:** the Apostle quenched their thirst for power lust and the arrogance complex.
- **Chapter five:** he vehemently dealt with the issue of incest.

⁵NASB 1995 (The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, p 1507)

- **Chapter six:** he discussed the issue of believers defrauding one another and wrongfully bringing lawsuits against fellow believers. He also dealt with the issue of immoral behaviors. In his epistle we read,

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit [reward in] the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit [reward in] the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NIV).

The Apostle Paul corrected them for indulging in their former lives from which they had been washed, justified and sanctified in Christ. He reminded them that they had been “*saved by grace*” (Ephesians 2:8-9)! Then Paul’s pen was on fire in the remaining verses as we read:

“Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything. “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food”—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body (Corinthians 6:12-20 NIV).

Consider verse sixteen: “*Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘The two will become one flesh’*” This verse is not a hypothetical situation. Paul was addressing believers who had not broken away from their old lifestyle of visiting a temple that offered a thousand “sacred” prostitutes daily. That’s right! That’s what we have in their spiritual report! That’s why Paul took pains to graphically describe the implication of such a lifestyle. The Apostle then called attention to their bodies, “*Or do you not know [while you are involved in this behavior] that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?*”

Amazingly, Paul did not say, “You idiots, see what you have done to yourselves because of your carnal lifestyle: You have lost the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.” Paul also never told them that they had lost their salvation. This is great news for we all fail sporadically in our spiritual lives. The Psalmist sang it best:

If You, Lord should mark iniquities, O Lord who could stand? (Psalm 130:3 NASB).

- **Chapters seven through ten:** the Apostle Paul dealt with the issue of marital problems, food offered to idols, and inconsideration toward other believers. He also mentioned their lack of support for his ministry as their spiritual father.
- **Chapter ten:** he reminded them to consider the Jewish spiritual failures in the wilderness and the resultant action of God. Consequently he sternly told them to flee idolatry!
- **Chapter eleven:** the Apostle confronted the church with an issue that astounds me every time I read this passage. The heart of the problem was their lack of respect for the Holy Communion. My friend, it sticks in my throat every time I try to swallow the thought that believers would approach Holy Communion without reverence and awe for God’s majesty. Rather these Corinthians would literally fight for bread and wine in the midst of the communion service; and some would even partake of these sacred elements while drunk!

Here you have their spiritual report in black and white! No wonder the Apostle Paul lambasted them this way:

Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! (1 Corinthians 11:22 NIV).

Beloved, at this time, let's pause and think about this question. Assume you are the president of the Spiritual Gifts Distribution Center; if you received an application from the church at Corinth, with its spiritual report attached to their request for the gift of tongues, or what charismatics refer to as the "second blessing," would you approve this request? Surely you would not! Keep in mind that our review of the spiritual quagmire of the Corinthian church was what Paul saw on their report. Knowing this, he took three chapters to deal with their abuse and ignorance of the gift of tongues. He told them plainly,

So then tongues are for a sign (1 Corinthians 14:22 NASB).

You read it correctly. "*Tongues are a sign!*" If they were for a sign, then what are the spiritual benefits? What good did it do the Corinthians? We shall now examine this subject.

What are the Spiritual Benefits of Tongues?

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge [sound Bible teaching]. Because you [a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ] have rejected knowledge [sound Bible teaching], I will also reject you from being My priest [servant]. Since you have forgotten the law [doctrine] of your God..." (Hosea 4:6 NASB).

God in His matchless grace raised up, Hosea, the last prophet to warn the Jews before He permitted the Assyrian invasion, which resulted in the captivity of the Northern Kingdom. Israel at this time had no appetite for sound Bible teaching. Rejection of Truth in their souls, finally shut off any interest they had in God's Word. They rapidly developed a soul-vacuum which sucked in apostasy.

My friend, this can happen to us, when we become careless or lazy, failing to:

...test the spirits [every doctrinal teaching] to see whether they are from God (1 John 4:1 NASB).

Be on guard. Just as all that glitters is not gold, so not all Bible communications are heaven-approved. False doctrine can cause great havoc!

I request that you join me in a simple but essential exercise. Let's list the benefits of speaking in tongues in two categories.

Benefits of Speaking in Tongues

<u>7 personal spiritual benefits</u>	<u>7 benefits to a local church</u>
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.

We shall not check our answers against experience, but against Scripture. We know that experience is not the final test for determining whether God is communicating to us. God speaks to us through His Word; and, His Word is the only reliable standard for testing Truth available to us today. Was speaking in tongues meant for self-edification? Does it bring about spiritual transformation in a local church?

At the crossroads of sound Bible teaching and experience, the charismatic movement has taken the wrong road regarding tongues. It encourages and sometimes demands people to speak in tongues.

As a youth, before I knew what the Bible teaches, I was in a church where a pastor mandated that no one could leave the church service until all had spoken in tongues! Under this pressure, all but my cousin opened their mouths and were uttering meaningless “words.” My cousin not wanting to pretend, said nothing. When the pastor came to him he told my cousin to open his mouth and say whatever came into his mind. He stood dumbfounded; finally the pastor out of frustration forced his lips open and yelled at him, “Say something!” What an embarrassment! My cousin left that church — for good.

This is just one illustration of the harm caused by heresy that has eaten so deeply into the church. I trust that at the end of this study, you will join the thousands who have been set free from the bondage of the charismatic teaching of tongues exclaiming, “Thank You God! Your Truth has set us free!”

Let's review our list. Did you list, "Speaking in tongue edifies me?" If you are a charismatic believer, that may be your number one reason. The Apostle Paul is often quoted to support this claim:

One who speaks in a tongue **edifies** [only] himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church (1 Corinthians 14:4 NASB).

We need to compare this verse within its context before we attempt any interpretation, remembering that Scripture must be compared with Scripture, verse with verse, and an individual verse with the context of the whole Bible. Consequently we have:

One who speaks a tongue **edifies** himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church (14:4). So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the **edification** of the church [the body of Christ is Paul's emphasis]. What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. *Let all things be done for edification* [of the whole church] (1 Corinthians 14:4 cf. 14:12, 26 NASB).

The common denominator in these three verses is EDIFICATION: The Scripture never describes any gift as spiritual that manifests self-centeredness, self-gratification or self-edification.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves (Philippians 2:3 NASB).

Each of us is to please his neighbor [fellow believer] for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself" (Romans 15:2, 3a NASB).

The truth of the matter is that God the Holy Spirit bestowed all spiritual gifts for the edification of the entire body of Christ. Again, there's no single gift in the New Testament that is meant for self-edification. This would sharply contradict Paul's dissertation on spiritual gifts

explained in his anatomy analogy of 1 Corinthians 12. He taught that every body part benefits the whole. In underscoring the purpose of all spiritual gifts, Paul wrote:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same [Holy] Spirit...
But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for
the **common good** (1 Corinthians 12:4, 7 NASB).

In layman's language: "God the Holy Spirit is solely responsible for the issuing of all spiritual gifts. Every gift He gives is not for self-edification, but for the edification of everyone."

The Greek word *sumphero* translated "common good" in the New American Standard simply means "*to bring together for the benefit of another.*" Simply put, for the edification of all! That's the purpose of all spiritual gifts, tongues included.

Paul sometimes used sarcasm to make a point. He was a brilliant teacher who could bury a person in sarcasm without being harsh. Consider his words:

Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings—and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you! (1 Corinthians 4:8 NASB).

Consider carefully how he uses sarcasm in 1 Corinthians:

For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his [human] spirit he speaks mysteries (1 Corinthians 14:2 NASB).

The question is: How do we know that Paul's statement "*For one who speaks [prays] in a tongue...[speaks or prays] to God*" is not an instruction for prayer, but is Paul teaching with the use of sarcasm?

First let us consider what prayer is. God speaks to us through His Word and we talk to the Omnipotent God through prayer. Prayer expresses our inner longings, communicates our needs and places our petitions before God the Father.

1. Paul uses sarcasm in 1 Corinthians 14:1-9 (context for 14:2), in his plea for the Corinthians to use their gifts for the common good of the entire church, just as we saw him do in 1 Corinthians 12:4.

Consider the words “for no one understands...he speaks mysteries.” These words must be sarcasm or the believer would not be aware of his prayer request. A mystery request sets the stage for a mystery answer. The believer must know exactly what he is asking God to do. Why? Paul tells us:

Devote yourself to prayer, being watchful and thankful (Colossians 4:2 NIV).

The whole purpose of answered prayer is that we glorify God. For we are instructed:

Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will **honor** Me (Psalm 50:15 NASB).

We cannot be thankful nor honor God if we have no clue as to what we prayed about! How can we identify an unknown answer to an unknown request? God in His ultimate fairness would not require us to be thankful or watchful if we can't recognize the answer.

2. Scripture cannot contradict itself! To assume 1 Corinthians 14:2 means “make your request to Me in a mysterious way” is contrary to other instruction for prayer:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6 NASB).

You do not have because you do not ask (James 4:2b NASB).

These clearly instruct us to make known requests to God.

Paul is not saying that we edify ourselves when we speak in meaningless words; but rather that it's absurd when we utter words that no one can understand or interpret.

So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? [Examine this:] For you will be speaking into the air (1 Corinthians 14:9 NASB).

How can anyone be edified by speaking into the air? To help you understand Paul's logic, ask yourself: By what means are we edified spiritually? It is by means of learning and applying Bible Truth! Not by speaking in an unknown tongue. It's a message of Truth that brings about edification. Isn't it?

Elsewhere, the Apostle Paul mentions communication gifts, (Apostle, evangelist, pastor/teacher) and links them to the edification of believers, namely the body of Christ:

And He gave some as Apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12 NASB).

In other words, it's an Apostle, evangelist, or a pastor/teacher that brings a seasoned message of God's Word, that results in edification of the soul.

The correct interpretation of this passage can't be emphasized enough. Ignoring its message resulted in problems for the uninformed brethren in Corinth. Ignoring its message has also had a terrible impact on the Church!

Words of edification could have come through doctrinal hymns, words of prophesy or tongues that are interpreted! Never by feelings or meaningless utterances! Never by a mysterious "tingling" from God! Again, how could God edify a person or a church using words they cannot understand? Does that make sense?

See what we do to ourselves when we fail to examine Scripture thoroughly? Let us return to 1 Corinthians 14, where Paul tells us:

For one who speaks in a tongue [the word *unknown* is not found in the original language] does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in the spirit he speaks mysteries (1 Corinthians 14:2 NASB).

Paul says: "*No one understands.*" When his statement is examined in the light of the whole context, his commentary is magnified:

There are, perhaps a great many kinds of languages [tongues] in the world, and no kind is WITHOUT meaning.... Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he [or someone] may interpret (1 Corinthians 14:10, 13 NASB).

When Paul told the believers in verse 13 to pray for interpretation, it becomes apparent that Paul is not saying that there are tongues or languages that could not be understood. Otherwise, why urge us to pray for interpretation? He had already affirmed that there's no language without a meaning (1 Corinthians 14:10).

He continued, and presented his argument that prayer without the harmony between the spirit and the mind is a useless prayer. He continues:

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful [a problem for any who claim to pray in the spirit]. What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also [harmony]; I will sing with the spirit; I will sing with the mind also [harmony] (1 Corinthians 14:14-15 NIV).

What a prepared, humble servant of God, Paul was! He knew how to take on an argument from any angle and graciously, under the mentorship of the Holy Spirit, follow it through without a loss of thought or coherency. He has done that here!

