

Have You Spoken In Tongues?

(A Study of 1 Corinthians 14)

by

William H. Bell, Jr.

Unless otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible. Copyright © 1996 Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN

Copyright 2003
William H. Bell, Jr.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system without the prior written permission of:

ISBN # 0-9632964-1-8

All Things Fulfilled.Com
4535 W. Sahara Ave Ste 204
Las Vegas, NV 89102

Have You Spoken In Tongues?

(A Study of 1 Corinthians Chapter 14)

By William H. Bell, Jr.

Have you spoken in tongues yet? What does it mean to speak in tongues? Why is there so much interest in speaking in tongues? Why do churches practice speaking in tongues? Can you be saved if you have not or do not speak in tongues? Can people really speak in tongues? What is an “unknown” tongue? What does the Bible say about this matter? These and other important questions are considered in the pages which follow.

Building a Framework

The key to understanding any text of scripture is to understand the context in which it is found. In other words, we should seek to discover the purpose of the author. Who was doing the speaking? To whom was he speaking? What was he speaking about? It may also help to understand the time or “chronological” setting of a written document because it may have a bearing on the events.

Paul is the author of 1 Corinthians. He writes to the church at Corinth, (1 Corinthians 1:2). His primary purpose for writing was to address specific concerns about which he was informed by the house of Chloe, (1:10). There were divisions, dissensions and false teachings in the church.

1 Corinthians Chapter 14 is designed to correct misinformation and behaviors associated with miraculous or spiritual gifts. Paul did not want the church to be ignorant about the use of spiritual gifts, (1 Corinthians 12:1; 14:38). The primary focus of this study is the gifts of teaching by inspiration. The setting was the formal worship assembly of the church. Some in the Corinthian church despised others who could not speak in tongues. Division and disruption of the church worship assembly resulted.

Paul wrote to correct these errors in order that the church would conduct itself *decently and in order*. *“Let all things be done decently and in order.”* (1 Corinthians 14:40) Churches desiring to be decent and in order will be guided by the teaching and principles of 1 Corinthians Chapter 14.

Issues Addressed In 1 Corinthians 14

- Do people today really speak in tongues by miraculous inspiration?
- Were those who spoke in tongues greater or to be more highly esteemed?
- Is “speaking in tongues” a sign to believers?
- Is it scriptural for an entire worship assembly to be speaking in tongues?
- Were tongue speakers allowed to speak when no interpreters were present?
- Is tongue speaking needed if the church only speaks one language?

- Could tongue speakers control themselves when under the influence of the Spirit?
- Did women speak in tongues in the common assembly of the church?

What Is The Gift Of Tongues?

We will begin by going all the way back to the period when all men on the earth spoke the same language. *“Now the whole earth had one language and one speech.” (Genesis 11:1, 6)* After construction of the tower of Babel began, God *miraculously* confused the people’s language that they could not understand one another. This resulted in the people scattering over the earth, forming societies among those who spoke the same language. (Genesis 11:7, 8)

Also, it is important to note that when the people were not all speaking the same language, they were:

- confused and unable to understand one another
- divided (scattered) over all the face of the earth
- unable to continue positive progress in building

These are inherent principles of communication break-downs. As long as we cannot understand one another’s language, confusion will result. We divide. Progress ceases. Paul addresses these very issues in 1 Corinthians 14. However, it is important to establish how different languages came about according to the scriptures.

We have seen that men were divided and separated according to language. In order for meaningful association and progress to take place, one had to first bridge the communication gap. In other words, before African, Latin American, Chinese or English speaking people can make progress they must understand one another’s language. There were four ways in which this could be done.

- Learn from birth
- Study formally (in school or home study course)
- Hire an interpreter
- Perform a miracle

When Jesus commanded the apostles to go into the inhabited world to preach the gospel to all the nations, (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15) He knew that centuries before, He had confused their languages. *“Come, let US go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”* The “US” referred to here is Elohim as in Genesis 1:26, *“Let US, make man in Our image. Or, Gen. 3:22, Behold the man is become as one of US. It refers to God.)* *“So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city.” (Genesis 11:7, 8)*

The Lord also knew that the apostles could not speak in the languages of all the nations of the world. Unless something was done about this, Jesus would be commanding the impossible when He gave the great commission to preach the gospel

to all nations in all the world, (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). The gospel was destined to failure from the very outset unless the communication problem was solved. Jesus solved that problem, bridging the communication barrier. He gave the apostles the miraculous power to speak in tongues. (Tongues are *foreign languages* such as Spanish, Latin, German, Arabic, Greek, etc).

