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## 1 Corinthians 14.

(2013)

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But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

***Teach it, don't demand it.***

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## 1 Corinthians 14.

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### Topics.

- **SECTION ONE: Tongues and the Corinthian Church.**
- Earnestly desire spiritual gifts and that you may prophesy.
- The one who speaks in a tongue utters mysteries in the Spirit.
- The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues.
- The one who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret.
- Tongues a sign for unbelievers, prophecy a sign for believers.
- **SECTION TWO: Women should Keep Silent in the Churches.**
- Women should keep silent in the churches.
- If there is anything a woman desires to learn, let them ask their husbands.
- **SECTION THREE: All Things Should be Done Decently and in Order.**
- Earnestly desire to prophesy and do not forbid speaking in tongues.

**The Previous Chapter:** in the previous chapter Paul spoke of the depth of love and how it did not matter what a brother or sister in Christ does (i.e., giving away all they have or burning themselves) if it is done without love it counts for nothing clearly showing everyone what God considers the highest priority for every brother and sister in Christ. The chapter ended with Paul saying, we see in a mirror dimly, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away and we will then see face to face until then faith, hope, and love abide, but the greatest of these is love.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

- In certain chapters this letter is written as though Paul is having a conversation with the Corinthians (i.e., he asks them a question and then answers it etc.).
  - Though Paul's letter is directed to the Corinthian church the content applies to any church or believer in the same situations.
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### SECTION ONE ----- Tongues and the Corinthian Church.

**INTRODUCTION:** the Corinthian church was totally out of order especially when they ate the Lord's Supper thus the entire focus of Paul's teaching was to bring some sense of decency, order and a concept of what behavior is acceptable and right when they come together in Christ's name.

**Tongues;** means language or dialect in the context of this chapter it refers to a language that is different from one's own native language. It was a common expression during earlier ages for the introduction to many older Bibles to begin by saying: -

Translated out of the Original Tongues and with the former  
Translations diligently compared and revised by  
His Majesty's special command A.D 1611

Both the Greek and the English words tongues and language can refer either to the organ of speech in our mouths or the language that is spoken thus the reason languages is often referred to as tongues, i.e., it is the organ (the tongue) that is speaking the language.

The following two verses show that the Bible uses the word tongues and language interchangeably showing that the word tongues simply means language.

Luke writes: -

- Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his *own language* (Acts 2:6 KJV)

Then in verse eight Luke states: -

- And we hear every man in our *own tongue*, wherein we were born?

Clearly showing that those listening understood what those speaking in tongues were saying and that it was a proper language.

**NOTICE:** in (Acts 2:5-12) they weren't confounded because they couldn't understand what the people were saying, but because they heard them in their own language which those speaking had never learned and yet they understood what they were saying.

### **Earnestly desire Spiritual Gifts.**

1 Cor. 14:1 ----- <sup>1</sup>Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

In the previous chapter Paul said, "If he has all knowledge but does not have love, he is nothing and if he gives everything he owns away and even surrenders his body to be burned but does it all without love he gains nothing 1 Cor. 13:1-3) and ended the chapter by saying, "Now faith, hope, and love abide, but the greatest of these is love (1 Cor. 13:8-12).

Now he begins this chapter by telling us to pursue love which not only means chase and hunt it down but also to practice it. These statements clearly show us two things, firstly that God places the highest priority on love and secondly that we should pursue its majestic and royal glory and gracefully cloth everything we say and do with loves splendour and abundant grace no-doubt had the Corinthian brothers and sisters done this many of their hurts, difficulties and divisions would have vanished.

### **NOTICE.**

Paul tells the Corinthian brothers and sisters to desire spiritual gifts but to be actively involved in hunting down and chasing after love this is because anything done void of love counts for nothing and gains nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

### **Desire that you May Prophesy.**

Prophets and Prophesying; the word prophet is not limited to those who received future predictions, i.e., Moses was a prophet of God yet much of what he spoke had nothing to do with future predictions thus the word prophet also embraces those who received inspired revelations of God's word regarding the LORD'S instruction, statutes, laws and promises.

In the New Testament the word prophet embraces both those who predicted future events and those who received by the inspiration of God's Spirit revelations of the New Covenant and the Gospel of Christ during the time of Acts since at that time there was no written New Testament Scriptures for people to follow, but now we have what these original prophets spoke by the inspiration of God's Spirit recorded in written form on the pages of the Bible.

Since God's word originated from inspired prophecy and is now recorded in the Bible the word prophet now embraces whoever is teaching the word of God from the Bible since the words they are teaching are prophecy in print. Today we do not need men who prophecy future events since all we need to know regarding Christ's return and the end of this age as we know it is now recorded for us in God's Holy book the Bible.

## **The one who speaks in a Tongue Utters Mysteries in the Spirit.**

1 Cor. 14:2 ----- <sup>2</sup>For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit.

To understand what was in the mind of Paul when he wrote this chapter it helps to know beforehand that in verse ten and elevens he says: -

- There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker (1 Cor. 14:10-11).

