

## Tongues

### A Bible Study

*AND THESE SIGNS SHALL FOLLOW THEM THAT BELIEVE; IN MY NAME SHALL THEY CAST OUT DEVILS; THEY SHALL SPEAK WITH NEW TONGUES; MARK 16:17*

Where are the believers today? The purpose of this study is to illuminate the Biblical doctrine of the gift of tongues in such a way as to provide Scriptural answers to these questions:

1. Are parts of the modern charismatic movement a fulfillment of Mark 16?
2. What part will charismatic experiences play in the final events?
3. What does the Bible teach about a private prayer language?

The languages of the earth had their seeds in the dispersion of Noah's grandchildren and great-grandchildren.<sup>1</sup>

Men in the plain of Shinar, hoping to avoid God's judgments while ignoring His command to spread across the earth, erected a tower. Here God intervened by a curse to promote the populating of the earth by confusing human languages.

And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. Gen 11:6-9.

Babylon, in the Hebrew tongue, means "confusion." It draws its meaning from this experience. The scattering of men from Babel left God's few faithful men with an advantage—though they had obediently spread here and there, they shared a language.

This language became the dominate language influence of the Near East.<sup>2</sup>

By the time of Jesus this advantage had degenerated. It could not be assumed that a Hellenized Jew would speak Hebrew. Acts 22:2. Greek was the language of commerce. Not even the New Testament was written in the Hebrew tongue.

The power of the gospel's spread through foreign-speaking missionaries had been a matter of prophecy for many centuries.

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 10:5, 20, 31

<sup>2</sup> This is the author's own conclusion—drawn simply from the similarities of Hebrew and Chaldee. It is possible, of course, that one of the confused tongues became the language of the Chaldeans and then was adopted by Abram's parents. This seems less likely considering the origin of the languages.

Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, 'This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing': yet they would not hear. Is 28:9-12

God's purpose as manifest in the passage is to "teach knowledge" and to "make to understand doctrine." The use of the "other tongue" was to communicate to "this [Jewish] people" words of gospel invitation. These would be refused.

Jesus echoed this prophecy in the closing words of his earthly ministry.

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. Mark 16:17-18.

Acts 1 and 2 follow, in point of time, immediately after Mark 16. There the prophecies of Jesus and Isaiah found their first fulfillment. God spoke to the Jews gathered for Pentecost in the various languages of their dispersion homes.

The first event of tongue speaking was signified prior to its accomplishment by the event of fire-tongues appearing. The apostles spoke the word with power teaching "knowledge" and making men "understand doctrine" as Isaiah had predicted.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?

And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. Acts 2:5-11.

The gift of tongues surfaces twice more in the book of Acts—but never again with the kind of informative narration as is contained in Acts 2. In the first case the gift was evidence that Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost as well as the Apostles had in Acts 2.

The final incidence related to the rebaptism of John's converts after their instruction in Christian doctrine and subsequent reception of the Holy Spirit.

For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Acts 10:46  
And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. Acts 19:6

In both stories the believers spoke in several languages. This is apparent both from the plural of the word "tongue" and from Peter's testimony regarding the story. He witnessed that the gift of Acts 10 was the "like gift as he did unto us" as "at the beginning."

And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? Acts 11:15-17. See Also Acts 15:7-8.

This experience is the very thing we observed in Acts 2. As there are not a plurality of languages in heaven—a place that has never been cursed like Babel—this observation confirms that the languages spoken in Acts 10 and 19 were as human as those used in Acts 2.

With the exception of its treatment in 1 Corinthians, this concludes the Bible's attention to the gift of tongues. The gift is mentioned in neither Romans 12:6-8 nor in Ephesians 4:11-13. These are the two lists of spiritual gifts found outside of the first epistle to the Corinthians.<sup>3</sup>

The Corinthian sermon on gifts begins in chapter 12.

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. 1 Corinthians 12:8-11.

The prominence of the plurality of the tongues is signified by the words "divers kinds" as well as by the "s" on "tongue." Here we find interpretation "of tongues" listed as a separate gift. This is sensible only in the light of Acts.

Men teaching speakers of other languages in a multi-lingual congregation can only speak in one tongue at a time. This is remedied today as it was two-thousand years ago—by translators. Their services allow the message to be received by several language groups simultaneously.

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<sup>3</sup> Gifts found in all three lists are those of prophecy, evangelism, and pastoral-teaching. These are not worded precisely the same in each list.