But the big question is: Can you see it?

It's my heartfelt prayer that God opens your eyes to see it, so that you may be set free.

In light of our examination of Scripture, it's apparent that speaking in tongues was never ever meant for self-edification. Did your list say, "Speaking in tongues brings refreshment, transformation of the church and causes it to be vibrant"? Do you speak for your church alone or for the Corinthians also?

Some months later, when Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians, there had not been much spiritual change in the church. Space will not allow us to examine 2 Corinthians chapter by chapter.

But suffice it to say in 2 Corinthians 6:11, Paul indicated that they were still too emotional. Emotion is always a big obstacle to constructive learning since feeling blocks thinking.

In 2 Corinthians 12:12 Paul presented his miracle-sign-badge⁶ to the Corinthians in his own defense since the church disputed his authority and Apostleship. They were still saying: “Paul, you are not really an Apostle.” If their “second blessing,” which they alleged to have experienced, had propelled them to a new dimension spiritually, they would not have challenged Paul’s authority. But their reaction showed that they were not maturing. Their experience didn’t move them from their seats, let alone new spiritual heights!

Where then do we get the idea that speaking in tongues is a wonderful benefit for the Church? If it were, would Paul have discouraged the Corinthians in their quest for starting a charismatic movement? We read:

“**But** earnestly desire the greater gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:31a NASB).

“But” is a powerful word that we time and again take for granted when found in a sentence. It often serves as a red flag to alert us to something significant ahead, or to discourage us from something previously mentioned.

For example: I wanted to cross the river **but** the bridge was down. Obviously if you ignore what comes after the “but” you will be in deep water - literally! The very same is true when you see a “but” in a passage of Scripture. It carries the same warning. The believers ignored, or failed to see Paul’s warning of “but” when he dealt with the issue of tongues.

“**But** earnestly desire the greater gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:31a NASB).

Another way of saying it is, “Corinthians, stop desiring the gift of tongues, which has no spiritual benefits. Rather desire greater gifts, such as love, helps, or administration” (1 Corinthians 12:28). Here Paul refers to love as a gift to compare it to the gifts the Corinthians were seeking. Love is technically part of the fruit of the spirit and is available to each and every believer. No gift needed (Galatians 5:22).

⁶Moses C. Onwubiko: *Signs and Wonders*

He further underscored his statement, when he told them to seek to abound in gifts that bring about the edification of the whole Church (14:12). It is crystal clear from this section alone that speaking in tongues is non-essential for our spiritual life. Thank God for His clarity! Rejection of this illuminating work of the Holy Spirit infers that one only cares about certain portions of the Bible, and does not have regard for the entire Scripture. That is very dangerous; for such an attitude mirrors Satan who opposes God’s plan for the Church.

Sadly, we live in a time of thought-system collapse. Many people don’t bother to think anymore. So I challenge you to consider this in light of what the Apostle told the Corinthians: Assuming that the gift of speaking in tongues has not ceased, why would anyone invest his time in seeking the inferior gift over the superior (as ranked in 1 Corinthians 12:20) in order to achieve his very best—knowing that he has limited time to accomplish much? Who wants inferior when superior is encouraged? Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost, a distinguished Professor of Bible Exposition, Emeritus at Dallas Theological Seminary could not have said it better when he wrote these sobering words: “A man whose life is disciplined by the Spirit of God and the Word of God does not give himself to something of secondary importance. Recognizing that he does not have time for good and best he approves the things that are superior.”⁷

Simply put, there is no spiritual value, not even a particle, that can be derived from speaking in tongues. We shall see this in more detail as our study continues.

To properly examine the subject of tongues we must factor the Jews into the bigger picture.

⁷Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost: *Joy of Living*

The Jews in God's Program

Before we can study tongues as a sign (meant specifically for the unbelieving Jews) in the next chapter, we first need to take a few pages to get an overview of the Jews and their history.

The Jews are a unique people in God's plan. We cannot overlook God's dealing with them throughout time, and still expect to comprehend the "*God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*" The history of the Jews is indeed a golden starting point in the exposition of the deep Truths of Scripture, for they have:

“...adoption as sons and the glory and covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen” (Romans 9:4b-5 NASB).

The Jews were, and still are, in a unique category: God's chosen people. We must have a measure of understanding about their place in God's plan in order to have a grasp on the subject of tongues.

What have the Jews to do with tongues? EVERYTHING! That's right! EVERYTHING! To understand the doctrine of tongues, and its importance, we must first understand two things:

- Why God chose "*this people.*"
- Why on the day of Pentecost (the onset of the Church) He used the miracle of tongues as a sign to communicate to them.

Who are "*this people*" on whose account untold nations have suffered loss and many have been obliterated from the global map? Scripture tells us they are:

...the apple of His [God's] eye (Zechariah 2:8 NASB).

Abraham was the literal father of the Jews. They were fore-known when God called him out of Haran, and said to him:

...“Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:1-3 NASB).

Abraham was 100 and his wife Sarah was 90 when she gave birth Isaac, the son God had promised. Isaac became the father of twin boys, Esau and Jacob. The Lord changed Jacob’s name to Israel after the time Jacob wrestled with Him all night long. Jacob fathered twelve sons who each became head of their tribe. The twelve tribes assumed their father’s name to become the Jewish nation known as Israel.⁸

The history of the Jewish nation is panoramic; but we will only study the portions of Scripture that are pertinent to our subject, tongues. We will briefly examine:

- Why God chose the Jews over other nations
- The colossal spiritual failures of the Jews
- Isaiah’s prophesy and fulfillment in regards to tongues
- Our Lord’s grief for the Jews
- The Apostle Paul’s mourning for the Jews
- The glorious future hope for the Jews

God’s Assigned Mission for the Jews

In eternity past God designed a plan by which the world would be evangelized following the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden.

God does not wish that anyone should perish (2 Peter 3:9). Because of His desire for the entire human race, He called the Jewish nation to be His servant (Isaiah 44:21), to accomplish the mission of declaring His glory and wonderful deeds worldwide (1 Chronicles 16:24-25). Isaiah tells us regarding God’s choice:

⁸Moses C. Onwubiko: *Signs and Wonders*

“You [Israel] are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me no god was formed, nor will there be one after Me. I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior. I have revealed and saved and proclaimed—I, and not some foreign god among you. You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “that I am God. Yes, and from ancient days I am He. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?” (Isaiah 43:10-13; cf. 40:9; 45:4; 44:8 NIV).

He said to Me, “You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory”... I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth (Isaiah 49:3, 6b NASB).

Long before Isaiah, Moses accurately declared:

For the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God (Leviticus 25:55 NIV).

To demonstrate that God chose the Jews for the purpose of spreading His Good News to all parts of the world would take a whole book. Therefore we will just point out that over and over they failed, first in their spiritual life, and second in their assigned mission. Again and again, God warned them through His prophets, but they did not listen.

(Do we listen when God warns us?)

God chose the Jews as his people. Soon after Solomon’s reign they became divided into two Kingdoms: The Northern Kingdom called Israel, and the Southern Kingdom called Judah (1 Kings 12).

In the heart of the spiritual slum of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, God raised a prophet whom He used in a dramatic way to reach out to His apostate servants, the Jews. The story of the prophet Hosea marrying, and remarrying his wife after her lifestyle of prostitution (Hosea 1-3) was a picture of the unfaithfulness of Israel and

God's willingness to take her back if she would return to Him. This message, through Hosea, was God's final attempt in reaching out to "*this people*," as the Bible calls them in both the Old (Isaiah 28:11) and New Testament (1 Corinthians 14:21). The Jews of the Northern Kingdom developed deaf ears and cold hearts to Hosea's message, and consequently they were captured by the Assyrians and taken into exile (722 BC). This left only the Southern Kingdom, Judah, to be God's nation.

The Southern Kingdom

After the fall of the Northern Kingdom, Judah remained as the only priest kingdom unto God, but the people had a hard time adjusting to God's plan. The nation had a roller-coaster spiritual life. Despite their failures, God raised excellent prophets, men like Jeremiah and Isaiah, to steer them away from ungodliness that would result in calamity (2 Chronicles 36:14-16). They too ignored God's grace, and subsequently landed in Babylon as captives in the sixth century BC, fulfilling Jeremiah's prophesy (Jeremiah 25:1-12).

But that's not where this ends. God had a covenant to raise a Messiah out of Judah, which was yet unfulfilled. Out of His mercy and faithfulness, He allowed the people of Judah to return to their land after 70 years in captivity.

God is faithful. The return of the people of Judah was not only a grace overture, but also a provision to preserve the Jews until Messiah would be revealed—just as the Scripture foretold. Upon their return, the spiritual life of the Jews was not impressive, nor were they accomplishing their mission of evangelism. They scoffed at and despised the Gentiles, the very people God wanted them to reach with the message of hope. This was even extended into their attitude toward Jesus Christ in His Incarnation. The Jewish leadership rebuked Him sharply, both for His proclamation to the Gentiles, and His association with them, not to mention His claim of Messiahship. Unknown to them, God had sent Jesus Christ as a suffering Servant who would set the stage for worldwide evangelism. It would be remiss on our part if we neglected Isaiah's prophesy, for it holds the key that unlocks the mystery of speaking in tongues.

The Book of Isaiah

Isaiah is said to be one of the most valuable books in the Old Testament. Most scholars can agree that the book of Isaiah is partly a book of signs. It contains three important signs that we need to mention to underscore our study.

1. **Sign of the virgin birth:** God had promised a Savior from the house of King David. The question was: How could people recognize Him when He was born? Isaiah stated that He would come by means of a virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14).
2. **Sign of unique miracles to identify the Messiah:** The news of the virgin birth would be localized because not everyone knew what took place between God, Mary and her betrothed husband, Joseph. God provided a sign so the Jews could identify Him. This was a miracle-sign-badge.⁹ Isaiah declared that the Jews would recognize Him as Messiah through the unique miracles He would perform (Isaiah 35:4-6).
3. **Sign to the Jews as a warning:** This sign includes the miracle of speaking in tongues, which is our topic. This would be the last warning sign to the Jews as failed servants of God. This sign would signal the suspension of the Jewish Era and the ushering in of new servants, the Gentiles (Romans 11:25).

Before we embark on Isaiah's prophesy of foreign languages, we need to mention just a few of the indictments against the Jews in both the New and Old Testaments.

Spiritual Failures of the Jews—God's Action

The spiritual failures of the Jews are evident to any student of God's Word. We have seen that God sent a prophet to steer the Northern Kingdom away from collapse, but they did not listen. In the Southern Kingdom, God raised men like Isaiah and Jeremiah to warn them of an impending judgment, a gesture of grace they too disregarded and mocked. To this stubborn attitude Jeremiah declared:

⁹Moses C. Onwubiko: *Signs and Wonders*

The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy (2 Chronicles 36:15-16 NIV).

In the New Testament we have a similar indictment, and prediction of a disastrous future. The Lord, in His triumphal entry to Jerusalem, wept sorrowfully because He knew what lay ahead for them. Concerning the Lord's grief, Matthew recorded this for us:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate [future suspension as God's servant]. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say [in the Millennium, the 1,000 years reign of Jesus Christ following the “end of time”], ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’ (Matthew 23:37-39 NIV).

Luke also states:

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days [70 AD] will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you” (Luke 19:41-44 NIV).¹⁰

¹⁰ Moses C. Onwubiko: *Signs and Wonders*

How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against *this people* [Jews]. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Luke 21:23-24 NIV).