The words, "The one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God" means they are speaking or praying to God in their native language, but those in the church speak a different language and therefore do not understand them it is in this sense that they are speaking mysteries in the Spirit. They are referred to as mysteries (meaning obscurities and incomprehensibilities) because though they understand what they are saying no-one else does.

The phrase, "He utters mysteries in the Spirit" simply means that they are speaking from the Spirit and what they are saying is perfectly truthful and right before God since He understands all languages, but it is obscurities and mysteries to everyone else since they have no idea of what is being said.

Corinth was a large Roman city of Greece and of Achaia with commercial shipping harbours well placed for trading and therefore had travellers constantly passing through no-doubt coming with many new messages concerning Christ that they had heard while in other towns, villages and cities. It would be very much like having a church in Europe were some would be speaking a different language and a different dialect. Thus verse two could read: -

- There is no point in a brother or sister speaking amongst the congregation in a foreign language or dialect that is not common to all because no-one will understand what they are saying, nevertheless they can speak to God in their own native language (in the spirit) because God understands all languages, but it will sound like mysteries and obscurities to the congregation since they do not understand what they are saying,"

This is the reason Paul later says: -

- If there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God (v28).

## **The one who Prophesies Speaks to People for their Encouragement.**

1 Cor. 14:3 ----- <sup>3</sup>On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

**Upbuilding:** means moving to a higher place (i.e., mentally, emotionally and spiritually).

**Encouragement:** means to inspire, reassurance and help.

**Consolation:** means to comfort, relief and support.

The word prophesy in this context does not refer to foretelling future events, but to proclaiming the word of God in a style that those who are listening are moved to a higher place mentally, emotionally and spiritually, for this to happen they have to be able to understand what the speaker is saying which means that the word prophesy in this context applies to a language that is common to all and to a speaker that proclaims the word of God in a manner that inspires those they are speaking to.

## **The One who Speaks in a Tongue Builds up Himself.**

1 Cor. 14:4 ----- <sup>4</sup>The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.

The only effect that a person has who speaks in a tongue is that they build themselves up other than this what they are doing is fruitless since no-one else understands what they are saying. This is because they are speaking in their native language which is different to the language of those in the church therefore the one speaking is only edifying themselves whereas the one who prophesies (proclaims the inspired word of God) builds up and edifies the entire church since everyone understands them.

**I want you all to Speak in Tongues, but even more to Prophecy.**

1 Cor. 14:5 -----<sup>5</sup> Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophecy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.

Tongues in this context simply refers to a language it was the common word used for language during the age of the early church, a person's native language was referred to as their mother tongue, even in our modern era the question in some countries is still asked: -

- What is your mother tongue?

Meaning what is your native language. The mother tongue of the Jews was Hebrew, yet many spoke other languages and dialects both of which were called tongues added to this the early church was mixed with Jews and Gentiles from all nations which means there would have been a multitude of languages amongst the congregations of some churches, especially in the city of Corinth since it had many foreign travelers regularly passing through because of its shipping trade.

**The following verses show that tongues is an understandable language: -**

- Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the *Hebrew tongue* Bethesda, having five porches. (John 5:2) (KJV).
- And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their *own language* (Tongue in KJV) Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) (Acts 1:19).
- And how is it that we hear, each of us in his *own native language*? (Tongue in KJV) (Acts 2:8).
- And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great hush, he addressed them in the *Hebrew language* (Tongue in KJV) (Acts 21:40).

Clearly these verses show that during the era of the ancient world the word tongue was commonly used for languages. Paul in these verses is simply saying that the brother or sister who speaks in an unknown language (tongues) is only edifying themselves because they are the only ones who understand what they are saying thus no-one else is edified whereas the one who prophesies meaning speaks the inspired word of God in the language the people understand edifies the entire church. Nevertheless it is OK for every brother and sister to speak in the language of their birth (their mother tongue) in fact Paul encourages them to do so providing they find someone who speaks the language they are using and also the language of the majority in the church so that they can interpret to the entire congregation what the speaker is saying.

**The one who prophesies is Greater than the One who speaks in Tongues.**

The reason Paul says: -

- The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues (v5).

Is because the congregation understands what the one prophesying (i.e., speaking the inspired word of God) is saying and therefore can be inspired, encouraged and comforted, whereas no-one in the congregation understands those speaking in tongues (their native language) and therefore what they are saying remains fruitless.

But if they can find another brother or sister amongst the members of the church who are able to speak both languages then they can be used to interpret what is being said so that the entire church is built up, when this happens neither the one who prophesies or the one who speaks in tongues is the greater since both are now inspiring, encouraging and comforting every brother and sister with the inspired word of God since everyone in the church understands what both speakers are saying.