But if we assume one modern theory to be correct the two gifts cancel each other out and make the Holy Ghost an author of confusion and redundancy. Imagine the situation in an English-only congregation. A man speaks in an unknown tongue. Another interprets. The result is just the same as if one had spoken the Spirit's thought in English. What value has the tongue gift added?

### **The Gift as a Test?**

The gifts were divided as needed among the various members. Few things are as clear as the assumed answer to the rhetorical question, "do all [spiritually gifted persons] speak in tongues"?

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 1 Co 12:27-13:1.

We can not place confidence in men who claim that all that are filled with the Holy Ghost will receive the gift of tongues. Not only is the opposite plainly taught in the verses above, it is witnessed by the history of Acts.

When men are filled with the Spirit in Acts 4:8, the evident effect was that they "spoke the word of God with boldness." Acts 4:31. When the Samaritans were filled in Acts 8:17 the effect was the same. Acts 8:25. When Paul was filled in Acts 9 the result was the same. Acts 9:17-20.

Jesus was the first man baptized by the Holy Spirit. Acts 10:38. We are to walk in his Spirit guided foot-steps. These steps include no allusion to speaking in tongues.

How are men to know that they are filled with the Holy Spirit if the gifts given vary from person to person? Men have not the Spirit who yet exhibit a lack of self-control or who are void of an abiding peace. If the fruit of gentleness or selfless love does not appear, a man may know that he is not filled.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Gal 5:22-25.

But some one might object that Mark 16 teaches otherwise. The signs of tongue speaking will "follow them that believe." Mark 16:17. Mark 16 lists other signs. Men will take up serpents and "if they drink any deadly thing" it will not hurt them. Mark 16:18.

How were the signs of exorcism, tongue-speaking, serpent handling and poison drinking fulfilled in the book of Acts? Paul, near the end of his life, was bitten by a deadly serpent—and was unhurt. Acts 28:5. When Paul encountered a demon-possessed woman he let her alone "many days" before finally casting the demon out of her. Acts 16:18.

Others were freed from demon possession. But the timing of their release was related to the moment the apostles encountered the need—not to the moment the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit. Acts 5:16; 8:17.

Never did godly men tempt God by drinking a deadly thing. As poison was used commonly in Paul's day as a way to secretly murder, the absence of death-by-sickness in the book of Acts is evidence of the fulfillment of this "sign" when needed by an unsuspecting worker.

The sign of tongue speaking appears only in Caesarea and in Ephesus in the book of Acts. Like exorcism, healing, protection from serpents and protection from poison, it appears only where it is needed. Not one of these signs can be made a test without doing violence to the story of the book of Acts.

Even if those that were gifted to speak in various human languages could attain to speaking the language of angels it would be no evidence of their spirituality without an accompanying selflessness.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 1 Co 13:1

Before you conclude that this passage teaches that men speak with angel's languages, consider the next verse, "and have all knowledge so that I can understand all mysteries." Very apparently Paul is proposing extreme unlikelyhoods to underscore his point—that no matter what a man might do without charity, it is nothing. No man understands all knowledge. Then must be suppose that some man speaks angel's languages?

The diversity of human languages will cease at Christ's coming. Prophecy will no longer be needed. The heavenly language, of course, will continue to be used for eternity in the same way that selfless love will continue to rule the hearts of heaven's inhabitants.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. 1Co 13:8

In Acts 2 the gifts of tongues and of apostleship were combined. In that situation the messages spoken through the tongues were as true as Scripture. That these gifts were not always combined is apparent in the fourteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians.

Just as teachers and evangelists and other spiritually gifted men may retain their skills when they lose their consecration, so may those gifted in the use of foreign languages. A view that all tongue-utterances are the Spirit speaking can not be harmonized with the chapter we are about to read. *Paul denies that the Spirit authors the confusion that he works to reduce.*

Interestingly, Paul quotes Isaiah's prophecy in the midst of his sermon.

I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. In the law it is written, *With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me*, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. 1 Co 14:18-22.

Here notice that tongues are plural as a gift, but singular when being used by a particular speaker—Paul. This accords with the human-language theory and does not accord well with the angel-language theory.

An hour's worth of speaking a tongue to an audience where no-one (or perhaps a small handful) understands it does little to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah. Five words spoken intelligently in a setting where they can be understood would be of more value. So thought the Apostle.