Yes, you read it correctly! “*Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*” The compelling question then is: How would the remnant (those who still paid attention to prophecy and historical events) have known that the time of all these prophetic warnings were at hand? Here is EXACTLY where Isaiah’s prophecy of tongues fits perfectly.

Behold, the Lord has a strong and mighty agent [for judgment]; as a storm of hail, a tempest of destruction, Like a storm of mighty overflowing waters, He has cast it down to the earth with His hand ... For all the tables are full of filthy vomit, without a single clean place. (Isaiah 28:2, 8 NASB).

To whom would He teach knowledge [of what He’s about to do]? And to whom would He interpret the message? Those just weaned from milk [those who have no frame of reference]? Those just taken from the breast [those who are incapable of understanding]. No.

For He says “order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there” (Isaiah 28:10 NASB).

The prophet Isaiah looked ahead seven centuries to the calamity which would befall the Jews and gave a sign in the next verse of his prophetic words.

Indeed, He will speak to this people [specifically the Jews] through stammering lips and a foreign tongue...but they would not listen (Isaiah 28:11, 12b NASB).

In view of Isaiah’s prophesy, the Apostle Paul first rebuked the Corinthians with sarcasm and second, referred them to Isaiah 28:11 to show the purpose of tongues.

Brethren, do not be children in your thinking [you are thinking like an baby; it's about time you grow up]; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature. [For] In the Law [Isaiah] it is written, “by men of strange tongues and by lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me” says the Lord. So then tongues are a sign, not to those who believe [Jews who had believed and were now in union with Christ, where distinctions are no more {Galatians 3:27-28}] but to unbelievers [unbelievers referring to “this people” in context, the Jews] (1 Corinthians 14:20-22a NASB).

We will return to this passage later. Hermeneutics (the science of interpretation) demands that we interpret a verse in context, factoring in the whole context of the Bible. Going back to Isaiah 28:11, the phrase “*this people*” refers to the Jews only! Also when the apostle Paul used the Greek word *laos* [“*this people*,” *Israel*] in reference to Isaiah’s prophecy it specifically applies to the Jews only! Thus, tongues as a warning sign was unique to the Jews! We could end this book right here, and would have made our point, but we need to examine the whole realm of God’s Word.

Tongues: A Sign

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate [future suspension as God’s servant]. For I tell you, you will not see me again until [in the Millennium] you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’ ” (Matthew 23:37-39 NIV).

At God’s appointed hour, the God-Man, Jesus Christ, entered Jerusalem, and out of compassion wept over everything Jerusalem stood for. He wept for the colossal failures of the Jews as chosen servants of the Most High God, their rejection of Him as their Messiah, and the impending total destruction of their land. With judgment passed and the age of the Jews coming to an end, the questions then were: When will the time of the Gentiles commence? What event would signal its arrival? Again Isaiah’s prophesy, answers our questions.

Indeed, He will speak to this people through stammering lips and a foreign tongue...but they would not listen (Isaiah 28:11, 12b NASB).

The Uniqueness Of Pentecost

Pentecost, a word that customarily meant 50, was also the name of one of the feasts celebrated by the Jews. They were very familiar with the term. On the 50th day after our Lord’s triumphant resurrection, entrance into Heaven and session (was seated) at the right hand of God the Father, as our Supreme High Priest, something EXTRA-ORDINARY occurred: the birth and inauguration of the Church Age.¹¹ Pentecost had assumed new meaning. Though having dealt with this subject in detail in the book, *Signs and Wonders*, it is necessary to

¹¹ Moses C. Onwubiko: *Signs and Wonders*

give it a new dimension here. Let's consult the authority of Scripture. Luke tells us:

And when the day of Pentecost had come, they [the disciples] were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise **like a violent rushing wind**, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them **tongues as of fire** distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance (Acts 2:1-4 NASB).

Tongues as of Fire

On the day of Pentecost, God's judgment on the Jews was carried out as prophesied. "*Tongues as of fire*" and "*other tongues*" have the same meaning; they depict a miracle-sign of judgment. Recall the burning bush incident in which the bush was ablaze, but the leaves were not consumed?. The "fire" was a sign-judgment of the Egyptians.¹² It happened only once in Jewish history.

Similarly, the "*tongues as of fire*" which rested on the heads of the disciples without consuming their hair, was God's sign-judgment on the Jews. Just as physical judgment came to Egypt soon after the sign-judgment of the burning bush, so physical judgment would soon come to the Jews after the sign-judgment of the "*tongues of fire*" of Pentecost. They witnessed Isaiah's prophecy come to pass: God speaking to them "*with men of strange tongues!*" God keeps His Word!

God used speaking in other tongues to accomplish four objectives.

1. A Warning Sign: the first and main objective

The main purpose of speaking in other tongues was to warn the unbelieving Jews that the end of their existence as a nation was near. Their servant-role in God's plan would pass to the Gentiles. Now it is clear why the Apostle Paul explicitly referenced the passage from Isaiah 28:11 to extinguish the fire of charismatic experience at Corinth! It also is clear why he emphatically told these confused brethren: "*Tongues are a sign!*" Do you see why he discouraged

¹² delineated in detail, Moses C. Onwubiko: *Signs and Wonders*

them from their burning desire to seek the spiritual gift of tongues? He told them point blank: “*Tongues has nothing to do with the spirituality of the believer! It was a warning sign to the Jews!*” This explains why tongues is only mentioned in Corinthians and Acts.

There is no other mention of either the gift of tongues, or the abuse of tongues in the whole New Testament other than what was addressed by Luke in the book of Acts and by Paul in the book of 1 Corinthians. The book of Acts was written in 61 AD and mentions tongues only three times. The book of 1 Corinthians was written in 56 AD.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul, not actually being in Corinth, addressed all the aspects of the gift of tongues (as we saw in Chapter Four). He wrote instructions on the correct use of the gift, remedies for correcting any abuse that may have been taking place, and discouraged false imitation of the true gift.

Nowhere else in the New Testament is the gift of tongues mentioned:

James	45-50 AD	no mention of tongues
Galatians	49 AD	no mention of tongues
1 & 2 Thessalonians	51 AD	no mention of tongues
Mark	50-55 AD	vs 16:9-20 is not in the original text
2 Corinthians	57 AD	no mention of tongues
Romans	58 AD	no mention of tongues
Matthew	60's AD	no mention of tongues
Luke	60 AD	no mention of tongues
Colossians, Ephesians		
Philippians, Philemon	61 AD	no mention of tongues
1 Timothy, 1 Peter	63 AD	no mention of tongues
Titus	65 AD	no mention of tongues
2 Timothy, 2 Peter	66 AD	no mention of tongues
Hebrews	68 AD	no mention of tongues
Jude, John	80-85 AD	no mention of tongues
1, 2, 3 John	90's AD	no mention of tongues
Revelation	96 AD	no mention of tongues

The chronology above clearly shows there is not one mention of the legitimate gift of tongues other than the books of Acts and 1 Corinthians.

It seems illogical, if tongues were to continue, that all of these inspired books would be written with no mention of tongues.

Many of Paul's experiences in missionary travels are given in Acts and his epistles, but none mentions tongues, except the ones already listed.¹³ That's right! There was no mention because the Apostles didn't incorporate the doctrine of tongues in their Church Age teachings. These Apostles and their audiences, like the believers in Philippi, understood its place in God's program. It was a warning banner for the displacement of the Jews and announced the insertion of the Church!

Have you ever thought about that? Please pause for a moment and meditate on this.

2. Confirmation of the Promise: *"You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit"*

The Lord promised His disciples that He would send them the Holy Spirit once He ascended into Heaven (John 16:7). God, on the other hand, used the same speaking in tongues to confirm that the promise had been fulfilled. God keeps His Word! What a comfort! This, however, was a non-repetitive experience for the disciples as there is no record anywhere in Scripture that they ever spoke in tongues again. Nowhere! Can you find one?

3. Spreading the Gospel

This miraculous sign of tongues spread His Gospel to all the observant Jews in town from all over the world (Acts 2:5-11). These devout Jews who came to Jerusalem to observe the annual feast heard the Gospel, each in his own native tongue (Acts 2:8). Unquestionably, they had heard about God's goodness. But, for the first time in history, they heard the Gospel in their own language; not in Galilean, the language spoken by the disciples. They heard the message in the language of their native countries which were Rome, Crete, Asia Minor, Egypt and eleven others as named in Acts 2:9-11.

4. God's Confirmation of Inclusion

With the onset of the Church Age, God expanded His outreach to include all who believe in Christ. The Jews had been God's exclusive people. But from the Day of Pentecost forward, anyone who believed in Christ alone, became part of the Church Age. These

¹³E.L. Bynum: *TONGUES Glossolalia & Charismatic Renewal in The Light of The Bible*

new believers included, Samaritans (a mixed race of Jews {Acts 8}), Gentiles (Acts 10), and believing Jews; *all* were now part of the Church Age.

This is part of Peter's defense (Acts 11:1-18) when his fellow Apostles sharply rebuked him for having preached to the Gentiles. He referred them to the time when the household of Cornelius spoke in tongues (Acts 10:44-46). What struck Peter was that the members of the house of Cornelius had the EXACT speaking in tongues experience that he and the other disciples had on the day of Pentecost. God had allowed them to speak in tongues once to help convince doubting Peter that Gentiles were no longer aliens in God's plan!

And so, in his defense we read:

“Therefore if God gave them **the same gift** as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way [of bringing in the Gentiles]?” (Acts 11:17; cf. 15:8 NASB).

The fact is, speaking in tongues was a warning sign to the Jews. Tongues was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophesy to them! That explains why, wherever speaking in tongues occurred in the Scripture, there was at least one Jew to witness this miraculous warning-sign. Some examples are:

- Thousands of Jews were present on the day of the Pentecost. (Acts 2)
- At least six Jews were present at Cornelius' house, when Peter witnessed speaking in tongues. (Acts 10)
- The Apostle Paul, a Jew, was present in Ephesus when the disciples of John the Baptist (also Jews) spoke in tongues (Acts 19:1-7).
- Jews were among the members of the Corinthian church that claimed to have spoken in tongues. (Acts 18:1-8).

Take a moment to prayerfully reflect on what has been presented so far.

We are now poised to examine the most revealing chapter on tongues, in the book of Acts.

Acts Chapter Two: Transition to the Church Age

Acts chapter two records the account of Pentecost, the birthday of the Church.¹⁴ Its contents discuss the crucial information that tells of the end of the Jewish Age and beginning of the Church Age. It's a famous chapter, and frequently quoted. When we talk about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the formation of the Church, the body of Christ, we must turn to this chapter. Untold millions of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have run their fingers through this text. However, it remains the most distorted of all passages in Scripture!

The fathers of the charismatic movement have built their denominations entirely upon the faulty interpretation of Acts chapter two! Consequently, they have led millions of believers away from the Truth and into the bondage of a false theology, making them enemies of the Cross of Christ (Philippians 3:18). What a tragedy!

Let's re-examine this famous chapter, which contains the fulfillment of the Lord's prophecies prior to His ascension.

Many times Jesus announced the coming of the Church during His earthly ministry. He assured His disciples that He would build His Church upon Peter's testimony: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*" He had called these same disciples to serve as the foundation builders of the Church (Ephesians 2:20). All they lacked was the Mentor, the Holy Spirit, who would guide them to build with precision (John 16:13).