**Example:** it is very much like a modern day English missionary taking the Good News of the Gospel of Christ to a non-speaking English country, if they do not find someone to interpret the messages they are speaking, no matter how beautifully they present it, their words will be fruitless.

### **If you Utter Speech that is Not Intelligible you will be Speaking into the Air.**

1 Cor. 14:6-9 ----- <sup>6</sup>Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? <sup>7</sup>If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? <sup>8</sup>And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? <sup>9</sup>So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air.

**Revelation:** in this context refers to those who during the book of Acts and prior to the New Testament Scriptures being put in print received insights through the inspiration of God's Spirit regarding the New Covenant and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Knowledge:** in this context refers to all biblical knowledge especially knowledge concerning the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Prophecy:** refers to two aspects of God's word firstly, to foretelling and predicting future events and secondly to proclaiming the inspired word of God.

**Teaching:** in this context refers to any teaching of the Bible, i.e. it could be history, doctrines, behaviour, the Gospel or the return of Christ etc.

### **Musical Instruments the Flute the Harp and Distinct Notes.**

If musical instruments did not give their own distinct sound no one would know what is being played, likewise if those sharing a revelation, a teaching, knowledge or a prophecy in a language that was clearly understood how will anyone know what is being said thus

Paul's words: -

- You will be speaking into the air (v9).

Simply means if a brother or sister speaks amongst a congregation that does not understand them, then what they are proclaiming is totally wasted since no-one is edified by what they are saying, thus the words, they are speaking into the air.

### **Paul, Languages and Travelling.**

Remember Paul did a lot of travelling and would have encountered many churches that spoke a different language not only to himself but also to each other. Many scholars say that since Paul was an enormously well-educated man he probably spoke about five different languages.

This is the reason he is saying that if he goes to the Corinthian church speaking in a language they cannot understand how will it benefit any of them therefore he will share with them in a language that they clearly understand. Paul continues to make this point very clear by telling the Corinthian congregation: -

- If they utter speech that is not intelligible how will anyone know what is being said? (v9).

Of course no-one can know what is being said and it is in this sense that they are said to be, "Speaking into the air."

### **There are Many Different Languages in the World.**

1 Cor. 14:10-12 ----- <sup>10</sup>There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, <sup>11</sup>but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. <sup>12</sup>So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

The words, "There are many different languages in the world (v10) clearly show that when Paul is using the word tongues he has a proper languages in mind and the words, "Every language has meaning," means that all languages contain words that communicate messages, but if someone speaks to a person in a language they do not understand whatever message the speaker is sharing (no matter how good), is wasted since those listening have absolutely no idea of what is being said.

**NOTICE:** Paul tells the Corinthians to strive which carries the idea of going all-out and doing ones utmost to do all they can to excel in building up and edifying their brothers and sisters in the church over and above seeking for spiritual gifts which shows that all gifts and everything we do should be for the common benefit and encouragement of everyone in the church.

### **The One who Speaks in a Tongue should Pray for the Power to Interpret.**

1 Cor. 14:13-17 ----- <sup>13</sup>Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret. <sup>14</sup>For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. <sup>15</sup>What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. <sup>16</sup>Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? <sup>17</sup>For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up.

Paul tells the Corinthians, "If a brother or sister in Christ speaks in a language (tongue) that others do not understand they should pray God would give them the gift to interpret it.

He then uses himself as an example by saying, if he prays in his own native language (Hebrew) and Gentiles and those from other nations that are not Jewish do not understand what he is saying even though he is praying from his spirit and he knows what he is praying in his mind his prayer is going to be unfruitful because no one else understands him and therefore cannot be comforted, blessed or encouraged by what he is praying, but if he prays in their language they will understand what is in his mind and be encouraged and edified.

Naturally when in Jewish towns Paul would no-doubt speak in his native Hebrew language since most in those towns would understand him.

Paul's words: -

- If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful (v14).

Means that though Paul is praying from his heart i.e., (his core inner self) the message that is in his mind is unfruitful because no-one who is listening to him understands what he is saying and the words: -

- I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also (v15).

Mean he will sing and pray from his heart, but rather than speak it or sing it in Hebrew he will use a language those with him understand so that they can say AMEN, which means "I agree, so be it." Paul points out that if no-one understands what he is saying it is impossible for them to agree with him and therefore they cannot say AMEN.

## **Speaking by the Spirit, in the Spirit or with the Spirit.**

The Bible says: -

- All Scripture is breathed out by God (given by inspiration of God in KJV) (2 Timothy 3:16).

This shows that in the mind of New Testament writers any passage of Scripture was seen to have been spoken by God because it came through human men inspired by God's Spirit.

The Scriptures say: -

- David himself said by the *Holy Ghost*.... (Mark 12:36).

And in the following verse it was Moses who spoke the words: -

- Today, if you hear *his voice* (Heb. 3:7-10).

Yet the writer of Hebrews says it was the Holy Spirit speaking.