The apostles did not require formal study to learn foreign languages. They did not grow up in multilingual homes where multiple foreign languages were spoken. They did not have interpreters. They were all Galileans, a fact which was noted by others who heard them. *“Look are not all these who speak Galileans?” (Acts 2:7)*

In other cases, they did not even have to give thought beforehand what they would say. *“But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.” (Mark 13:11)*

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Who received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost? Some say there were 120, others say only the apostles. How can we know? There are three reasons why the apostles and not the 120 received the Holy Spirit at the beginning on Pentecost.

First, the scriptures teach that Jesus, before His ascension, gave commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen, (Acts 1:2). The law of grammar states that a pronoun must refer back to its antecedent, (noun).

Thus, in the following verses, the pronouns all refer back to the noun or antecedent “apostles.” Consider, “to **whom** he presented Himself, and being seen by **them** (Acts 1:3) And being assembled together with **them**, He *commanded them* not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the Promise of the Father which, He said, **you** have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water, but **you** shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. (v. 4, 5)

These pronouns continue all the way through the text to the ascension. See Acts 1:6-11 and underline all the pronouns such as “they,” “you,” “them,” “their.” They were the Men of Galilee to whom Jesus gave the commission.

Further, Jesus did not command the 120 to go into all the inhabited world and preach the gospel to all nations. This command was only given to the apostles. The eleven apostles do not join the 120 in the upper room until after the ascension, thus after Jesus has given them the commands regarding the Holy Spirit.

In addition, after they return to Jerusalem as Jesus commanded them, all the apostles are named as separate from the women and Mary. And when “they” had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These [apostles] all

continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with His brothers.

If the women, Mary and the brothers of Jesus were already included in the company of the apostles, there would have been no need to add that they were with them after the eleven returned from their journey. Or, their names should have been in the list per verse 13. Again this shows that Jesus had only spoken to the apostles about receiving the Holy Spirit.

Finally, when they choose a successor to Judas, the last verse shows that the apostles are the subject. "And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles. The pronouns which follow in chapter two verses 1- 4 refer back to the antecedent or noun apostles. Therefore it is the twelve apostles upon whom the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4.

The Day of Pentecost

On the day of Pentecost, it is recorded, **they** [apostles, 1:26) were all with one accord in one place...“then there appeared to **them** [apostles] divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of **them**, [the apostles].” “*And **they** were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave **them** utterance. When the Jews from every nation heard about this, they came together confused, “because everyone heard **them** [the apostles] speak in his own language.” (Acts 2:3-8)*

The text clearly states that Peter stood up with the eleven, (v. 14), which according to grade school math is 12 apostles, not 120! Ask any third grader how many are one plus eleven and they will answer 12. If they say 120, then the child may have difficulty passing to the next grade.

The Jews knew that the apostles had not received any formal training or education. They even called them ‘*uneducated and untrained men*’ (Acts 4:13). They knew the apostles were all from Galilee. They could not understand how the apostles were able to fluently speak in foreign languages. The apostles spoke fluently in every language represented on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:9-11 shows this to be the case.

This was the “*gift of tongues*” or the ability to speak in foreign languages promised by Joel the prophet, (Acts 2:16-21; Joel 2:28-32). “*But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions your old men shall dream dreams...*” (vv. 16, 17)

The Promise of Miraculous Gifts to Believers

The gift of speaking in foreign languages was not only promised to the apostles, but also to the believers. “*And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues.*” (Mark 16:17). The Corinthians had an abundance of these gifts. They had surpassed many if not all other churches in the abundance of spiritual gifts. Paul says they were “enriched” in all the

gifts, -in *all utterance* and *all knowledge* and did not fall short in any of the gifts. (1 Corinthians 1:4-7).

The apostles received the gifts directly from God. However believers received the gifts **through the laying on of the apostles hands**. *“Then they laid hands on them and they received, the Holy Spirit. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money.”* (Acts 8:16, 17)

Paul tells Timothy, “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” (2 Tim. 1:6) Earlier Paul had written to Timothy saying, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given you by prophecy with the laying on the hands of the eldership.” (1 Tim. 4:14) Apparently, the elders joined with Paul in laying on of hands, however, they do not convey the gift. The word with (from meta) in the Greek does not convey instrumentality. Paul emphatically states that the gift was imparted by his (my) hands.

He also wrote to the Romans, “For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established.” (Romans 1:11) Thus, the act of imparting spiritual gifts was reserved only to the apostles. The elders merely joined in the act of laying on of hands, much like the church did when commissioning Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:2, 3. It was not to impart a gift, for Paul already had the ability to work miracles and impart gifts. Barnabas was a prophet and teacher. (13:1) Thus the laying on of hands in the general sense by those not designated as an apostle of Jesus Christ was not to impart gifts.