The Jews had already been judged as we have noted. Their judgment was certain and the inauguration of the Church was just as certain. The question then was: When shall one door, the Age of the Jews, be closed and the other door, the Age of the Church, be opened? Our Lord ordered His disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they were baptized with power from God. In light of this glorious anticipation, Luke tells us:

¹⁴ The church was formed and began on the day of Pentecost via the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Moses C. Onwubiko: *Signs and Wonders*

Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “You heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:4-5, 8 NASB).

And so we review the opening of Acts chapter two:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they [the disciples] were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise **like a violent rushing wind**, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them **tongues as of fire** distributing themselves and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit was giving them utterance. Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language [tongue] (Acts 2:1-6 NASB).

This passage clarifies, this famous chapter.

Verse 1 - mentions two things: the day of the Pentecost and the disciples’ obedience to the Lord’s command to stay in Jerusalem.

Verse 2 - is also extremely important. “*And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind.*” This was an extraordinary wind that came with a powerful noise to attract the attention of all assembled there.

Verse 6 - confirms this: “And when this sound occurred, the multitude present [all Jews] came together.” God designed this great noise to get their attention; to call them—all Jews “*from every nation under heaven*”—to be silent and bear witness to the judgment of God and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Conditions were perfect. Jews from many nations were in town for the feasts, but not gathered together. God called them together

because He was about to pass His sentence, as prophesied, and retire His favor toward the Jews until the reign of Christ (in the Millennium), when they will, “*Say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’*” (Matthew 23:39 NIV).

Once God had their attention, He passed sentence on the Jews. He used “*tongues as of fire*” to announce judgment and speaking in tongues to warn the assembled, each in his own language, that the prophesied judgment was here. We have already explained these two signs in our study. God, in His fairness and justice on this day of Pentecost, closed the door of the Jewish Age and opened the door to the Church Age!

God will not continue His covenant with the Jews until the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled (Luke 21:24).

The main action of the passage is in verses three through six. The disciples received the promised power of the Holy Spirit, the Mentor, and the gift to speak in various languages. They spoke in clearly understood languages, “*for they were each one hearing them speak in his own language.*”

Fifteen (15) countries are mentioned in this passage! Everyone there witnessed the miraculous work of God! It was the fulfillment of the warning sign! Loud and clear, Isaiah’s prophesy, that God would communicate to the Jews by means of “*a foreign tongue,*” had now come to pass! This had never happened before in history and explains these words of astonishment,

They were amazed and astonished, saying, “Why are not all these who are speaking Galileans [born in Galilee and grew up in Galilee]? And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?” (Acts 2:7-8 NASB).

Why were they so amazed? Imagine if you were traveling and heard your native language in a foreign country. They were hearing men who had never been to their respective countries speak fluently in their own language. There are fifteen countries listed in Acts 2: 9-11. Imagine, not just a few languages—but fifteen languages being spoken all at once. They were totally astounded as the following verses in Luke’s account indicate:

“Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.” And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” (Acts 2:11-12 NASB).

Those hearing had the good sense to question “What does this mean?” Those who were still receptive to God considered the miracle-sign seriously. I propose that these were among those who believed Peter’s message. But the majority mocked, just as Isaiah prophesied:

...but they [the Jews for which the miracle warning sign was intended] would not listen (Isaiah 28:12b NASB).

Read it again! That’s their attitude, exactly as God said it would be. Luke tells us:

But others were mocking and saying, “They are full of sweet wine” (Acts 2:13 NASB).

Apostasy hardened their minds. They could not think rationally anymore. “*They have eyes, but can no longer see; and ears, but can no longer hear*” (Mark 8:10). Indifference to Truth had calloused their souls to the point of not being able to recognize a miraculous work of God, let alone interpret prophesy.

This can happen to anyone who allows Satan to derail their spiritual life through falsehood. Think of it. How could new wine cause someone to speak any language fluently, particularly one he had never learned?

Their comments caused the Apostle Peter to take a stand for the cause of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Luke’s account, Peter gave us his profound Gospel message in verses 14-40. We will examine, not the Gospel message as such, but sections which are pertinent to our subject. In Luke’s account, we read:

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour

out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved' ” (Acts 2:14-21 NIV).

Let's quiet our minds, concentrate, and approach this section with careful attention. Why? Because it is the reference point and stronghold of charismatic theology. On this passage the basis of the charismatic movement stands or collapses.

The root of the error of the charismatic movement is two fold:

- The theology was erroneously derived from the words of the Apostle Peter in the Acts 2:16, which we shall examine in detail.
- Failure to harmonize the context with the whole Bible. Remember, Scripture must harmonize with Scripture!

We do well to examine each portion of His Word under the focus of the filling of the Holy Spirit—comparing Scripture with Scripture, chapter with chapter, verse with verse, and subsequently any verse with the entire Bible. That's Hermeneutics. But charismatics fail here, consequently they build their theology on the shifting sand of partial Truth. Partial Truth is not Truth at all! We will hold the Bible scholars, who misconstrued Peter's words, partially accountable:

“For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day [9 a. m.]; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: ‘and it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams’ ” (Acts 2:15-17 NASB).

The problem passage which begins: “*But this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel...*” has been misinterpreted. The

charismatic movement has decided “*the last days*” means the day of Pentecost. They are on fire about it! They assume Joel’s prophesy is even now being fulfilled. Since the premise is wrong, logic leads them to an erroneous conclusion that this spiritual experience of Joel’s prophesy is available to all today (rather than in the millenium)!

Charismatic ministers quote this passage repeatedly. They package verse 16 with Joel’s prophesy and take them at face value. Normally that would be a correct approach, but what about Isaiah 28:11? That is exactly what the verse says, as translated, but that would contradict both Isaiah’s prophesy (Isaiah 28:11), and the Apostle Paul’s reference to it, that tongues are a warning sign (1 Corinthians 14:22).

Can Scripture contradict itself? Absolutely not! We are responsible to take the time and effort to harmonize and reconcile all the Scriptures.

What is the main problem in this passage? It is the mistranslation of verse 16. Most Bible scholars translate it this way: “*But this is similar to what was spoken of through the prophet Joel.*” Also, many theologians believe that when Peter said,

“This [the coming of the Holy Spirit] is what was spoken through the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16 NASB).

he was simply saying “*this is ‘like’ what was spoken by Joel.*”¹⁵ The omission of the word “*similar*” or “*like*” is the main source of misinterpretation of the entire passage. It is amazing that two tiny missing words could cause so much confusion. Based on Scripture what occurred on the day of Pentecost was “*similar*” or “*like*,” but not the fulfillment of Joel’s prophesy.

Note: The rest of Peter’s quotation of Joel’s prophesy, particularly the last two verses as quoted by Peter, are yet to occur.

“and I will grant wonders in the sky above, and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come [reference to the second advent of Jesus Christ]” (Acts 2:19-20 NASB).

¹⁵ Mal Couch: *An Introduction to Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics* (Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids Michigan 2000, p. 183)

Carefully examine the passage and ask yourself, “Did any of those things mentioned in the above passage take place on the day of Pentecost or even thereafter?” If they didn’t, then it’s a costly error to use the mistranslation of the passage as many of us have it in our Bibles: *“This is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel.”* What Peter was referring to was the manner in which the Holy Spirit was poured out to them. They had never seen anything like the coming of the Holy Spirit before, but they all should have been familiar with Joel’s prophecy. In essence, Peter was telling them, “Look, we are not drunkards.” The Ryrie Study Bible says: “Peter reminded his hearers that, knowing Joel’s prophecy, they should have recognized what they were seeing as a work of the [Holy] Spirit, not of drunkenness.”¹⁶

It is not a matter of searching from Genesis to Revelation in desperation to find a verse that must be taken out of context to defend your belief, but rather it is a matter of realizing, like Apollos did when confronted with his doctrinal error (Acts 18:24-26), that we are not here on our own agenda, but the Lord’s!

We must not compromise, even one bit, the Truths we find by digging into the infallible Word of God. But we confront the doctrinal error of the charismatic movement with a grace toward our brothers and sisters in Christ. Many of these brethren have just been misled in this area; they are devout, sincere believers, passionate for the work of God’s Kingdom.

You ask, “How do you know that they are sincere and passionate for the work of God?” I have witnessed thousands of charismatic ministers around the world confess their error after exposure to the Truth of the Word of life.

Often, believers take it personally when someone suggests they adjust their thinking to align with the Truth of the Bible. But we should take comfort that in the Bible *“we have the mind of Christ.”*

Question: If the structure of your denomination should crumble because it is built on a foundation of falsehood would you make way for a new structure to be erected for The Lord’s glory? The charismatic movement is built on the basis of falsehood. God does not endorse it! Modern day tongues is not helping the Church, but is a major stumbling block.

¹⁶ C.C. Ryrie: *Ryrie Study Bible*, NASB 1977 commentary note, page 1647

My friend, it goes without saying that it's better to arrive at the Truth late, than to never arrive. God is gracious. It is not too late to change. God's grace abounds when we embrace His Truth! What a horror it is to those who turn their back on His Truth, and take others with them (James 3:1)!

If this chapter is yet unclear, please take time to review it, just as the Bereans did with the teachings of the Apostle Paul (Acts 17:11). To what conclusion are we forced after carefully reviewing, and comparing Scripture with Scripture?

Let's meditate on this before we examine Joel's prophesy.

Joel's Prophecy

Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) is quoted in the New Testament as noted. Many, including charismatic theologians, have misinterpreted and misapplied this passage with a terrible impact on the Church.

That is exactly what Satan enjoys. He delights in seeing the wheels of apostasy in motion, speeding down the wrong path. His elite demons work relentlessly to misguide and blind us to the Truth. As a result, these evil workers have stopped many believers in Christ from being productive in their spiritual lives, which ultimately deprives them of their God-given opportunities to impact their world for eternity and to glorify Him. Already, Satan, the deceitful and shrewd one, has bound untold numbers of believers in falsehood. But there is hope:

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32 NIV).

On the day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter, quoted Joel 2:28-32. Considering the rules of hermeneutics, we shall approach Joel's prophesy contextually. While it is not in our scope to do a verse by verse study, it will be of great benefit to consider this passage within its context. Here the prophet tells us,

“Thus you [Israel] will know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and there is no other; And My people will never be put to shame” (Joel 2:27 NASB).

In context, the apostle Peter quoted the verses that followed:

“It will come about **after this** that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind [literally on all flesh], and your sons and daughters [whose sons and daughters? Israel's {context 2:27}] will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions” (Joel 2:28 NASB).

Joel's prophecies were addressed to the Jews, and we must interpret it in view of those addressed.

It says: "*And it will come about after this that I will pour out my Spirit.*" What does the phrase "**after this**" refer to? Obviously "*this*" refers to *something*; and only after that "*something*" occurs will the next phrase "*that I will pour...*" be fulfilled as described as we repeat:

"...that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind [literally on all flesh], and your sons and daughters [whose sons and daughters? Israel's {context 2:27}] will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions" (Joel 2:28 NASB).

Understanding this is very crucial! We know that what this verse is referring to did **not** happen on the day of Pentecost.

We now discuss what "*this*" refers to. Open your Bible and examine it along with me. The word "*this*" has to do with God's action as seen in Joel chapter three. There we read,

"For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat [meaning Yahweh judges]. Then I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; and they have divided up My land" (Joel 3:1-2 NASB).