Paul says: -

- The Sovereign LORD spoke, through the mouth of our father David, your servant and said by *the Holy Spirit*, "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? (Acts 4:25).

These verses shine a spotlight on the truth that what Scripture states is really what God has spoken or said and that this is true irrespective of whether or not the particular passage cited are the words ascribe to God, to the Holy Spirit or are the statements of the human author.

The Holy Spirit influenced the writers of Scripture to put in print the messages that God wished to communicate to man and therefore the phrase, "Speaking in the Spirit" means, speaking God's truth and speaking what God says.

Speaking by the Holy Spirit in simple terms is speaking from God's viewpoint and speaking His plans and promises etc., as opposed to speaking from man's viewpoint and from the flesh, (self, ego and pride) it is speaking God's will contrasted to man's will, it is speaking God's purposes contrasted to man's purposes.

## **Paul thanks God that he Speaks in Tongues more than Everyone.**

1 Cor. 14:18-19 ----- <sup>18</sup>I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. <sup>19</sup>Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Since most scholars accept Paul spoke at least five languages he is in these verses simply stating that he speaks more foreign languages (tongues) than those in the Corinthian church do. Obviously in his travels he would need to speak many different languages to communicate the gospel to those he met. This most likely is the reason he thanks God i.e., because he is able to communicate the Gospel to people other than those who speak in his own native Hebrew language (tongue).

The words: -

- I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Carry the idea that Paul would rather struggle to speak a few words in a language that the congregation understand so that by his voice they will know what is in his mind and be instructed, taught, encouraged and comforted, than fluently speak multitudes of words in a language that those in the church do not understand. Remember; the key to understanding what Paul is saying: -



- There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker (1 Cor. 14:10-11).

### **Do not be Children in your thinking, but in your thinking be Mature.**

1 Cor. 14:20-21 ----- <sup>20</sup>Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. <sup>21</sup>In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord."

The words, "Be infants in evil" means, don't have anything to do with evil, don't even think about it while in contrast "Be mature in your thinking" means think only on what is right, godly and good.

The statement: -

- By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord (v21).

Is cited from the following words of Isaiah: -

- For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the LORD will speak to this people, <sup>12</sup>to whom he has said, "This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose," yet they would not hear (Isaiah 28:11-12).

Those of strange lips and speaking with a foreign tongue refer to the Gentiles speaking the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the nation of Israel in a language other than Hebrew. The Jews did not hear the message (meaning they did not receive it) and instead crucified their Messiah.

The words: -

- This is rest; give rest to the weary (Isa 28:12).

Refers to salvation by grace contrasted to keeping the Levitical ceremonial law (i.e., self-effort). The Gentiles in a foreign language were proclaiming this message of rest (grace) i.e. rest from self-effort to be saved, but the Jews would not hear it, meaning they would not accept it.

### **Prophecy was a Sign to the Jewish people that God was with Them.**

The following words of Moses show that tongues and prophecy was a sign in the Old Testament to the Jewish people that God was with them: -

- Moses told the people the words of the LORD and gathered seventy-men of the elders and placed them around the tent then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders and as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they *prophesied* but did not continue doing it. But the *Spirit rested on Eldad* and Medad. and they *prophesied* and a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are *prophesying*" And Joshua said, "My lord Moses, stop them" but Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that *all the LORD'S people were prophets* that the LORD would *put his Spirit* on them! (Num. 11:24-30).

### **The Supernatural gift of Tongues.**

A careful reading of the New Testament Scriptures in which the supernatural gift of tongues was poured out on Gentiles will show that its primary purpose was to reveal to the Jewish nation that God was now pouring out His Spirit on the Gentile people. Up until this time God was only focused on the nation of Israel, the Jews saw themselves as the holy race with God and the Gentile nations as the unclean race without God thus God by miraculously giving the Gentiles the gift of speaking in a language Jews from all languages and nations understood God testified to the people of Israel that God was now pouring out His Spirit on people outside the

Jewish nation. This witness was magnified since when the Jews did witness such an event the Gentiles were praising and glorifying the God of Israel, not their idols and pagan gods.

### **Tongues are a Sign not for Believers, but for Unbelievers.**

1 Cor. 14:22-28 ----- <sup>22</sup>Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. <sup>23</sup>If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? <sup>24</sup>But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, <sup>25</sup>the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you. <sup>26</sup>What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. <sup>27</sup>If any speak in a tongue let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. <sup>28</sup>But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.

### **Tongues a Sign for Unbelievers, Prophecy a Sign for Believers.**

Paul is saying that those who had the ability to speak in in another language (tongues) was for a sign to unbelievers (primarily the unbelieving Jews because Gentiles also received the same miraculous gift of tongues as they did) while prophecy (speaking the inspired word of God) was a sign for believers because teaching the things of God in the common language of the congregation is of infinitely far more benefit than speaking in all the foreign tongues in the universe which those gathered for instruction, prayer and worship do not understand.