Cornelius and his household (Gentiles) were one exception to this rule. They received the Holy Spirit directly from God without the laying on of hands because God was demonstrating to the Jews that the Gentiles also were worthy of salvation. (Acts 10:45; 11:17) Believers could not transfer gifts to others through the laying on of hands as could the apostles.

The Gifts Became a Source of Pride

Those among the Corinthians who could speak in foreign languages were overcome by pride. They deemed themselves superior to others in the church. Paul addresses this pride and arrogance through instruction and the analogy of the body and its members.

Paul taught them that tongue speakers were not the whole body, but only a member of the body. Even members of the body that appear to be less glorious were very essential to the proper functioning of the body. (See chapter 12:14-31).

Chapter 13 directs the Corinthians to have the proper attitude. Paul also advised them that the spiritual gifts were only temporary. He stated that without love, speaking in foreign languages was nothing more than noise. *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.”* (13:1)

Paul further said that the gifts would cease at Christ's coming (1:7, 8; 13:8-10) a time equated with the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Thus there was only a short time (about 13 years) for those gifts to remain with the church when Paul wrote the Corinthian letters.

Elsewhere Paul taught that the coming of the Lord was *at hand*. He taught that the '*end of the ages*' had arrived in their generation, (Romans 13; 11, 12; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Philippians 4:5; 1 Peter 4:7, 17; 1 John 2:18; Revelation 1:1, 3; 22:6, 10).

The Text of Chapter 14

In view of the above, the church was exhorted to follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially the gift of prophecy. Prophecy was the miraculous gift of teaching by inspiration. Unlike tongues, it was spoken in the common language of all. By this it is meant that if the congregation spoke in Greek, all the teaching would be communicated in Greek. If all spoke English, all the teaching would be done in English.

The reason the gift of prophecy was more desirable by God and more useful to the church than tongue speaking is stated in verses 2 and 3. Those who spoke in foreign languages were not speaking to the assembly for no one could understand them but God.

Speaking to God does not mean to speak in gibberish or in some non communicable language. It meant to speak in a foreign language that others could not understand without the aid of an interpreter.

On the other hand, the person who prophesied could *edify* which means *to build up, exhort or encourage and comfort*. Those who prophesied would be meeting the needs of the brethren, whereas tongue speakers would benefit only a select few.

Paul wished that all could speak with tongues, but he desired even more that they all prophesied. "*For, he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues.*" The only manner in which one who spoke in tongues could equal (not exceed) the one who prophesied was to have an interpreter to speak in the common language of the church. In this manner, the church is assured of receiving understanding and edification through the message. Without this, the person speaking in tongues was of no service or profit to the church. (vv. 5-11)

The Purpose of Gifts

The primary purpose of spiritual gifts was to build up or edify the church, (Ephesians 4:12). Paul makes clear that if one cannot understand what was being said, there can be no edification or comfort. It is like having the confusion of the tower of Babel in the worship assembly. The brethren were to excel at edifying the church, (v. 12, 13).

Our words can bring no fruit to the understanding of others when we do not speak the same language that others speak and understand. Even when seeking to bless others in a foreign language, Paul asks, "*How will he who occupies the place of*

the uninformed say "Amen" at one's giving of thanks, since he does not understand what is being said? "For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified," (vv. 14-19). The focus must center and remain on edification.

Paul says that he would rather speak five words in the common language of the people so that he could be understood, than to speak ten thousand words in a foreign language that only God and himself could understand. *"I thank my God that I speak with tongues [foreign languages] more than you all, yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue."* (vv. 18, 19)

Tongues --A Sign To Unbelievers

"Many modern day churches practice what they term as "tongue speaking" believing this to be an example of the practices of the first century church. Some say that this is a "sign" that those who practice this form of speaking are saved.

Contrary to this belief, many who had exercised gifts in the name of the Lord were **condemned**. *"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast our demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness! (Matthew 7:22)* So, the exercise of spiritual gifts is not within itself a guarantee or proof that one is saved.

The concept of "speaking in tongues" to prove one is saved is "foreign" to the Scriptures. The Gentiles at the household of Cornelius spoke in tongues before they were baptized, hence before they were saved. They were then commanded be baptized in water to be saved. (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36-38; 10:48)

To further demonstrate the fallacy of using "*speaking in tongues*" as a sign of salvation, Paul quotes Isaiah 28:11, 12 to say that tongues were a sign for a rebellious people. These were people who were ripening for an imminent and impending judgment.

God, addressing the drunkards of Ephraim, (10 northern tribes of Israel) spoke of those who 'erred through wine and intoxicating drink. He said that the priests and the prophets had erred through intoxicating drink. Their drunkenness was so bad that they stumbled and vomited over the tables in the temple. For this, God would bring them to judgment. See Isaiah Chapter 28.