Israel is a unique people in God's eternal plan! One renowned professor puts it best: "The evidence of God's existence is in one word, Israel!" Right now, Israel is scattered all over the world because of its spiritual failures (Ezekiel 20:23-24). In light of this, Moses in the Old Testament declared:

Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods—gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. Among those nations you will find

no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life. In the morning you will say, “If only it were evening!” and in the evening, “If only it were morning!”—because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see (Deuteronomy 28:64-67 NIV).

Our Lord delivered the last words of judgment on Israel which Matthew recorded. Thus we read again:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate [future suspension as God’s servant]. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say [in the Millennium], ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’ ” (Matthew 23:37-39 NIV).

The phrase: “*You will not see me again until you say...*” means that we have the Jews’ future on record! Here is the record—the Lord, in His unsurpassing grace, will still fulfill His covenant to them at a later date. What a magnificent expression of God’s faithfulness! However, our Lord’s prophesy still came to pass in 70 AD, when the Romans displaced and dispersed the Jews around the known world (Luke 21:24).

Presently the majority of Jews live outside their land. It’s true that many have returned, but their coming back in 1948 has no bearing on prophecy. What prophecy tells us is that the Jews will not be regathered as “Israel” until after the Rapture of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:17) and at the beginning of the seven year Tribulation. Scripture gives no information on the events leading up to the Rapture (Resurrection of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:17), We know the Rapture could occur any time! Are we ready? The prophetic regathering of the Jews will be the Lord’s doing as clearly confirmed in Isaiah:

And He will lift up a standard for the nations, and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth (Isaiah 11:12 NASB).

This is the record of Scripture!

But you ask: “How could these events play out in history?” This brings us back to Joel, who was prophesying about these events. Here is the sequence:

Rapture

- All Church Age believers in Jesus Christ will be removed, in a “twinkling of an eye,” into Heaven for evaluation, accountability and decorations (1 Thessalonians 4:17 cf 2 Corinthians 5:10).
- The Church will never be the object of God’s impending wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Tribulation

- The seven year period after the Rapture (Matthew 24:21).
- Since the Church has been removed, 144,000 special Jewish evangelists (Revelation 7:4) will be called into action by God
- These Jewish believers in Jesus the Messiah will evangelize the world for the last half of the seven years, under the most intensified suffering man has ever known.

Second Advent - (including events immediately preceding)

- At the close of the Tribulation, God will have prepared the unbelieving Jews for the second coming of their Messiah.
- He will cause the believing Jews to re-gather in preparation for the great and awesome Day Of The Lord.
- The King of kings, Lord of lords, our Savior, Jesus Christ, makes His glorious appearance as He returns to defeat the enemies of Israel. The Second Advent will be a real ecstatic experience.

This is what Joel saw, and was referring to when he said, “after this!” It was a prophecy of events still future. Events future to the prophet Joel, events future to the Apostle Peter, and

events still future to us today. The events “*after this*” will not occur until the church has been removed from the earth. Obviously they cannot be in effect today.

The Second Advent

Immediately following His victory over the Antichrist and his false prophet at the end of the Tribulation, the Lord will set up His Millennial Kingdom on earth, according to Revelation 20:2. He will grant the twelve Apostles, and faithful Bible-oriented believers, an awesome privilege to reign with Him (Luke 22:30; Revelation 21:14; 2:26; 3:21). The Jews, will be restored (Ezekiel 36:24).

But how will the unbelieving Jews be re-gathered without faith in their Messiah, the sole requirement for an eternal relationship with the King of kings, Lord of lords? When will they accept their Messiah-King, which is a requirement for their King to be seated on the throne of King David? These questions prepare the way for the coming fulfillment of Joel’s miracles, signs and wonders prophecy.

Miracles, Signs and Wonders

We know that God used a miracle-sign-badge to authenticate the Messiah in His first Incarnation, and the Apostles in the Apostolic Era as being God-sent. We have covered this subject in detail.¹⁷ Peter said of the Lord:

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested [authenticated] to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourself know. (Acts 2:22 NASB).

The author of Hebrews added:

How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After [indicating in the past] it was first spoken through the Lord [that is, the Lord no longer speaks as He spoke when He

¹⁷ Moses C. Onwubiko: *Signs and Wonders*

was with the Apostles], it was confirmed to us [believers] by those [the Apostles] who heard [past tense] (Hebrews 2:3 NASB),

God also testified [past action] to it [their testimony—God authenticated their testimony] by signs, wonders and various miracles (Hebrews 2:4 NIV).

Again, it is apparent that the Apostolic testimony and their authenticating sign-badge of miracles, signs and wonders were a thing of the past.¹⁸

God the Father used miracles to identify Jesus Christ as the Messiah. The events leading up to the Second Advent will be spectacular and glorious by comparison. God will display unprecedented miracles, signs and wonders in the sky prior to the descending King emerging through the roaring cloud. It's going to be amazing!

Jesus Christ Himself foretold this event. In Luke's account, we read:

“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:25-28 NIV).

Here is the heart of Joel's prophesy. It is exactly where the prophetic event to which Peter referred fits perfectly! God will display wonders like no other time in history! This dynamic event has been tailored to convince the Jews, beyond a shadow of doubt, that the One descending from on High is indeed their Messiah! Peter quotes Joel, in agreement with Jesus' statement, recorded in Acts.

“And I will grant wonders in the sky above, and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The

¹⁸ Moses C. Onwubiko: *Signs and Wonders*

sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come [reference to the Second Advent of Jesus Christ]” (Acts 2:19-20 NASB).

God, in the riches of His grace, will cause the Jews surviving the Tribulation to look up and see His work. Simply put, an unparalleled and spectacular wonder will be displayed in the sky above! It’s at this time that all Jews will behold the appearing Messiah with His crucifixion marks visible to their naked eyes. Of this glorious appearance, John confirms:

Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those [the Jews] who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him (Revelation 1:7 NIV).

In our day, the majority of Jews are still in total denial that their Messiah was, and is, Jesus of Nazareth, the very One they crucified.¹⁹ But, at that splendid hour, many will be convinced for the first time, that indeed they participated in condemning the Lamb of God—their Savior and Messiah-King—to the Cross. They shall mourn Him! Zechariah equally prophesies:

“... and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a first-born son. On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land will mourn, each clan by itself, with their wives by themselves: the clan of the house of David and their wives, the clan of the house of Nathan and their wives, the clan of the house of Levi and their wives, the clan of Shimei and their wives, and all the rest of the clans and their wives.” (Zechariah 12:10b-14 NIV).

¹⁹Though the Romans crucified Christ, the Jews were responsible, Acts 2:23

John adds:

Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, **even those who pierced Him**; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen (Revelation 1:7 NASB).

The lamentation, wailing and weeping, will reveal their faith in their Messiah-King. Their weeping will be another way of saying, “We now believe that You are the Messiah, Whom we ignorantly accused and caused to be crucified.” This is the time the Apostle Paul was referring to when he indicated that the remaining Jews will be saved (Romans 11:36). Their salvation will be based on their calling upon the name of the Lord as Joel’s prophecy indicates (Joel 2:32). Faith alone in Christ alone stands the test of time. My friend—please be prepared—Zechariah’s and Joel’s prophesy will each be fulfilled at the same time!

“It will come about *after this* that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind [literally on all flesh]; and your sons and daughters [whose sons and daughters? Israel’s {context 2:27}] will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions” (Joel 2:28 NASB).

“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the [Holy] Spirit of grace and of supplication” (Zechariah 12:10a NASB).

In retrospect to Joel’s prophecy that was quoted by the Apostle Peter—it is clear that the phrase “**after this**” refers to the Lord’s defeat of the Antichrist and his minions. “**After this**” refers to God’s regathering of the Jews—“**after this**” is a reference to God’s display of wonders in the sky. It refers to the revelation of the King of Kings in the clouds on high. Above all it is in reference to the Jewish nation’s acceptance of their Messiah King. It is only after all these events referred to by “**after this**” that the Lord will pour out His Spirit upon the house of David.

Ezekiel also prophesied on the same future event saying:

“I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD” (Ezekiel 39:29 NIV).

Only then will Joel’s prophecy come to pass. Therefore **“after this”** is yet future.

My beloved, do you understand now why we say, based on the in-depth examination of Scripture, that the charismatic movement has been forced to an “off-ramp” on the freeway of God’s Truth.

Peter’s quotation of Joel’s prophecy on the Day of Pentecost cannot, in Truth, support the claims of the charismatic movement. As grace prevails, they too will see the Truth of His Word and lose interest in empty “hallelujahs,” “praise the Lords,” “being filled with the ghost” and “binding the devil.”

Grace has revealed this Truth. My prayer is that you embrace it!

Paul's Dissertation on Tongues

Paul took three entire chapters of his first Corinthian epistle to discuss tongues. He corrected them firmly but with love and good humor which can be seen by his use of sarcasm.

But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you [why come at all] unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching? (1 Corinthians 14:6 NASB).

J. Vernon McGee explains this concept, “Paul is saying, ‘if I don’t make any sense when I come to talk to you, what is my sense in coming?’”²⁰ If you are thinking, “That Paul is a man of genius!”, you are absolutely correct! He was a man of grace; equally one of great ingenuity. Had he married, he would have been the kind of husband who would call his wife “knuckle head” or “silly goose” in a romantic way, without causing any ill feelings.

Here is yet another example where he did exactly that to the Corinthians.

Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature. In the law it is written, “By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people [Greek: *Laos* ‘the Jews’] and even so they [the Jews] will not listen to Me,” says the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:20-21 NASB).

In effect he is saying “Honey, you shouldn’t think like a child.” On the one hand he gave a sharp reprimand, and on the other hand he gave a dozen roses! You see, he could have been confrontational and said: “Corinthians, when will you start growing up?” That would have agitated them, and perhaps caused them to reject the rest of

²⁰ J. Vernon McGee: *Through The Bible*, Vol. 5

his corrective epistle. It takes a brilliant man like the Apostle Paul to know how to win a “knuckle head” over without stirring up trouble.

Paul was not excited, not the least bit thrilled, when he heard about the formation of a charismatic movement at Corinth. Think about this carefully. He could have said: “Praise the Lord, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit Joel spoke about is now overflowing at Corinth!” But he did not.

Why not?

The Corinthian brethren had missed the boat because they didn’t measure their experience against Scripture! They failed to realize that speaking in tongues was not a permanent spiritual gift; and its purpose was not for spiritual edification, but rather was a sign of judgment to the Jews who were also members of the congregation (Acts 18:1-8). That’s why he referred them to Isaiah’s prophesy (Isaiah 28:11) and challenged them to examine the Scriptures closely.

Perhaps you identify with the Corinthian believers, perhaps not. But it is clear, we all must compare Scripture with Scripture. Take a moment and review these Scripture references again if you need to.

With the foundation of the Apostle’s thesis in place, we are now ready to examine his entire work. 1 Corinthians 12 marks the beginning chapter on the Paul’s exposition on tongues. To help us understand this chapter we divide it into four parts:

- Spiritual gifts
- Division of labor
- Baptism of the Holy Spirit
- Superior gifts

Spiritual Gifts

Paul took the first eleven verses to comment on varieties of spiritual gifts, which God the Holy Spirit Sovereignly, bestows on all believers in Christ. Each of us as believers receives at least one gift at the point of salvation. The Apostle Paul pointed out that these spiritual gifts were given for the “common good,” not for self-edification (1 Corinthians 12:7). He listed these gifts, in order of their superiority:

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:28 NASB).