### **A Sign to Jews.**

The following events from the book of Acts show that the miraculous gift of tongues falling on the Gentiles was a sign to the Jews that God was now pouring His Spirit out on the Gentile nations.

### **Acts Two.**

- After the one-hundred and twenty in the upper room had received the gift of tongues they went outside speaking the mighty works of God in the native language (tongues) of the Parthians, Medes, Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, of Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya and Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians and the Jews dwelling in Jerusalem and devout Jews from every nation were astonished because they heard Galileans miraculously speaking in their own native language (tongue) and did not understand how such a thing was possible (Acts 2:5-11)

### **Acts Ten.**

- While Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word and believers from among the circumcised (Jews) were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles since they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God, Peter then asked, "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these Gentiles who have received the Holy Spirit just as we Jews have?" (Acts 10:44-47).

### **Tongues and the Apostles.**

Had the apostles been limited to their own language and gone about proclaiming the gospel of Christ to unbelievers much of their preaching would have been in vain had they not had the gift of tongues (the ability to speak in a foreign language a person had not learned) and therefore it was a great aid to evangelism and converting the unsaved to Christ, thus tongues was a spiritual gift and a sign to unbelievers (v22) intended for the conviction and conversion of those outside the Christian faith so that they might be brought into the Kingdom of God, it was a necessary gift required to spread Christianity and gather the lost into God's Kingdom and therefore was intended to be used to convince unbelievers of the Good News of the Gospel of Christ.

But in an assembly of Christians already converted to the Christian faith, to make use of this gift would be of no advantage to the congregation since they spoke the same language and were already converted to Christ rather they were to be built up, encouraged and comforted by prophesying (i.e., speaking the inspired word of God and worshipping in their own language) which was for the edification of brothers and sisters who already believed since those in the congregation all spoke the same language and therefore to speak in foreign languages (tongues) in Christian assemblies was totally unnecessary since there was no need for it.

### **Tongues and the Reputation of the Church.**

For the sake of the reputation of Christian assemblies among unbelievers Paul is telling the Corinthians to prefer prophesying before speaking with tongues because if their ministers and the congregation gathered for worship and they all spoke or sang in an unintelligible language (tongues) and unbelievers should be present they would conclude them to be mad, to be no better than a parcel of wild fanatics and no-doubt wonder who in their right mind could carry on religious worship in such a manner? Or wonder what sort of religion is it that leaves out sense and understanding? Rather the Christian faith is a sober and reasonable thing in itself, and should not, by the ministers of it be made to look wild or senseless.

Paul is basically saying that those who do anything that has this aspect disgrace the Christian faith and denigrate their own character simply because an unbeliever upon hearing a minister preach or the congregation worshipping and praying in a language that they do not understand makes the Christian faith look ridiculous.

But, on the other hand, if instead of speaking with tongues, those who minister plainly interpret the great truths of the Gospel or the assembly prays and worship in an intelligible and proper language then if an unbeliever is amongst them they may realise that God is present amongst the assembly, the secrets of their heart maybe revealed (because Scripture truth plainly and clearly taught has a wonderful power to awaken and reveal the secrets of the heart) and their conscience touched so that they are convicted by the truth they hear and brought to humble themselves before God confess their guilt and be converted to Christ (v24, 25).

### **Prophecy and the Bible Today and Prophecy.**

Prophecy properly means to predict future events, but it also means to declare the divine will of God; to interpret the purposes of God; or to make known in any way the truth of God, which is designed to influence people. Though its first meaning is to predict or foretell future events the word prophecy is not limited to this meaning since those who did prophecy were messengers of God, and as they commonly proclaimed predictions, instructions, and exhortations in regard to the sins, dangers and duties of people the word prophecy came to denote any who warned, threatened or in any way communicated the will of God.

Today the word prophecy refers to proclaiming the messages of the Bible, since what we have in written form today is the prophetic and inspired word of God.

During the generations of Paul the Scriptures were not neatly put together as we have them in the Canon of the Bible today. Added to this the New Covenant and Gospel message was totally new so the people had to rely on others receiving visions and prophecies.

Today we have all those visions and spoken prophecies recorded in the pages of the Bible, therefore when a person is proclaiming God's word and the words of the Lord and the apostles they are proclaiming the prophetic word of God, thus we do not need any more knowledge beyond what is recorded in the Bible since it has recorded within its pages God's plans, purposes, will and eternal outcome for all mankind.

### **A Hymn, a Lesson, a Revelation, a Tongue or an Interpretation.**

Paul says: -

- When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up (v26).

This shows that his concept of church is not of one man teaching and the only role for all other brothers and sisters is to practically support him in his ministry as elders, administrators and helps etc. This is only one part of Paul's concept of church not the entire whole, we know this because Paul in these verses is telling the Corinthian congregation some of them may have a hymn, others a lesson to share, some a revelation others a tongue (i.e., something they want to share in a foreign language the congregation does not understand, which if they can find a brother or sister amongst them that is able to interpret their foreign language to the common language of the assemble they are also encouraged to share).