The "sign" of this judgment would be a nation (the Assyrian army) invading Israel in 722 BC. The Assyrians were the foreigners of whom the prophecy speaks whose language Israel could not understand. *"For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people."* (Isaiah 28:11). Paul makes an application of this prophecy to the unbelieving Jews of his day who rejected and crucified the Lord Jesus. These Jews like their predecessors were yet rejecting the gospel message and persecuting the church.

Thus, Paul applies this text to those who “refused” to hear the Lord. *“In the law it is written; with men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear Me, says the Lord. Therefore tongues are for a sign, **not to those who believe but to unbelievers**; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.”* (vv. 21, 22)

Contrary to what many modern day beliefs and practices are Paul says:

- Tongues were *not* a sign for believers
- Tongues were a sign for unbelievers

- Prophesying is not for unbelievers
- Prophesying is for believers.

God was using the gift of “speaking in tongues” to persuade the unbelieving covenant people to repent and obey the Lord Jesus Christ. They were unconvinced that failure to do so would mean judgment and punishment. The gift of tongue speaking was a sign that judgment upon the Jews was imminent. Particularly, the invasion of Judea and the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem as prophesied by Christ would soon come, (Luke 21:20-22, 32).

The words *‘this people’* (v. 21) identify the Jews. Gentiles (non-Jews) in fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy would speak to God’s Old Covenant people, the unsaved (Romans 10:1-3) as a sign that their end was near with the appearing of Christ. When Cornelius, a Gentile spoke in tongues to Peter and the other *believing* Jews they were astonished.

God was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 28:11,12 mentioned in 1 Cor. 14: 21, 22, with the household of Cornelius. God used men of other lips (language) through the Gentiles to speak to His people, the Jews. This certainly would have created a stir among the unbelieving Jews! This reaction was evident in the confounding of the multitude on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:6-12.

Tongue speaking was a sign that the destruction of Jerusalem, the coming of Christ and end of the age was near, (Matthew 24:3, Hebrews 9:26, 10:37). On the other hand, prophesying was the gift for believers, because by it, they could be instructed, encouraged, edified and comforted in the word of God during the trials which preceded Jerusalem’s fall, 1 Corinthians 7:21.

Filled With the Spirit

Some conclude that the phrase “filled with the Spirit” demands that spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues are implied. This is false. There are several times where the phrase “filled with the Spirit” occurs and where there is no such mention or implication of “tongue speaking.”

John the baptizer is said to have been filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb. "He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God." (Luke 1:15).

At John's birth he is filled with the Spirit. Will those who believe they can speak in tongues argue that John, the Immerser, spoke in tongues from the womb? He was filled with the Spirit!

John demonstrated being filled with the Spirit by teaching those who heard him to follow Christ. There is nothing said about John ever speaking in tongues. Was he not saved? Not only did John not speak in tongues, he did not perform one single miracle! "Then many came to Him and said, 'John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true.' And many believed on Him there." (John 1:41, 42).

The above passages confirm that John did not work a miracle, but he did lead people to Christ. The scriptures state that this is what John would do being filled with the Holy Spirit. Thus we learn that one can be "filled with the Spirit" without working miracles, and thus lead people to Christ as an example and expression of being filled with the Spirit.

Secondly on this point, Elizabeth, John's mother was filled with the Holy Spirit. Did she speak in tongues? No. Did she go to hell? No. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." She expressed being filled with the Spirit, by speaking a blessing to Mary, the mother of Jesus. (Luke 1:41) Granted this was prophetic, but it was not tongue speaking.

Thirdly, Zacharias, John's father was filled with the Holy Spirit. "Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying Blessed is the Lord God of Israel... (Luke 1:67, 68) Zacharias prophesied, but he did not speak in tongues.

Paul writes to the Ephesians commanding them to avoid drunkenness but be filled with the Spirit. The phrase does not imply that they were to speak in tongues to be saved.

The Bible states that "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." Mark 16:16. The Ephesians were commanded to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus to be saved. Paul then laid hands on them to impart spiritual gifts of prophesying and speaking in tongues. These gifts were for "edification" of the body of Christ, (Ephesians 4:12, 13), not for salvation.

Paul said, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." (1 Cor. 13:1). Remember Jesus told some who prophesied in his name, cast out demons, worked miracles and did many wonderful works, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:22, 23).

When Churches Go Crazy

The confusion which results from people trying to communicate in foreign languages is something that brings a shameful accusation against the church. If an unbeliever entered an assembly where everyone was speaking in foreign languages he would think that the church was filled with a bunch of lunatics. *“Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind”* (v. 23) The marginal reference reads “insane.”