The gift of Apostles is first, with tongues at the bottom of the list. This is very significant, as we shall see later.

Then he used anatomy in his analogy to explain how each gift compliments the whole Church (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

Division Of Labor

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12 NIV).

The Apostle Paul explained to the Corinthians how God, in His infinite wisdom, designed each part of the body to compliment the other. He did so for three reasons:

- To have correct thinking about spiritual gifts, and their intended purpose in the plan of God.
- To point out that spiritual gifts were not for self-edification, but for the whole body of Christ. We are not here for our own glory, but for the Lord's glory (Isaiah 43:7).
- To discourage them from concentrating on just one spiritual gift.

They were all agonizing, and eagerly seeking to speak in tongues, as is seen today among charismatic believers. The Apostle stopped them in their tracks with these striking questions:

[In the church], All are not apostles, are they? [The answer is no!] All are not prophets, are they? [No!] All are not teachers, are they? [No!] All are not workers of miracles, are they? [No!] All do not have the gifts of healings, do they? [No!] All do not speak with tongues, do they? [That's for you to answer]. All do not interpret, do they? [No] (1 Corinthians 12:29 NASB).

This passage makes Paul’s point clear. It restored their thinking, their common sense. It had them examine their behavior—how foolish they had been as a church in seeking the use of tongues. Paul extinguished the flames of the unauthorized charismatic movement in Corinth.

Months later, when he wrote his second epistle to them, there was no mention of tongues. That’s because the issue of tongues was a settled matter, put to rest not only at Corinth but beyond.

NOTE: This was the last time the Apostle Paul ever mentioned tongues in all his epistles!

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Attempting to bring order to the confusion in the Corinthian church, the Apostle called their attention to the primary purpose for the sending of the Holy Spirit—the formation of a new entity, the Church, the body of Christ. This was unique; it had never occurred before!

At salvation, the Holy Spirit places (baptizes) each Church Age believer into the body of Christ. It is not an emotional experience, nor does it require speaking in tongues. Remember, all it takes for salvation is faith alone in Christ alone. The Apostle Paul had already established that not every believer was given the spiritual gift of tongues. On the contrary, he maintained that ALL believers are baptized into the body of Christ at salvation (1 Corinthians 12:7, 13, Galatians 3:27).

You may ask “What about Mark 16:17?” According to some of the most reliable ancient manuscripts, the text ends at Mark 16:8. This is footnoted in many Bible translations we have today. “The doubtful genuineness of vs. 9-20 makes it unwise to build a doctrine or base an experience on them.”²¹

Superior Gifts

Looking ahead to the benefits for the whole Church, Paul implored believers to seek the superior gifts, such as teaching, helps or administration, rather than one of the inferior gifts such as speaking in tongues.

²¹C. C. Ryrie: *Ryrie Study Bible*, NASB, 1978, page 1528

But earnestly desire the greater gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31a NASB).

The Apostle Paul commented on tongues, their purpose, as well as their proper use and function. He used every possible way to discourage the Corinthians from their desire for the gift of tongues. Paul was a Jew among Jews, possessing an extraordinary education in, and mastery of, the Scriptures (Acts 22:3). In 56 AD when he wrote 1 Corinthians, he was acutely aware that tongues was a warning sign and as such had almost served its purpose.

He also knew that the warning sign was for the Jews because they had failed to take the gospel to the world. (Romans 11:11-25). The Jews remained the apple of God's eye, with covenants yet to be fulfilled, but they would be replaced by God as the nation to take forth the saving message of the Gospel.

Again, if speaking in tongues was to be a "second blessing," as some traditions claim, why then did Paul not support the Corinthians, or anyone else, in this experience?

The Bible is totally silent on a "second blessing." The Apostles never spoke of such blessing! It is foreign to Scripture!

Where the Bible is silent, we ought to be as well! It is tempting to add to Scripture. We need to resist that temptation, for it is a spiritual crime carrying maximum divine discipline from God's perfect and eternal Justice.

Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar (Proverbs 30:6 NASB).

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. (Revelation 22:18 NIV).

Be safe! Stay within God's Word!

Cessation of Tongues

Neutrality does not exist.

In our spiritual lives, we are either recipients of God's blessing, or objects of His divine discipline. God cannot bless us when we operate in a system of falsehood. Instead, He makes war against us. He disciplines us because He loves us as His children. (Proverbs 3:12, Hebrews 12:6)

Have you ever stopped and asked yourself: "Why am I involved in the charismatic movement?" and "What was the purpose of speaking in tongues in the past and what is the purpose of speaking in tongues today?" We can never plead with you enough to ask these questions.

There is a purpose behind everything God does! God had a purpose in angelic creation; He had a purpose in the creation of man; He had a purpose in calling Abraham out from Haran; He had a purpose in choosing Israel out from other nations; He had a purpose for the incarnation of His Son, Jesus Christ; He had a purpose for the institution of the Age of the Church; and *He had a purpose for the spiritual gift of tongues*. He has a purpose for this book!

A serious student of God's Word is compelled to ask these thought provoking questions, as they apply today:

- What is the purpose of speaking in tongues?
- Is speaking in tongues evidence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?
- Is speaking in tongues a manifestation of the baptism, or the filling, of the Holy Spirit?
- Is speaking in tongues a measure of one's spiritual growth?
- Was the gift of tongues meant for every believer?
- Why did the Apostle Paul refer to Isaiah 28:11 in his dissertation on tongues in the book of 1 Corinthians?

- Why is speaking in tongues called a **sign** to the unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22)?
- Who are the unbelievers in the context of 1 Corinthians 14:22?
- What are the benefits of speaking in tongues?
- Can the tongues speaker be self-edified?
- Why is the gift of tongues not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament except in Acts and first Corinthians?
- Where is the origin of the modern day tongues movement?
- What role does experience play in the interpretation of God's Word or in our spiritual life?
- If the gift of tongues is meant for our spiritual growth, why did God leave the Church without it for almost 2,000 years?

Careful examination of the Apostle Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians shows that speaking in tongues did not bestow any special spiritual status to the speaker. Tongues helped spread the Gospel to the world but its primary purpose was a warning sign to the Jews, whose spiritual condition was repugnant to the justice of God.

We cannot over-emphasize this point! The focus is on the sign itself, not the one speaking. If this is not clear please re-read Chapters Six and Seven.

The Corinthian church is a perfect example—speaking in tongues has no spiritual benefits to the Church! The Corinthian church claimed to have experienced this spiritual gift, yet was involved in every kind of immorality.

God has a marvelous sense of humor! The entire history of speaking in tongues is not recorded—just as every event in the life of Christ is not recorded. But God recorded the account of this immoral, decayed church which He chose to display the banner of His warning sign. Why? The answer is simple. Tongues was a sign, not a mark of spirituality; only a sign, nothing more!

Question: When a sign or banner is displayed for a program, when the program ends, what happens to the sign? You take the banner or sign down. Don't you?

Paul wrote to inform the Corinthians that when the role of temporary gifts was fulfilled, or concluded in God's plan, the signs—including tongues—would be removed.

Love never fails, but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For we see in a mirror dimly, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known (1 Corinthians 13:8-12 NASB).

Not all the gifts of the Holy Spirit were permanent; many were **temporary**, each tailored to accomplish specific assignments. Those were deactivated, withdrawn, or ceased upon completion of their intended purpose. However God did give permanent gifts that remain which include: pastor, teacher, evangelist, service, encouragement, generosity, hospitality, helps and administration. Now lets review the temporary gifts: Apostle, prophet, knowledge, miracles, signs, and wonders, and tongues.

Temporary Gifts

Apostle
Prophet
Knowledge
Miracles signs wonders
Tongues

Permanent Gifts

Pastor/teacher
Evangelist
Service
Encouragement
Generosity
Hospitality
Helps
Administration

We again ask God the Holy Spirit, the Supreme Communicator, to guide us as we dig into 1 Corinthians 13:8-10: one of the most controversial and misinterpreted in all of Scripture.

Love never fails, but if there are gifts of prophesy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial [or temporary gifts] will be done away (1 Corinthians 13:8-10 NASB).

As the Apostle summarized his teaching on tongues, God the Holy Spirit compelled him to call the gift of tongues a temporary gift, one that was on its way out. This explained why he was not pleased when he heard about the abuse of tongues at Corinth. He simply encouraged them to seek superior gifts. On the other hand, he didn't discourage those with the gift.

At the time of his writing 1 Corinthians in 56 AD, speaking in tongues was still in use. The only church was it ever mentioned in conjunction with tongues was the church at Corinth.

After the Book of Acts, from the time of writing 1 Corinthians to the time the book of Revelation was written—almost 40 years—no author mentions speaking in tongues anywhere in the entire Bible.

Think about this.

Now we are ready to begin our examination of these temporary gifts.

Temporary Gifts

The temporary gifts were given to help the Church get started. Let us keep that in mind as we continue our study. We will focus on three of the temporary gifts since we have already examined two of them—miracles, signs, and wonders, and Apostle—in another book.²²

Gift of Prophecy:

The gift of prophecy (“to proclaim the Truth of God...”)²³ was one of the temporary gifts Paul listed (1 Corinthians 12:28). God the Holy Spirit, in His infinite wisdom, designed this gift as a channel whereby God revealed His purpose to man. To put it best, Scripture is God's completed revelation to all men. The Apostle Peter tells us:

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20-21 NIV).

²² Moses C. Onwubiko: *Signs and Wonders*

²³ H.A. Ironside: *Acts: Ironside Commentaries*, 1998

The Canon of Scripture contains nothing but the Mind of God. God has spoken! God spoke through Moses in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, known as the Torah or the Pentateuch. He continued to speak through other prophets on through Malachi, which was the last book written in the Old Testament.

From Malachi to the time of John the Baptist in the New Testament, there was a period of silence from God. There was no prophet in the land; therefore there was no “*Thus says the Lord,*” for about 400 years.

You read it correctly! *God never spoke to any human being for over 400 years!*

Then John the Baptist came along, followed by the God-Man and His disciples. Henceforth, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate One, became the focal point. God’s message came to us through His Apostles or their associates, John the Apostle being the last message receiver.

With this significant insight, we can now study the book of Hebrews from a new dimension. Let us pay close attention to the grammatical construction of the following passage:

God, after [past tense] He spoke [action past, now ceased] long ago [past tense] to the fathers in the prophets [by means of the prophets] in many portions and in many ways [such as dreams and visions {Numbers 12:6}], in these last days [indicating a change] has spoken to us in [through] His Son [Jesus Christ], whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world (Hebrews 1:1-2 NASB).

Hebrews was written around 70 AD In light of its grammar it was obvious that prophets were no longer receiving messages. God no longer communicated through them. Why not?

He had switched the focus to His Son, Who then chose His Apostles to both receive and transmit God’s Word to any who would hear. This explains why the Apostles and a few of their faithful associates wrote the entire New Testament. On the Island of Patmos the Lord spoke His final words to the Church through John the Apostle. He then closed the New Testament with this sobering warning:

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. (Revelation 22:18 NIV).

There and then, the issue of *“Thus says the Lord,”* was put to rest. The gift of prophecy became a thing of the past. In essence, any time an individual makes a statement such as, *“Thus says the Lord,”* regarding a new concept the individual is in total violation of *“Do not add”*. The only time *“thus says the Lord”* is appropriate is to quote something already spoken within the pages of the Bible (Revelation 22:18).