The principle is that every brothers and sister is encouraged to share what they have when they are gathered together in Christ's name providing all things are done for the common good of all and decently and in an orderly fashion (i.e., waiting each other's turn in contrast to shouting above others, cutting someone short by rudely interrupting and entering into argument and quarrels etc.).

### **Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues.**

The words: -

- If any speak in a tongue let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret, but if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God (v27-28).

Means if there are people among the congregation who do speak in foreign languages or dialects (tongues) and want to share a message then they should find someone who understands their language and can interpret it into the language of the people gathered in the assembly. If they are able to find an interpreter then it is fine for them to share the message they have, but if they can't it is better that they just remain silent and speak to themselves and to God since only God will understand what they are saying.

### **Tongues a Common Problem.**

What Paul is teaching in this chapter regarding those who speak a foreign language different to that of the congregation would have been a common problem in some churches especially the Corinth church since it was a large Roman City in Greece and a primary trade route and commercial centre in the ancient world which meant it would have had a vast variety of people with different languages and dialects constantly passing through.

### **Tongues and Today.**

A modern day example could be likened to having a church in Europe where the dominant language of the congregation is English, but it has others regularly visiting who can only speak the French language. If Paul was alive today his advice to the French speaking person in this situation would be to find a person that is able to speak both English and French so that they could then interpret what the French speaking person was saying to the English speaking congregation so that the entire congregation could be taught, encouraged and comforted by what the French speaking person was saying.

If the French speaking person can't find someone amongst the congregation to translate their words they are then better to speak (in their own language) silently to themselves and to God (v28) since they and God are the only ones who will understand what they are saying.

### **Let two or three Prophets Speak, and let the Others Weigh what is Said.**

1 Cor. 14:29-33 ----- <sup>29</sup>Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. <sup>30</sup>If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. <sup>31</sup>For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, <sup>32</sup>and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. <sup>33</sup>For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints,

Before the New Testament was in print as we have it recorded in the Bible today, there was no written New Covenant nor was the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in print and therefore those living at the time of the Corinthian church had to rely on others to hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ since they couldn't go to a book store and buy a Bible. During this era the understanding of the New Covenant and the Gospel of Christ came to the mind of the apostles and certain others by the Spirit of God and they then spoke the knowledge they had received by revelation of the Spirit of God to the brothers and sisters in the assembly.

### **Questioning and Examining.**

If there were a number of people among the congregation who say they have a revelation to share, the congregation was to give them the priority to speak, but only one at a time so that things would be done in orderly fashion to prevent confusion so that all can learn and be encouraged. Then whatever was spoken by those claiming to be giving a message from God must be judged by the congregation for the correctness of what they had said. Paul did not expect brothers and sisters to blindly accept what had been spoken simply because a person states they have a revelation from God rather he is encouraging them to question and examining what had been spoken (29-31).

### **The Spirits of Prophets are Subject to Prophets.**

The words: -

- The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets (v32).

Means no-one who is moved by the Spirit of God is thrown into a trance like state that totally takes over control of their body, their mind, their emotions and their actions.

This is what Paul was referring to when he made the statement: -

- God is not a God of confusion but of peace (v33).

Meaning no-matter how strong the inspiration of the Spirit of God inspires a person they will always remain in total control of their will, mind, emotions and actions and therefore are able to do things in order contrasted to entering into a trance like state where a person has no control over what they are doing.

**Confusion in the Church:** it appears a select few in the Corinthian church felt that what they had to say was so inspired that they were speaking in an emotional frenzy above each other and interrupting others who were already speaking and therefore creating much confusion amongst the congregation. Paul is telling them that getting into an emotional frenzy is not spiritual since God is not the author of confusion, rather being spiritual is doing things in order and while in full control of one's own spirit contrasted to immediately standing up and speaking when a person feels they are being inspired by the Spirit of God.

Paul is trying to bring some sense of order into the Corinthian church because they are totally out of order in so many ways i.e., they were full of boasting, they exalted their leaders, tolerated a man sleeping with his mother and while eating and drinking they not only got drunk, but did not share what they had with the poor, their assembly was full of confusion and disorder and based on the following verses it appears dominant, overbearing, assertive and forceful women were shouting and calling out from amongst the congregation.

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## **SECTION TWO ----- Women should Keep Silent in the Churches.**

1 Cor. 14:34-36 ----- <sup>34</sup>the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak but should be in submission (Obedience in KJV) as the Law also says. <sup>35</sup>If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. <sup>36</sup>Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?

**Silent:** (sigao) from Strong's Concordance means to keep silent, to keep secret and by extension it carries the idea of maintaining peace.

Paul's words: -

- Women should keep silent in the churches (v34).