In other words, when a church has a bunch of people all speaking in words the rest of the assembly cannot understand the bible says it is an insane church. By way of contrast, if all prophesied, meaning that everyone taught in the common language understood by all, and then the uninformed person could understand, become convicted of the truth, repent of his sins and worship God confessing the truth of the message.

How Many in A Church Assembly Were Allowed To Speak In Foreign Languages?

Churches that claim to speak in tongues today are often referred to as “charismatic.” In these churches, it is not uncommon to see an entire assembly muttering, mumbling and chanting words (???) which no one can understand. It is this kind of confusion that Paul would certainly have labeled as a church with a serious mental illness.

The scriptures teach that even when speaking under inspiration (as those in the New Testament) all things were to be done for edification. Even though everyone might have had an inspired revelation, everyone was not allowed to speak at the same time. In fact, some were expressly told not to speak at all, but to remain silent.

If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret, (v. 27). Here is the order of a church of Christ. They were not all to speak at once, but one at a time, each in turn. There must be decency and order. Only two were allowed to speak under normal conditions. At the most, it could never be more than three persons who spoke in tongues. Each spoke one at a time.

Interpreter Required

Whenever tongue speaking was present, there had to be an interpreter of the foreign language that was being spoken. *“But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church, and let him speak to himself and to God.”* (vv. 27, 28) Therefore, the use of foreign languages or tongue speaking was prohibited when no interpreter was present to assist the church in understanding the message spoken. If the church could not be edified, the tongue speaker was to “muzzle” his mouth which means to remain silent rather than speak without an interpreter.

Prophesying In Turn

The same principle of order was true for the one who prophesied. *“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another*

who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.” (vv. 29-31)

Again observe that the focus is on the benefit to the understanding and encouragement of the whole church. Only two or three could speak in the assembly. The rest were to remain silent respecting the exercise of the gifts.

Speakers Were Under Control

Often we hear it said by modern day Charismatics that, ‘When the Spirit hits me, I cannot control it.’ They may have overlooked or have never read verse 32. *“And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.”* Or perhaps they have read it and therefore have a total disregard for the words of the Spirit!

Paul says a man who received a message under the inspiration of the Spirit was *not* out of control. Rather he could control himself because the spirits of the prophets were subject to or in submission to the will of the prophets.

This was the only way they could maintain “law and order.” **“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”** (14:33) This text demonstrates that Paul’s message was universal among all the churches. According to the apostle Paul, this was the consistent teaching and practice of *all* New Testament churches of Christ. Note the following summary of this section:

- Tongue speaking in the assembly was limited to two or at the most three people.
- Each person spoke in turn, one by one, not all at once.
- An interpreter was necessary whenever tongue speaking was done.
- If there was no interpreter the person must remain silent and was not permitted to speak in tongues.
- Tongue speakers had full control of their behavior even while under inspiration.
- Tongue speakers *could* withhold from tongue speaking as they were commanded.

Women Speaking Under Inspiration

The gifts of inspired tongue speaking and prophesying were not limited only to men. Joel’s prophecy clearly stated that “your sons **and your daughters** shall prophesy,” and your menservants **and maidservants** would dream dreams. Philip, the evangelist, had four virgin daughters who prophesied under inspiration in fulfillment of Joel’s promise, (Acts 21:9).

However, it is never said that women prophesied in an assembly where men were present. Prophesying and tongue speaking were acts and methods of teaching. And even though women received inspired revelations, **they were not permitted to speak** these revelations in the worship assembly where men were present. **“Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they**

are to be submissive as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.” (v. 34)

Observe that permission to speak is placed opposite to being submissive which means under authority. Thus, speaking in the public assembly as a teacher, placed the woman in a position of authority over the man. This is why Paul says even inspired women were not to speak in the church, rather they were to ask their husbands at home.

Paul writes, *“Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed then Eve.” (1 Timothy 2:11-13)*

The reason stated is not because of the woman’s inferiority. She is not inferior. It is not because of cultural norm or social fad. It is because of the immutable, unchangeable law of God. Paul appeals to Genesis both in First Timothy and in First Corinthians to show that this has always been God’s law. The word of God cannot be broken.

The Commandments of God

Paul was certain that some would not accept his teaching. Today it is sad to see women violate these clear New Testament commands by becoming public preachers in the pulpits in some churches. Paul knew that given the pride, arrogance and ignorance of men and women, some would think themselves both ‘above the law’ and immune to his instructions.

However, he assures them that, *“If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write are the commandments of the Lord.” (v. 37)* In other words, a truly inspired person would recognize and affirm that Paul spoke by inspiration of God. This being true, they would submit to his teachings as God’s divinely inspired commandments.