The gift of tongues in Acts 2 was used to convince unbelieving Jews. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. The gift of tongue speaking brings faith to those hearers that have it not—if it is used well. Used indiscriminately it backfires.

If tongues convince unbelievers by the sensibility of what is spoken in a language they understand, this makes sense. If tongues convince unbelievers by the super-naturalness of the experience, it does not.

If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. 1 Co 14:23-25.

There are two classes that are fit to hear careless tongue-speaking without being tempted to say "you are crazy." These are believers and educated persons. Unlearned persons do not recognize the languages of the learned. But if the languages spoken are angelic, learned men would have no advantage over others and Paul's statement would be less than cogent.

The gifts were given for a purpose. They were bestowed to unite the body of Christ through spiritual instruction and encouraging thoughts. They were intended to secure the church against false teaching and "cunning craftiness."

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: Eph 4:11-15.

But in Corinth some were using them in ways that served none of these purposes. Paul counseled that if persons were going to speak in an unfamiliar language in church, no more than three should take the opportunity. They should share one at a time with simultaneous interpretation—or keep silent.

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God . . . For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. 1 Co 14:26-28, 33.

## **Speaking to God**

Prayer brings us nearer God. It is the opening of our hearts to Him as to a friend. Why were men gifted with tongue-speaking to refrain from praying in public in the absence of an interpreter? If we answer "because no one will understand his prayer," we agree with the passage (See 1 Co 14:1-2 below).

But the scripture cited above teaches that a man may pray privately in tongues with great propriety. The questions we are seeking to answer are these: Is the private gift of tongues a gift of foreign human languages or the gift of a heavenly language? Does the one praying understand the meaning of the words of his prayer?

If we were forced to answer these questions based on the verses we have read so far, we would have to answer that the private gift is the same as the public gift. Indeed, the verses we have read speak of only one gift of tongues and relegate it to private worship only in the absence of an interpreter.

Notice also that the same logic that would forbid him to pray publicly would forbid him to pray privately in a language that he did not understand. Men are inconsistent who teach that unintelligible prayers are legitimate in the closet. If someone appeals to Romans 8 where the Spirit prays "for us with words that can not be uttered" we will simply note the last four words of the phrase. The Spirit's prayers are not spoken through our lips.

The very meaning of prayer is removed when men are not praying in words that they understand. Men are to reason with God. Our mind—variously called our spirit or our heart—is to be involved in the petition. In public prayer this is also true of the listeners. They are to participate in the prayer but adding their hearts' cry for the petitions of the one praying.

When a man prays in a language that no-one else can understand, himself excepted, he deprives the church of its privilege of saying "amen." With his spiritual gift he speaks—but no one understands him.

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.  
For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God:  
for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. 1 Co  
14:1-2

These mysteries help no one. As gifts were given for the edification of the church, these mysteries are a spiritual flop. The mind of the speaker is involved, but the minds of his listeners are not. Whatever insights he might share in speaking, whatever petitions he might share in praying, the value of his thoughts is lost and he is "unfruitful."

Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. 1 Co 12:12-13.

In the use of his spiritual gift he should think of these things and only speak if he can interpret. In a multilingual church like Corinth situations like this could come up that would occur only rarely in other churches. This throws some light on the fact that not one of the other epistles in the New Testament even alludes to the gift of tongues.

Paul was comfortable singing and praying and preaching in both of the primary languages of the early Christian church—Hebrew and Greek. But some of his auditory were unlearned and could only say "Amen" intelligently if he would speak twice—once in each of these languages. Church members knowing one of these languages and gifted

with an exile language (like those listed in Acts 2) were to keep "edification" in mind in the use of their gift.

What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. 1 Co 12:14-17.

When Paul addressed the issue of tongues it was largely by way of suggesting that the members should rather seek the spiritual gift of prophecy. This gift would be of more value to the church's assemblies.

While tongues were to be used to facilitate communication with the unbelieving crowds, prophecy was to predominate in the meetings of believers.

Men in all ages have congregated in cities along lingual and cultural boundaries. Using New York as a modern parallel, one brother might be gifted to speak to the Laotian community. Another might be gifted to reach speakers of a special dialect from northern India. A third might be granted ability to communicate with Finnish immigrants.

While working the various neighborhoods each brother would find a proper outlet for his endowment. But bring these three missionaries to church and you have the Corinthian problem. The house-church speaks English or Spanish. Finnish and Laotian sermons are not the most helpful.