In view of other portions of the Scriptures is a difficult passage especially since we know that during the Old Testament era Huldah was a prophetess (1Kings 22:14) and Deborah was both a judge and a prophetess (Judges 4:4), Joel predicted that in the Christian dispensation the sons and daughters should prophesy (Joe 2:28), and Peter declared that this was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4). In addition, the daughters of Philip prophesied (Acts 21:9) and Paul gives directions concerning women prophesying in (1Co 11:5).

Certainly it was a Jewish ordinance that women were not permitted to teach in the Temple or the synagogues nor were they to ask questions.

The Jewish rabbis taught that: -

- A woman should know nothing except those things that concern the matters of her work.

And that: -

- It was better for the words of the law to be burned, rather than that they should be delivered to women.

This was much of the Jewish mindset until the time of the Gospel when according to the prediction of Joel, the Spirit of God was to be poured out on the women as well as the men, that they might prophesy, and it is evident in the New Testament writings that they did prophesy so how is Paul's statement: -

- Women should keep silent in the churches.

To be reconciled to the prophecy of Joel predicting woman filled with the Spirit of God would prophesying (proclaim the inspired word of God) in the New Testament.

If Paul's statement is placed within the context of Paul's entire letter i.e., trying to correct behaviour of brothers and sisters in the Corinthian church which was totally out of order and full of divisions, confusions sexual immorality, selfishness and pride and within the context of brothers and sisters in the congregation not only speaking over-top of each other, but arguing and quarrelling when they came together in Christ's name causing great confusion amongst the congregation.

It can then be seen that Paul's words are most likely meant to be understood in another sense since it is clearly evident that the context in which his statement is made is not in a well ordered church environment, but one that is totally out of order.

Thus Paul's words: -

- Women should keep silent in the churches.

Is most likely referring to dominant woman who were asking questions out of order and disrupting the congregation.

It was permitted for any man to ask questions, to object, altercate, attempt to refute, etc., in the synagogue; but this liberty was not allowed to any woman. Paul confirms this in reference also to the Christian church; he orders them to keep silence; and, if they wished to learn anything, let them inquire of their husbands at home; because it was perfectly impolite, unseemly and inappropriate for women to be contending with men in public assemblies, on points of doctrine and cases of conscience, etc. But this by no means intimated that when a woman received any particular influence from God to enable her to teach, that she was not to obey that influence; on the contrary, she was to obey it.

All that Paul is opposing here is a woman questioning, finding fault and disputing, etc., amongst the congregation (as Jewish men were permitted to do in their synagogues) and any attempts to usurp authority over the man, by setting up their judgment in opposition to them. It appears that it was special acts of disobedience and arrogance, etc., that Paul was referring to when he stated: -

- Women should keep silent in the churches (v34).

And not of woman who in proper decency serves the Lord in faithfulness, humility and in subjection to the congregation as we all should, since whether we are brothers or sisters we are all called to: -

- Give thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephes. 5:20-21).

### **Women should be in Submission as the Law States.**

It should also be remembered that Corinth was a city full of pagan religions some no-doubt worshipping the Queen of Heaven a female goddess, some even had temple prostitutes held in high esteem and many leaders of these pagan faiths were females.

It was amongst this pagan culture that the Christian faith was growing and it is certain that many women who had been held in high esteem or had been influenced by these religions had forsaken their pagan belief and converted to Christ, but nevertheless remained dominantly outspoken about their new found faith. Paul's words: -

- Women should be in submission (Obedience in KJV) as the Law also says (v34).

Was not referring to faithful and humble woman on whom God had poured out his Spirit, but to those who were disorderly, unruly disobedient dominating and dictating who were not in submission to anyone whereas the Scripture states, we are all called to: -

- Give thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephes. 5:20-21).

Especially while amongst the assembly of brothers and sisters in the Lord.

### **If there is anything a Woman Desires to Learn, Let them ask their Husbands.**

The statement: -

- If there is anything a woman desires to learn, let them ask their husbands at home (v35).

Does not mean that they should never speak in church, but that if they do not agree with a statement they should not raise their voice and express their opinion while amongst the congregation since it will result in arguing and quarrelling rather wait until the meeting is over and then talk about it with her husband or with those who made the statement.

Paul is not teaching a legalistic doctrine that denies all sisters in Christ any opportunity to teach the wisdom they have faithfully learned, but common courtesy that we should all (males and females) apply throughout all future ages which is never dominate, argue, quarrel while gathered together in a public gathering, but do all things in order, peace and love.

### **NOTE.**

There have been throughout history some churches that took such a legalistic stance on Paul's words, "Women should keep silent in the churches" (v34) that women were made to remove their shoes before entering a church so they would remain silent while in others sisters were forbidden to speak to their family or friends while inside a church building. These are simple examples of how easy it is to read more into a verse than was originally intended.