Some Rejected the Message

“But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.” (v.38). Sometimes words appear to be wasted on the ears of the unlearned and uninformed. For those who do not want to be taught and who are bent on doing their own thing, God allows them to follow their own destructive paths. (Matthew 13:14, 15). The old saying is true, ‘You can lead a horse to the water but you cannot make him drink.’ People cannot be forced to obey God. They must willingly submit themselves to His word.

All Things Decent and In Order

Paul concludes by encouraging the brethren first to prophesy. He exhorts to forbid not to speak in foreign languages. However, all things were to be done decently and in order. Remember the tower of Babel.

When people do not speak the same language, they cannot communicate. They are prone to division, separation, misunderstanding and lack of profitable enterprise (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). The modern day so-called charismatic churches are violating every important principle taught in 1 Corinthians 14. They are major contributors to the division which exists in the churches today. With respect to speaking in tongues, their assemblies are filled with confusion.

The Gifts Have Ceased

The gifts of inspiration which were present in the first century ceased. They no longer are operative in the church today. They were only to last until the coming of Christ in A.D. 70. Jesus promised that he would return before that first century generation passed away, (Matthew 24:30, 34).

The gifts continued until his coming arrived, (1 Corinthians 1:7, 8). This was called the day of redemption, Ephesians 4:30 and corresponds in time with Jerusalem's fall in A.D. 70, Luke 21:28, which occurred within that first century generation, Luke 21:32.

The church is no longer miraculously inspired with tongues, miracles, prophetic teaching or miraculous spiritual gifts. All are acquired through natural or developed through natural means, but when used for spiritual purposes are spiritual in nature. While we do not have these gifts miraculously today, the principles of decent and orderly worship services remain in tact as the unchangeable law of God.

Objections Considered

For the most part, we have anticipated and answered most of the objections during the course of this writing. However, there are a few points that we will address in this section.

Some argue that Peter's statement in Acts 2:38, 39, implies that speaking in tongues is for every one and for all time. "...and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

There are several problems with this interpretation. One, the promise mentioned in verse 39 is inclusive not exclusive. By that we mean that it is inclusive of more than the miraculous gifts, which included more than merely speaking in tongues. Peter spoke of receiving salvation, i.e. the remission of sins as a result of faith in Christ, repentance and baptism. "Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

These two things, the salvation promised in baptism and the gift of the Spirit are included in *the promise*. For the promise is unto you. The promise God made to Abraham included more than salvation only and more than gifts only. This compares to Mark 16:16, 17, which is a parallel statement. "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved. And these signs shall follow them that believe. Notice the chart below:

Mark 16:16, 17	Acts 2:38
He Who Believes And Is Baptized shall be saved	Repent and let everyone of you be baptized for the remission of sins
And these signs [gift of the Holy Spirit] shall follow them that believe	And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit
The Promise	

Now then we learn that the promise is broader in scope than merely the gifts. This is what Paul speaks of in Ephesians. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (1:13, 14)

Secondly, the promise is comprised of two gifts one of which is temporal, and the other is eternal. Now which is temporal? It is certainly not salvation, for Christ has obtained eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:12) in a kingdom which has no end (Luke 1:32, 33) and which can never be destroyed, (Heb. 12:28). However, Peter does quote Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit saying that it would continue through the last days until the great and notable day of the Lord. Therefore, the miraculous element of the promise would cease.

“Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. (1 Cor. 13:8-10). For a more thorough discussion on this point, see our article “When Did Miracles Cease?”, at the link below:

<http://www.rainesroadchurchofchrist.org/word%20documents/WhenDidMiraclesCease.pdf>

Third, in view of the fact that the “miraculous gifts” included in the promise were temporal, the reference to you and your children, and to those who are afar off, “even as many as the Lord our God shall call” refers to the gifts being received by the Jews (after and through the apostles of course and beginning on Pentecost.) Later, at the house of Cornelius, those who were afar off, meaning the Gentiles also received the gifts. (See Ephesians 2:13, 17).

According to Romans 10:13, calling on the name of the Lord is for salvation. “For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” To call on the Lord means to obey the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14; Rom 10:16), by the hearing of faith (Romans 10:17) and baptism. “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16) So, those being called by obedience to the gospel,) are the Jews, their children and those afar off (Gentiles). For a limited period of time, God would impart miraculous gifts through the apostles.

Objection # 2: This objection is based on the word “forever” used in John 14:16: “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever.” :Forever simply means for the entire duration of the time period intended. That time period must always be defined by the context, immediate and remote. Jonah described the time of his experience in the belly of the great fish as “forever.” “I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever.” Yet, according to the text, it was only for three days and three nights, (Jonah 1:17). Jesus confirms this in Matthew 12:40. For Jonah, “forever” was “three days and three nights.”