Violators risk judgment directly from the Justice of God! That’s a warning we all should take seriously!

The Apostle tells us, *“If there are gifts of prophecy they will be done away...when the perfect comes.”* The *“perfect”* of 1 Corinthians 13 refers to the completion of the New Testament Canon of Scripture. The writing of the Bible is now a thing of the past, and so are the gifts relating to it.

God has spoken! **He no longer speaks to anyone directly!**

Today He speaks to us through all of Scripture revealing His plan for us. Just as He was silent for 400 years after prophet Malachi, so He is silent after John the Apostle completed Revelation! That is the Word of God!

Let us consider this.

The controversy over this passage stems from the phrase, *“when that which is perfect comes.”* Many argue this refers to the completion of Scripture, but some theologians sharply disagree. In fact, their position is the cornerstone of the charismatic movement.

When the apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 13, only small parts of the New Testament had been written. Therefore there was need for the gifts of prophecy and knowledge to continue until the Canon of Scripture was completed.

“But when that which is PERFECT is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” Close examination reveals *“perfect”* is in the neuter gender. It references the finished (perfect) or completed

Word of God. If it referred to Christ, it would be in the masculine gender.²⁴

Dr. Merrill F. Unger and Roy L. Laurin, renowned theological scholars, agree with this grammatical construction in their commentary on 1 Corinthians. Besides, the use of neuter gender was by no means an accident! It agrees with the first chapter of Hebrews, previously examined.

Logically, if “*perfect*” is referring to Christ, then tongues, prophecy and revelatory knowledge would have to continue until He comes. But let’s look again, what does Hebrews 1:1-2 say?

God, after [past tense] He spoke [past action, now ceased] long ago [past tense] to the fathers in the prophets [by means of the prophets] in many portions and in many ways [such as dreams and visions {Numbers 12:6}], in these last days [indicating a change] has spoken to us in [through] His Son [Jesus Christ], whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world (Hebrews 1:1-2 NASB).

My friend, there’s no way to get around it; we cannot explain the Truth away. Read the passage again, for it is clear as it can be. Prophecy is a thing long gone.

Isn’t that what it says?

If we take Hebrews literally, which we should, then “*that which is perfect*” has to do with the New Testament Canon of Scripture! (This is what it means to compare Scripture with Scripture). After Hebrews was written, it was about twenty years before John the Apostle wrote his three epistles. Six years later, the Lord summoned John again for His final word to the Church in 96 AD. The final word of Revelation is...just that...final! The New Testament Canon of Scripture, “*the perfect*,” was complete!

The Gift of Knowledge:

Gift of revelatory knowledge was another special, temporary gift. It works hand-in-hand with the gift of prophecy. It is not the kind of knowledge that relates to how we organize and manage our daily affairs or content in an encyclopedia. Rather it was a knowledge that

²⁴E.L. Bynum: *TONGUES Glossolalia & Charismatic Renewal in The Light of The Bible*

enabled the writers of Scripture. It assured the rigorous duty of recording the New Testament Canon accurately. Once the Canon was completed, this gift was no longer necessary and thus was withdrawn as a part of spiritual gifts for the Church.

Now we are ready to look into the main gift that nearly derailed the church at Corinth:

The Gift of Speaking in Tongues:

We must all take great care not to twist God’s Word, take passages or phrases out of context, or ignore Scripture outright!

The gift of tongues was a warning sign (1 Corinthians 14:22) **and it has ceased** (1 Corinthians 13:8).

Some, may say: “Well, the tongue we speak is an unknown tongue, different from a normal language.” On the authority of God’s Word I assert, there’s no such thing as an unknown tongue recorded in all of Scripture! The King James Version, written in 1611 has it in italics indicating that it was not part of the original text.

“*Glossa*” is found 50 times in the New Testament and is translated “tongues” all 50 times.

1. Sixteen times it refers to the tongue as an organ of the body.
2. One time it refers to tongues “as of fire” on the day of the Pentecost.
3. The other 33 places it refers to languages as in Revelation 10:11, “...*before many peoples, and nations, and tongues [languages]*.”²⁵

The Bible is totally silent about any other “tongue” as we have already seen. “Angelic language” is mentioned by the Apostle hypothetically; for in the same passage he said that all languages are meant to be understood (1 Corinthians 14:10). If there were any heavenly language or experience other than that of Pentecost, the Apostle Paul would have addressed the issue. But he didn’t—because there wasn’t and isn’t!

²⁵E.L. Bynum: *TONGUES Glossolalia & Charismatic Renewal in The Light of The Bible*

We have examined clear passages in Hebrews 1:1-2 and Revelation 22:18. These are our known passages, telling us positively the gift of prophecy has come and gone. So in view of *“rightly dividing the Word of Truth,”* we can confidently conclude that the gifts of prophecy and revelatory knowledge are proper gifts given and utilized but in the past!

How should we interpret the obscure passage of 1 Corinthians 13? We do so in light of those clear passages already delineated. Tongues is the only question left to be resolved from the gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10.

Returning to the main purpose of this gift, where the Apostle Paul referenced Isaiah, quoted in 1 Corinthians 14:22, it becomes apparent that this sign was left on display until Jerusalem and the magnificent temple was destroyed in 70 AD. Then, its purpose fulfilled, the warning sign was removed! This explains why the Church fathers, like Chrysostom and Augustine, who lived near the end of the Apostolic Era, wrote that tongues *“used to occur, but now no longer take place,”* and *“that thing [tongues] was done for a sign, and it passed away”*.

The Apostle Paul then cemented his thesis with 1 Corinthians 14. In the first verse, he strongly encouraged the Church to pursue love with all eagerness, for that is its backbone:

If [hypothetical assertion], I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-2 NIV).

The Lord Himself explicitly told His disciples,

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (John 13:34-35 NIV).

“By this [love] all men will know that you are my disciples,” not

because you spoke in tongues, but because you have unconditional love for one another.

Would you agree with me that genuine love is a missing component in today's churches? Believers are full of gossip, maligning, judging and lack of concern for the well being of other believers. It is true that "love conquers all:"

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8 NIV).

Paul urged the Corinthians to pursue love rather than the lesser gift of tongues.

Once again, the Apostle referred these Corinthians to the words of the prophets. 1 Corinthians 14:21 quotes Isaiah 28:11. It was clear they had not been studying the Scriptures as they should. They had been operating on the fuel of emotion.

... "By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people [Greek: *Laos* 'the Jews'] and even so they will not listen to Me," says the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:21 NASB).

What the Apostle did here was simple. He slapped the Corinthians in a nice way. In essence, he told them, "Your major problem is not examining the Scriptures as the Bereans had (Acts 17:11); for if you had been, none of you would be concerned about the gift of speaking in tongues. You would have known the purpose!" What a brilliant apostle! Having put their ignorance to rest he concluded with these words,

Tongues, *then*, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22 NIV).

Tongues "*then*" are a sign. He closed his exposition with the word "then" (or better yet "therefore"). "Then" or "therefore" refers us back to his entire teaching of 1 Corinthians 12:21-14:21. Paul was saying, "In conclusion, here is the whole purpose of the spiritual gift of tongues. Tongues are a warning sign, not for the believing

Jews who have already heeded God's warning by placing their faith alone in Christ alone, but specifically for the unbelieving Jews who have rejected their Messiah (John 1:11). Consequently these Jews are now being removed from power as a result of maximum divine discipline. Corinthians, pay attention now! Even if you have not followed me in my logical teaching on tongues, here, now, is the purpose of tongues: **It's a sign!"**

The Apostle didn't know the exact date the discipline of the Jews would be administered. Nonetheless he knew it was imminent and that when the Lord's prophecy is fulfilled, as per Luke 21, that tongues "will cease" like other temporary gifts.

Our Lord's prophecy came to fruition in 70 AD, thus ending the need for a sign. In view of the command "*to rightly divide the Word of truth,*" God the Holy Spirit guides us to divide the Word with precision. All tongues have ceased. "*Do not tempt the Lord your God*" by attempting to restore what He has ended. Cease and desist from convincing others to indulge in this ceased practice. Violators who ignore the sign which clearly tells us that "tongues have stopped" will receive maximum divine discipline. All tongues from God ceased in 70 AD, the date the Jews were defeated—their time to heed the warning sign had ended.

So according to Scripture you see that speaking in tongues today is not meant for the Church

Sadly, delusion has influenced millions of believers to ignore the written Word of God. Satan continues to lead them to substitute emotion, ecstasy and experience for the inerrant and infallible Word of God. To these believers, experience, not God's Word, is what they follow. What a danger zone to operate in!

We are now ready to see who is behind the modern day tongues movement and why it is spreading like wildfire.

Power of Delusion

God, in His Justice, gives us freedom to choose. Every day we are faced with choices to follow Him. He continues to send us more Truth so we can grow in grace. We need to choose to take these Truths to heart for them to benefit us. As we near the end of our study, God gives us a choice of what to do with this new information.

He leaves us with two options concerning His Word: We can accept His undiminished Truth, or we can reject it. When we choose the latter, the consequences are always disastrous! (Hosea 4:6-10). My heart is bruised that untold numbers of believers have elected to believe their experience instead of what God's Word clearly teaches. They have failed to embrace the Truth. My beloved, rejection of Truth is always costly!

Let us consider the word "delusion." The Greek noun *plano* literally means, "a wandering," whereby those who are led astray roam here and there. It is always used in the New Testament to mean mental straying, wrong opinion, error in morals or religion.²⁶ Wandering "here and there" is a perfect description of those who speak in modern day tongues.

To seek after a tongues experience is one of the most dangerous things a believer can do. Why? Because " '...In the later times some shall depart from the faith [sound teaching], giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.' (1 Timothy 4:1) Satan is a [master] imitator (2 Corinthians 11:13-15; I John 4:1; Isaiah 8:20). He is ready to help people imitate the tongues of the Bible since there are many who are seeking this experience."²⁷

We are then compelled to ask: Why does God allow Satan to deceive the chosen of God? We have covered this subject in our book, *Signs and Wonders*, but now wish to explain it further.

²⁶ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1996, p. 157).

²⁷ E. L. Bynum: *TONGUES Glossolalia & Charismatic Renewal in The Light of The Bible*

When we refuse Truth, we collide with God's Justice. Delusional influence becomes inevitable! Let's go straight to the Old Testament to build our foundation.

King Ahab

King Ahab is a perfect example in cementing our foundation that a delusional spirit is possible among believers. Ahab was influenced to go to war, by his 400 prophets who assured victory over his enemies. These false prophets spoke in such a way that the king was convinced that their prophecy came from the Lord. But it was a deceit. We will see from Scripture that God was behind it all.

Scriptural Truths abound concerning the evil nature of King Ahab. He was the most evil king in Israel's history. Over and over he rejected God's Truth. He consciously and consistently chose lies over Truth. Consequently God gave him his heart's desire. This is true for everyone that rejects His Truth (Romans 1:18, 24). Thus we read the words of Micaiah, the true prophet:

Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven [the elect angels and demons] standing on his right and on his left. And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab king of Israel into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?' One suggested this, and another that. Finally, a [demonic] spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him,' 'By what means?' the LORD asked. 'I will go and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said. 'You will succeed in enticing him,' said the LORD. 'Go and do it.' So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you" (2 Chronicles 18:18-22 NIV).