Languages unknown to other than the speaker can benefit none but him. His own prayer-life edifies him as much as the prayer-life of any believer does. But the church receives no help.

But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? 1 Co 14:3-6

We have almost finished an exhaustive examination of the New Testament's statements about the gift of tongues. We have been contrasting two theories—that the gift consists in men being, as it were, mediums for the Spirit to pray in a heavenly language that even they do not understand, or that the gift is the simple endowment of an ability to speak in a tongue previously unknown to the speaker.

The last verses we will examine answer this question as thoroughly as all the others. Paul argues that speaking in an indiscernible language is speaking "into the air." He refers specifically to the many kinds of languages (i.e. "voices") in the world and to the significance of each of them. He uses the familiar term "barbarian" to refer to both the speaker and the listener in an exchange of unknown tongue use. He pleads that man speaking in tongues use words "easy to be understood."

How could he more strongly establish what had been obvious since the first gift of tongues—that the gift refers to human languages?

And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. 1 Co 14:7-11.

### **Tongues in Revelation and Supernaturalism at the End**

The last eight uses of "tongue" or "tongues" in the Bible are all in Revelation. They depict a battle between good and evil for the people groups of the earth. The gospel is to be preached to "every tongue". Re 14:6; 10:11. The larger portion of the speakers of every tongue will be deceived and will suffer the judgments of the last day. Re 13:7; 16:10; 17:15. But men will be redeemed from every one of the "tongues". Re 5:9.

The apocalyptic battle for the tongues of the earth highlights the purpose of the gift of Acts 2 and Joel 2. The Christian church today speaks thousands of the world's languages and dialects. But there are hundreds yet unspoken. The true manifestation of the gift has been exhibited among God's people in mission activity on numerous occasions as needed.

If anyone has any question whether the word "tongue" refers to a language (and "tongues" to "languages"), the issue is settled by the five remaining passages that use the word. Re 9:11; 16:16; Acts 21:40; 22:2; 26:14.

That concludes an exhaustive survey of the New Testament's use of the words "tongue" and "tongues." But the issue of miraculous events among the churches of the last day carries other surprises.

Miracles were used to testify to the truth in the first century. But in the end of time many that sincerely participate in Christian miracles will find that they are lost and deceived.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say

to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Ma 7:21-23

The spiritual power that has attempted to change God's law will be imitated by the religious powers in the United States. But these imitation powers will help to deceive the whole world. How? By miracles, and by the miracle of prophecy in particular.

And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. Re 13:14.

The miraculous counterfeit of God's true spiritual gifts will exist among those that are denying his law. (Compare Re 12:17; 14:12; Re 13:14; Da 7:25). The American religious power will even be characterized as a "false prophet" for its work in leading men to honor the authority that "changed" the law of God.

For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Re 16:14

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. Re 19:20

In summary, miraculous counterfeits of God's gifts will characterize the deceptions of the last age. When the Bible speaks about spiritual gifts in the end of time, this is the predominate theme. Miracles will deceive. Even God's chosen would be deceived—if it were possible.

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Mt 24:24

For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. Mr 13:22.

For those witnessing these miracles there will come a severe test: To believe the Bible or depend on their experience. The manifest sincerity of those that are disappointed in Matthew 7 characterized those that thought they had enough evidence of their spirituality in the content of their spiritual work and gift.

It is just like Satan to deceive comparatively good people by leading them to trust experience over scripture. 2 Th 2:9.

## In Conclusion

The gift of tongues in the New Testament is the gift of human languages. The "unknown tongue" of 1 Cor 14 is a language known by the speaker and unknown to the listeners. The private prayer is in the language understood by the speaker. Tongues are no test of spirituality. The reasons for these conclusions are these:

1. The word "tongue" is used in the plural. Heaven has only one language. Earth has many.
2. The prophecy of the gift of tongues in Isaiah 28:9-12 was for teaching unbelieving Jews.
3. The fulfillment of Mark 16 and Isaiah 28 in Acts 2 was the gift of human languages.
4. Paul introduces the gift as "diverse kinds of tongues" in his epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor 12:8-11).
5. The gift of tongues is listed with the gift of interpretation. The two gifts together cancel each other out unless language barriers were the issue in the Corinthian church.
6. The Spirit gives different gifts to different men. Not all are gifted with any particular gift. 1 Co 12:27-13:1. But all may judge themselves by their fruits. Gal. 5:22-25.
7. The signs of Mark 16, aside from tongues, follow believers as needed and occasionally. This is true of exorcism, serpent handling, and poison drinking. We can not consistently say it is different of tongues.
8. Men are filled with the Spirit in Acts 4 and Acts 8 and Acts 9. In all these cases the evidence of the filling was bold preaching on the part of the Samaritans, the Apostles, and Paul. The filling of the Spirit for service is evidenced in a variety of ways.
9. Even if a man could attain to speaking the language of the angels, it would be no evidence of his spirituality. Only selfless love gives the needed evidence. 1 Co 13:1
10. Human languages will cease to exist at Christ's coming. The heavenly will not. But "whether there be tongues, they shall cease." 1 Co 13:8.
11. Tongues, given for unbelievers, disgust unbelievers when they can not understand what is being spoken. The *unlearned* and the *unbelieving* are classed together as suffering in this situation. If the *learned* would escape the trouble, the languages must be human.
12. The gifts were given to unite the faith of the church and to preserve members from the "cunning craftiness" of false teachers. Teaching the Word of God in the languages of men does this very thing. But the speaking of unknown tongues does not serve this purpose. So five words that can be easily understood are better than an hour of hearing tongue-speaking in an unfamiliar tongue.
13. Men are to refrain from praying in an unfamiliar tongue when in public. The hearers can not unite their hearts with the petition and say "amen." "two or three" can not agree—and the special blessing of Jesus is

forfeited. But if we think this through, the gift of a tongue that is unfamiliar even to the gifted one would make even private prayer hollow. The praying one could not unite his heart even to his own prayer and say "amen." Gifted persons must understand the language they have been given. 1 Co 14:28; Matt 18:20.

14. The gift of tongue-speaking is relegated to private prayer only in the absence of an interpreter. This demonstrates that there are not two gifts—one public and one private. They are the same gift—human languages.
15. Private prayer when "my spirit" prays is not the same as when God's Holy Spirit prays in Romans 8. Our spirit is our mind. It prays when we understand what we are saying. The Holy Spirit prays for us in words that can not be uttered. Ro 8:16; 1 Co 14:13-14; Ro 8:26.
16. The *mysteries* of 1 Co 14:2 are *mysteries* because of the unthoughtfulness (without "understanding") of the speaker—not because of the power of the Holy Ghost's revelations. It is the mind ("spirit") of the speaker, not the mind of God, that is unfruitful in the passage.
17. Men are edified by their personal prayer life. This is true regardless of whether or not anyone else understands what they are saying. It is not true if they do not understand themselves. 1 Co 14:3-6.
18. Paul explains the issue of tongues by referring to the significance of the various "kinds" of languages "in the world". Yet, he argues, they are only significant when understood. Otherwise the speaker speaks "into the air." 1 Co 14:7-11.
19. Tongue-gifted conversations are described in 1 Co 14:11. A barbarian is someone who does not understand your language. Paul describes *both* the gifted speaker and the ungifted speaker in the conversation as barbarians to each other. This ungifted speaker does not share a common language with the gifted speaker.
20. The end-time battle for all nations and "tongues" in Revelation will involve many miracles. These will include counterfeit gifts of the Spirit manifested in sincere persons. The world will be deceived by means of these false gifts. With this in mind, gifts can not be relied upon as evidence of having the true Spirit. The dividing issue in the end will be the "commandments" of God—and these will be violated by falsely gifted persons. Re 14:6; 10:11; 13:14; Matt 7:21-23; Re 12:17; 14:12; Da 7:25; Re 16:14; 19:20; Matt 24:24; Mr 13:22; 2 Th 2:9.

Eventually someone is going to ask "But what about me? I speak in tongues. I don't understand what I am saying. I am not just making it up. Are you saying I am demon-possessed?"

No. I am saying that your experience is not the Biblical gift of tongues. Persons of non-Christian idolatrous religions also have an experience very much like yours. The Bible does not even accuse false prophets of being demonically possessed. It accuses them of originating their own experience. But we noted from Matthew 7 that many will do this unconsciously.

How this happens we are not told. And while the question is interesting, it is unrelated to what we need to know. We have enough information to know that the modern charismatic movement is not a movement of God's Spirit.

## Appendix A

### Super Short Super Simple Study

The Biblical gift of tongues is very easy to understand. In Acts 2 the apostles spoke in a dozen or more languages.<sup>4</sup> In Acts 10 the family of Cornelius was given the very same gift.<sup>5</sup> In the city of Ephesus a group of men were also given the gift of "tongues."