God also gave the Sabbath day as sign between Him and the children of Israel forever. (Exodus 30:17) However, the Mosaic covenant ended at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, (Hebrews 8:13; Luke 21:22) thus forever, meant for the entire duration of that Old Covenant. The miraculous outpouring of the Spirit was promised for the last days of that covenant, thus for the church, forever meant the period between Pentecost of Acts 2 and A.D. 70.

Finally, forever means without end, when speaking of the New Covenant age. For it is a “world without end (Eph. 3:20, KJV), a kingdom that has no end (Luke 1:32, 33) Thus forever in this context means for the entire duration which has no end.

Objection #3: The third objection is found in the misuse of the word “spirit” in 1 Cor. 14:15. I will pray with the spirit...I will sing with the spirit. The “spirit” in this passage is not the Holy Spirit. It is man’s spirit as demonstrated in 1 Cor. 14:14. “For if I pray in a tongue, *my spirit* prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.” Note that Paul says, if “I” pray, “my spirit” prays. “My spirit” is not the Holy Spirit unless we claim to be God!

Next, when he says that my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful, he speaks of the fact that his praying “in his spirit” does not bless others with an understanding. That’s why what he understands when praying “in the spirit” is not understood, or “fruitful” to others.

So the solution is for the one who prays “in my spirit” to do so only when what he says, “in his spirit” can be understood by those who hears him. “Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? For indeed you give thanks well, but the other is not edified.” (1 Cor. 14:16, 17)

Paul goes on to say, and in specific reference to speaking in tongues, “I thank my God I speak with tongues more than all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. (v. 18, 19) That should forever settle the matter that the purpose of communication in the church is to “communicate” with others to their edification and understanding. Tongue speaking did not serve this purpose when it could not be understood. Thus God said “interpret” or shut up.

Objection #4: Some argue that Jude 20 means to speak in tongues. “But you, beloved, building yourselves upon on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit. First, this text says nothing at all about speaking in tongues. Secondly, it is not a parallel to 1 Cor. 14:15, for we have shown above that Paul speaks of “my spirit” which is the individual’s spirit, not the Holy Spirit. Third, praying in the Holy Spirit means to pray “in God,” “in Christ,” that is by God’s authority or by God’s will. Fourth, if it is miraculous praying of some kind, it still must be governed by the principle of 1 Corinthians 14:14-16, so that others can understand for the prayer to be fruitful, thus it would mitigate against speaking in tongues, i.e. foreign languages without an interpreter.

Objection #5. It is argued that the speaking in an “unknown” tongue is when men speak to God privately in the absence of an interpreter and outside of the formal worship assembly. This view is advanced by Mr. Willie Robinson, the minister of The Word in Life Church, of Memphis, TN. In a radio talk show which airs on WLOK Radio AM 1340, hosted by Ms Emma Divine, Mr. Robinson appeared as guest, Wednesday afternoon, August 6, 2003. On that show he attempted to make a case for speaking in an “unknown” tongue as separate and distinct from speaking in tongues in the worship assembly.

Mr. Robinson expressed his knowledge of the languages in which the Bible, particularly the New Testament was written. He correctly acknowledged that it was Greek. He openly denounced the 1611 version of the King James Bible as 17th century English of which he avowedly does not speak. He (as does this writer) favors the New King James Version.

However, Mr. Robinson argued his case for an “unknown” tongue directly from the 1611 King James Version of the Bible without advising the listeners. What is the significance? Namely, that the word “unknown” appears not one single time in the discussion of speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians 14 where Mr. Robinson attempted to build his case.

In fact, the word “unknown” appears only three times in the New Testament, in the following passages, Acts 17:23; 2 Cor. 6:9; and Gal. 1:22. All occurrences are used by Paul, the author of 1 Corinthians 14 which discusses speaking in tongues. Not once did Paul use the word unknown in reference to tongue speaking. Further, Strong’s Concordance, another common study aid used by Mr. Robinson and this writer has no reference for the word “unknown in 1 Corinthians 14.

The fact of the matter is that the Greek text does not use the term “unknown” in reference to tongue speaking. That wording was supplied by the 1611 translators, not as a translation, but an *interpolation* in the text. The translators of the New King James Version recognized this and correctly omitted it from the text, thus providing the biblical world with a more accurate translation of chapter 14. Mr. Robinson’s inconsistency and lack of scholastic integrity deceived his listeners who are not as skilled as others with the Bible. It was an unfortunate presentation which received full sanction by Ms. Divine.

The concept of an “unknown” tongue is “unknown” to the Bible in the English or Greek text, particularly as a “secret” gift of tongue speaking. Every tongue or language is “unknown” when there is no interpreter present, which is why Paul commanded them to be silent in such cases of public worship and privately to speak only to God. It however was a legitimate language as we have demonstrated in this writing.