You read it correctly! It is recorded in 2 Chronicles to stand for all eternity: "*So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you.*"

But who is behind the deluding spirit? If you answer Satan, you are wrong! If you think his demon was responsible, you are wrong again!

The answer is very simple, the Lord is behind it! “The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of these prophets of yours.” The Truth is that the demons are used by God as His agents (Psalm 119:91b; Hebrews 1:14). Satan and his minions are God’s creatures, and though fallen, are at God’s disposal. They can be used by the Lord to fulfill His purpose anywhere, anytime! This Truth is highlighted in Paul’s second epistle to the Corinthians where we read:

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn [demon] in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. (2 Corinthians 12:7 NIV).

A thorn-demon didn’t become a tormentor in the Apostle Paul’s flesh just out of nowhere, rather he was sent as a messenger! God permitted this “*thorn*” to keep Paul from elevating himself and becoming distracted from the enormous task God had for him.

Let’s not take this subject beyond what we ought, but let’s be clear. **The Sovereignty of God allows or restrains the activities of Satan and his minions.** Satan cannot inflict the smallest pain on a believer without the permission of Almighty God (Job 1:8-12; Luke 22:31-32). Likewise, he cannot cause any problem to a believer or to the Church in general, without Divine permission.

God **permits** a spirit of delusion influencing those who reject His Truth. The Apostle Paul clearly taught this. As always we consult and compare Scripture to hear just what God has to say on the subject.

To the Romans, Paul declared:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Therefore **God gave them over in the lust of their hearts** to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. (Romans 1:18, 24 NASB).

And to the Thessalonians, he affirmed:

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of **counterfeit** miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing [who reject the Truth]. They perish because they refused to love the truth [of sound Bible teaching] and so be saved [or be delivered from falsehood and its consequences]. For this reason [rejection of truth] God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 NIV).

Read these lines again. *“For this reason [rejection of Truth] God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.”*

God sends a powerful delusion! The Bible explains the flame of the charismatic movement! Only God’s grace can reverse the course. The issue is not an argument of whether the experience is real, but the SOURCE of the experience. Some claims are verifiable, but what power is behind it? Powerful delusion! Whose power? You decide as we consult the Scriptures for the answer.

Biblical Rules Related to Tongues

For God is not a God of confusion but of peace (1 Corinthians 14:33 NIV).

Are you convinced that charismatic meetings today are *not* powered by the Holy Spirit? In these meetings people shout, yell and speak at random. Often people are thrown to the ground in the name of being “slain in the spirit.” These violations are proof positive that the experience is not Scriptural! Even if tongues were authorized for use today, these actions violate every rule that undergirds legitimate speaking in tongues. Let us notice a few of these principles and rules.

1. Prophecy is more edifying than tongues (1 Corinthians 14:1-6)
2. An uncertain sound from the trumpet, or a tongue that is not understood, only results in confusion (1 Corinthians 14:7-17).
3. Five words that can be understood are better than ten thousand words that can not be understood. (1 Corinthians 14:19).
4. Tongues were meant to be a sign to the Jews, for giving the gospel to the unbeliever, and not for the enjoyment of the believer (1 Corinthians. 1:22).
5. Unintelligible utterings flowing from the mouth only confuses the unlearned and clouds the Truth (1 Corinthians 14:23).
6. No more than three people were to speak in tongues at the same service. Even then only one was authorized to speak at a time (1 Corinthians 14:27). Today tongues speakers consistently ignore both instructions.
7. If there was no one present who could interpret every word to every person in the audience, then there were to be no tongues spoken (1 Corinthians 14:28).
8. There was to be no confusion in the service, “*For God is not the author of confusion...*” (1 Corinthians 14:33). Confusion best describes many modern meetings where worshippers seek the lesser gifts.
9. “*All things (were to) be done decently and in order*” (1 Corinthians 14:40). E.L. Bynum reports of services where things became so extreme that people who spoke in tongues removed their clothes to the point of nakedness while under this power!²⁸

Rejection Of God's Authority

Rejection of God's Word is equal to rejection of His authority. “*A Kingdom that is divided cannot stand.*” (Matt 12:25, Mark 3:24, Luke 11:17) God will not, and does not, divide Himself. God is not the author of confusion. What we see today, makes a compelling case that the charismatic movement is under a strong delusional influence. God's Word must be held in the highest regard—in its entirety. We are not to pick and practice only our favorite passages of the Bible.

²⁸ E. L. Bynum: *TONGUES Glossolalia & Charismatic Renewal in The Light of The Bible*

The Truth of Scripture allows us to see why the charismatic movement is so vibrant and spreading like wildfire. It shows why participants are not interested in what the Bible has to say, and why they have pseudo spiritual light in their movement! Rejection of sound Bible teaching has resulted in a disconnection from God's power.

When some think of the charismatic movement, they think of disorderliness, confusion, disarray and disenchantment with the clear teaching of the Word of God. The authority of ALL of God's Word is not held with equal respect.

How do we know this? Let's consult a passage of the Apostle Paul's instruction and compare our experience with Biblical instruction:

What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. If anyone speaks in a tongue [before 70 AD], two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God [hypothetically]. Two or three prophets should speak [before the completion of the Canon], and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets [uncontrollable spirits exist among the charismatic]. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace (1 Corinthians 14:26-33 NIV).

Think of the church where you worship—does it resemble the Church in 1 Corinthians? Are the rules outlined by Paul being practiced? Let's take a closer look at one of them:

If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God. (1 Corinthians 14:27-28 NIV).

My friend, have you ever watched, or participated, when any of these groups began speaking in tongues? How many people speak? How many speak at the same time? *“Two—or at the most three,”* following the rules in the the Bible? No! I have watched with keen interest, and I can assure you that dozens or scores speak at a time! An observer may ask, *“Have they not read the Scripture?”*

“If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three— should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret” (1 Corinthians 14:27 NIV).

Some have read it, some have not, yet they persist in ignoring its command. But why is the authority of God’s Word ignored? You be the judge!

The experience, real or imagined is a manifestation of the influence of a delusional spirit. That may sound extreme, and you may be right. But this is a matter of life and death!

Why is the authority of God’s Word rejected or ignored? There are three major reasons:

1. Emotions or experiences take precedence over God’s Word. Experience is the measuring stick; some are afraid to examine experience in light of God’s Word.
2. Serious consideration of God’s Word, and its application, may dismantle the dogma of this movement.
3. The rules of 1 Corinthians, if used, would subdue emotion and eventually the movement would die off. The display of entertainment, which attracts the masses, would be quieted!

You may ask, *“How can believers see all this Truth and still cling to this position?”* Rejection of Truth brings a strong delusion which causes blindness in the soul. Scripture tells us:

But the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the [Satan influenced] desires for other things [things other than the truth] enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful (Mark 4:19 NASB).

Let’s make sure we are deluded no longer. There is hope!

Exit To Freedom

When any of us suppresses the Truth, he opens his soul to demons and their delusional influence. Many brethren have been worshipping and serving God in carnality thinking that the Holy Spirit is controlling them. But in essence they are under demonic influence because of their charismatic involvement. The believer is forever secure in God's hand and cannot be demon possessed. (John 10:28, 2 Corinthians 6:16, 1 John 4:4), But he can be influenced by demon thought both directly, and indirectly through others. (Revelation 12:9)

But there is hope! As long as we are living and breathing, God gives us the opportunity to change and grow. He knows that if we earnestly seek His Truth, we will find it.

God is waiting!

“Those [carnal believers] whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent [change your mind]. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him [restoration of fellowship], and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 3:19-22 NIV).

God, in His immeasurable grace, is always ready to welcome back any believer who has been out of God's plan. King Manasseh was a perfect example. He failed God beyond measure, but divine discipline caused him to turn to God. Upon turning, God abundantly pardoned him (2 Chronicles, 33:1-13 cf. Isaiah 1:18-19).

He is anxious to embrace us when we have a change of mind no matter how we have failed in our spiritual life. He is eager for us to come to a point where He can unleash His abundant blessing on us—both in time and in eternity.

Truth is clear. The charismatic movement is not rooted in God's Word; and when we sponsor, endorse or partake of its activities, we risk divine discipline from the Justice of God. Please read this passage one more time:

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of **counterfeit** miracles, signs and wonders, [tongues], and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing [rejectors of truth]. They perish because they refused to love the truth [of sound Bible teaching] and so as to be saved [from the consequences of falsehood]. **For this reason [rejection of Truth] God sends them a powerful delusion** so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned [loss of rewards, not loss of salvation] who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 NIV).

My friend, none of us can afford to wait until it's too late, when we are face-to-face with the Lord. None of us wants to be a loser believer (one who has gained heaven, but lost his eternal rewards), shrunk in shame because of our rejection of His word when presented with the Truth.

Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming (1 John 2:28 NASB).

There is an exit to freedom! Take advantage today! God is waiting for you as He waited for those in the time of Noah to change their mind.

...the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah... (1 Peter 3:20 NIV).

Testimony of God's Goodness.

A few years ago I received a phone call, from a charismatic woman who had been struggling with speaking in tongues. She had read so many books and had even had a series of debates on this subject; yet nothing convinced her that she was in error. A friend told her about me and said, "Give Moses a call, he can explain tongues to you."

Her phone call brought me great joy! No one can truly measure my excitement whenever an opportunity presents itself for the Holy Spirit to shed light on the Truth.

So we made an appointment to meet. When my sister in Christ came, we took time and thoroughly examined the Scripture together. When we were finished, she broke down in tears. She hung her head, and held my hand and quietly whispered, "Please pray for me, for I now realize that I have been in error in my spiritual life for more than 30 years."

When she uttered those words of conviction, she was free from the bondage of falsehood. I was overjoyed. We both prayed thanking God for His grace, for the clarity of His word and the insight it had given her.

God in His absolute fairness, somehow, always brings His Truth to anyone who is starving for His Word. He does not leave the hungry soul lingering indefinitely! Your reading this book is no accident!

What God the Holy Spirit did in making the Truths of Scripture real to her, He can do, right now, for you too.

"... you will know the Truth and the Truth will set you free"
(John 8:32 NIV).

Truth, not experience, is the only thing that can release us from the slavery of falsehood and give us freedom.

What Joy!

After many years, God has answered the prayer of those who have been begging me to put this Truth in writing! My soul is very grateful to God the Holy Spirit, who guided me, to address this

falsehood that has immobilized part of His Beloved Church for over a century. To God alone be the glory! To Him, I forever remain in salute!

Dear Father: It's my heartfelt prayer that the Truth in this book would challenge us and bring about much needed revival in our midst. May You inspire us to return to the Bible. I lift my prayer in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.



God is waiting with open arms for anyone who would exit to freedom. Just as our dear sister came to freedom minutes after she had learned the truth—so can you. God released her in moments from 30 years of darkness—He will gladly do the same for you. Just as our dear Sister prayed you can pray too. God is listening...will you pray with me?

Dear Heavenly Father: Thank you for the opportunity to hear this Bible Truth. As others have asked, I too ask for Your perfect wisdom. I ask that your Word be a lamp unto my feet, illuminating my path as I consider this Truth You have brought me. Please have your Holy Spirit make real to my soul that which You would have me know about this subject. My desire is only to be Your servant and follow You as you lead. Please guide me as I apply this information, as You would have it, to my life. Help me grow. Give me the courage to change if need be. I humbly ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20-21 NASB).

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“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our
Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now
and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

(2 Peter 3:18)

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