The word is plural every where because there were "diverse kinds"<sup>6</sup> of languages in the world. The variety of languages came from a curse on Babel.<sup>7</sup>

Jesus had commanded the apostles to take the gospel to the whole world. He gave them the gift of tongues to fulfill their commission—to communicate His teachings to foreign speaking peoples.<sup>8</sup>

Men can know they are filled with the Spirit only by the fruits of the Spirit. The gift of tongues doesn't prove they have it.<sup>9</sup> The Bible takes it for granted that not all spiritual Christians have this gift.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the gift of tongues isn't even listed in two of the three places that list the gifts of the Spirit.<sup>11</sup>

When the gift of tongues does get a lot of attention in one chapter of one of the epistles, it is negative attention.<sup>12</sup> The gift that God had given for reaching the various ethnic groups in the city was being abused. Men were using the languages of these ethnic groups, languages unknown to their fellow church members, when meeting for church.<sup>13</sup>

This created confusion. The church could not understand its own meetings. Men were, as it were, speaking into the air.<sup>14</sup> The apostles wrote that if men were going to speak in the languages they had been given, they should only do it when they or someone else could interpret the message for the part of the audience that did not understand the tongue.

The summary of the chapter is that prophecy is a better gift for speaking in church. Tongues are better than prophecy for working among the unbelieving men that would be convicted to hear unlearned men speaking in their own language.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Acts 2:5-12.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 10:46; 11:15-17.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor 12:10

<sup>7</sup> Gen 11

<sup>8</sup> Mark 16:15-18; See also Matt 28:18-20; Re 14:6-7.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor 13:1

<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor 12:30

<sup>11</sup> Eph 4:11-13; Rom 12:6-8.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Cor 14:26-28, 33.

<sup>13</sup> Acts 2:5-11; 1 Co 14:22-23.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Cor 14:9

<sup>15</sup> Acts 2:6-7; Acts 4:13; 1 Co 14:5-9.

Some confusion has come through a misunderstanding of some of the words in 1 Corinthians 14. The "spirit" of a man is his mind, his will. When "my spirit prayeth"<sup>16</sup> my mind is communicating to God in words that I choose and understand.

Paul explains that personal prayer life is helpful—in whatever language the praying man understands. But public prayer should be conducted in a language that allows the listeners to say "amen." They can unite their hearts in the prayer.<sup>17</sup>

When they don't understand the prayer, it is a "mystery" to them. This is not a way of saying that it is some special spiritual knowledge entrusted to elite believers. Rather, it simply signifies that his prayer is unintelligible. It is a negative—not a positive.<sup>18</sup>

A man with the gift of a foreign language should pray silently in church. The exception would be when an interpreter is available.<sup>19</sup> To show off his gift, by speaking in an unknown tongue, would edify no-one. But he would be edified personally by a non-showy vibrant prayer life.<sup>20</sup>

Satan loves to imitate God's miracles.<sup>21</sup> He loves to imitate the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>22</sup> Has he taken advantage of the backslidden condition of the church by imitating the supernatural gift of tongues with a supernatural gibberish?

Ironically, men have claimed for this gift that it is the language of "angels" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:1. They have not realized which angels were behind the gift. The message of the verse they quote is that even if men were gifted with the heavenly language, it would not prove that they were spiritual.

A simple look at the rest of the paragraph will show that Paul was not teaching that men do speak with angel's languages.<sup>23</sup> In the next chapter he implies, by the use of the word "unlearned" that educated men would be able to understand some of the languages spoken by the gift.<sup>24</sup> This is not true of any heavenly language.

Miracles will be used to deceive the whole world.<sup>25</sup> We should beware of those miracles that imitate Pentecost but that differ from it in fundamental Biblical ways. In places where the members can speak the languages of those they are seeking to save we should not expect the gift to appear at all.

But its counterfeit is prospering there to the detriment of the participants.

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<sup>16</sup> 1 Co 14:14-15

<sup>17</sup> 1 Co 14:16-19; Matt 18:19

<sup>18</sup> 1 Co 14:2-5.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Co 14:28

<sup>20</sup> Matt 6:6; 1 Co 14:17.

<sup>21</sup> Exodus 7:7-12

<sup>22</sup> Matt 7:22-23.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Co 13:2-3

<sup>24</sup> 1 Co 14:16, 23-24.

<sup>25</sup> Rev 13:14; 16:14; 19:20