Objection# 6. Some reason that Ephesians 19:1-6 proves that speaking in tongues was necessary to be saved. Let us get the text before us for consideration.

(1) “And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples (2) he said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ So they said to him, ‘We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’ (3) And he said to them, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ So they said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ (4) Then Paul said, ‘John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.’ (5) When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (6) And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.”

First, inquired whether they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed? They replied that they had no so much as heard of the Holy Spirit. Learning this, Paul wanted to know “Into what then were they baptized.” They responded, “Into John’s baptism.” Here we get to the root of the problem. They had not heard of the Holy Spirit because they had not heard of the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The disciples at Ephesus were taught by Apollos, an eloquent and fervent proclaimer of God’s word who knew only the baptism of the John. “Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.” (Acts 18:24-25) Thus, the messenger through whom they believed was lacking in knowledge and could not instruct them in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Apparently, Apollos had already made some converts at Ephesus, baptizing them into John’s baptism. Later, Aquilla and Priscilla heard him and took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. Once Apollos learned the truth, he began to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. (vv. 26-28). It is after these events that Paul finds some of Apollos’ earlier converts in Ephesus. This explains why they had not heard of the gospel of Jesus Christ and were baptized into John’s baptism.

Once Paul explained that John’s baptism was temporary, lasting up to the time of the beginning of the preaching of the gospel on Pentecost of Acts 2, the disciples understood, accepted the explanation and submitted themselves to be baptized into

Jesus Christ. “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (v. 5)

The text shows that not until they were baptized, did Paul, an apostle, lay hands on them. Now our question is, were these disciples saved when they were baptized, or were they not saved until they spoke in tongues and prophesied? Remember that Jesus promised the gifts after “believe and be baptized and you shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16). Then He says, “And these signs shall follow them that believe, i.e. are saved.

In the Ephesian epistle, Paul makes clear that the Ephesians were saved prior to the receiving of the Holy Spirit. “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the world of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 1:13, 14 and Acts 19:5, 6	
In Him you trusted, after you heard the gospel of your salvation; in whom also having believed, Eph. 1:13	You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise..., (Eph. 1:14)
When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 19:5)	And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. (Acts 19:6)
Mark 16:16, 17; Acts 2:38 and Acts 8:12, 14-17	
He Who Believes And Is Baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16)	And these signs [gift of the Holy Spirit] shall follow them that believe (Mark 16:17)
Repent and let everyone of you be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38a)	And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38b)
But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. (Acts 8:12)	Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14-17)

Above, the Ephesians believed the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, and afterwards, they received the Holy Spirit. This is the teaching of the epistle and is demonstrated from the example in Acts 19:1-6, from which the teaching is drawn. Further, in each of the cases listed in the chart, belief and baptism, and thus salvation, always preceded the reception of the Spirit except in the case noted earlier in this writing. Thus, we establish the rule, not the one exception involving Cornelius.

Summary

In this study we have shown that in the beginning of history, all men spoke one language. During the building of Babel, God confused their language and thus caused men to be divided on the earth according to their languages. This required a communication bridge through the use of interpreters or knowledge for all the diverse lingual groups to communicate.

When God commissioned the apostles to preach, He was well aware of His former actions in confusing the languages. He therefore miraculously equipped the apostles to speak in every spoken foreign language to enable them to readily bridge the communication barriers. This was God's wisdom and common sense.

We examined the role of tongue speaking in the church. We demonstrated that tongue speaking is not a requirement of salvation. We showed that many who were capable of performing miracles and speaking in tongues were condemned by the Lord. Paul also taught that those without love who could speak in tongues were like the noise of clanging cymbals.

We examined 1 Corinthians 14, showing that tongue speaking means to speak in foreign languages. The manner and conduct of those having the gift was regulated by their own wills showing them capable of controlling themselves while under the influence of the Spirit. They were also to use the gifts in the proper order and were told to be silent if no interpreter was present. Women could not speak use their gifts to teach in a public worship assembly where men were present.

The gifts served a temporary purpose and signified the imminent impending judgment upon the Jews for rejecting Christ. They were a sign in the first century that the Lord's return was near.

A few of the common objections were answered. Among these was that being filled with the Spirit meant to speak in tongues. John did not work miracles proving this concept to be false. We further showed that the word "unknown" is not used as a category of private tongue speaking as opposed to that in public worship. We hope that the reader will rest in the assurance that one's salvation neither in the first century or today required that one speak in tongues to be saved. This is an unfortunate doctrine that enslaves the minds of many creating feelings of guilt, inadequacy through ignorance and/or pride-filled manipulators of the word of God. Our prayer is that your understanding has been enlightened.