## **Church Buildings and Poverty Stricken Nations.**

The Bible teaches that a church is anywhere Christians gather together in Christ's name, with or without a building. Many established churches in the Western nations have over the years sent faithful sisters out as missionaries in third world countries especially to remote places where there were no church buildings or established Christian traditions. Many of these women not only taught both men and women, but also established bible schools and led many of those living in spiritual poverty to the Lord.

Naturally the church who sent them greatly rejoiced in the work these sisters in Christ were doing overseas, yet when they returned to their home church in the rich and wealthy west other than share their testimony to the congregation they in many cases are not permitted to teach in their home church based on the words of Paul, "Women should keep silent in the churches" (v34) which for me raises the question (i.e., have we allowed opulent and religious church buildings to blind us to the real church?).

Are we being hypocritical by allowing women to teach in poverty stricken third world countries while at the same time denying them the same right to teach in their own beautiful opulent church building? In acting in this manner it appears that we are saying to our sisters and all those outside looking in (not by our words but by our actions) "It's O.K., for sisters to teach men who are suffering hunger and poverty both physically and spiritually, but they cannot teach men in the rich and wealthy west. This leads me to not only wonder if men living the rich and wealthy nations have developed an unconscious mental mindset that considers men in poverty stricken poor countries to be lessor than those living in rich and wealthy nations, but also to think that we might have totally missed what Paul was saying when he said "Women should keep silent in the churches" (v34) and rather than being led by the Spirit are following the letter of the law?"

## **Was it from Women that the Word of God Came?**

Paul's words: -

- Was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? (v36).

The first part of this verse: -

- Was it from you that the word of God came?

Is a rebuke directed at certain sisters in the Corinthian congregation since they are dominating the meeting by forceful interruptions and creating contention amongst the congregation. This is the reason Paul says: -

- Are you the only ones the word of God has reached?

No doubt these sisters think they are superior in their knowledge and are in a very unruly manner making sure they have their say, regardless of everyone else that is why Paul tells them they are not the only ones that the word of God has reached. Paul in a certain sense is putting them in their place and emphasising to the women who think they know it all and feel they have to interrupt the one who is speaking that they do not need to be dominate or forceful because Gods word had reached many others and not just them.

Paul in his teaching about women is simply saying, "It is a shameful thing for a woman to interrupt, dominate or speak out in church just because she does not agree with something that has been said." It is a far better testimony for them to wait until the service is over and talk about it in private with their husbands or if they do not have one share their concern with a friend and by practising this simple act of courtesy they are not disrupting the entire service for others by arguing and creating contention and conflict.



### SECTION THREE ----- All Things Should be Done Decently and in Order.

1 Cor. 14:37-40 ----- <sup>37</sup>If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. <sup>38</sup>If anyone does not recognise this, he is not recognised. <sup>39</sup>So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. <sup>40</sup>But all things should be done decently and in order.

Paul's words, the things I am writing to you (v37) are not limited to this chapter only, but embrace everything Paul has written to the Corinthians in this letter (i.e., all sixteen chapters) and the words, "The things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord" refer to doing everything in decency and in order when they come together as a church contrasted to boasting, being selfish, arguing, quarrelling and causing strife and contention etc.

This means the words "If anyone does not recognise this, they are not recognised" (v38) means two things: -

1. If anyone wants to continuing imposing and forcing their will onto others out of order do not acknowledge them or give them any importance.
2. Do not listen to those who act and behave in such discourteous manner.

#### **Earnestly Desire to Prophecy and Do Not Forbid speaking in Tongues.**

The words: -

- Earnestly desire to prophesy (v39).

In this context means earnestly desire to speak the inspired word of God in a language the congregation understands while the words

- Do not forbid speaking in tongues (v39).

Means do not forbid those amongst the assembly that speak in a foreign language not understood by the congregation, but find someone who is able to interpret what they are saying to the brother and sisters in the assembly and then allow them to speak.

#### **All Things should be Done Decently and in Order.**

Everything Paul has been saying is summed up for brothers and sisters in Christ in his final words, "All things should be done decently and in order" (v40) which mean whatever a church allows it should be done with respect to others and in a manner that honours God and brings a good testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ.

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#### **Tongues and Language are Interchangeable Words.**

The following verses show that both the Greek and the English words tongue and language in the Bible are completely interchangeable, that is they refer to the organ of speech in our mouths and a structured human language that is spoken.

The book of Acts states: -

- Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his *own language* (Acts 2:6) (KJV).

Now go to verse eight: -

- And how hear we every man in *our own tongue*, wherein we were born? (KJV).

The miracle that occurred was in the speaking, we know this because it was only the one hundred and twenty in the upper room that the Holy fell on and gave the ability to speak in languages of other nations that they had not learned.

Three thousand were converted as a direct result of the great witness given by these men and woman who had seen Jesus killed, and had also seen him alive after he rose from the dead. It is interesting to notice that there is not one statement in the book of Acts that any of these three thousand converts to the New Testament church spoke in tongues. The assembly of called out brothers and sisters in Christ would continue to grow, with Jews and Gentiles from all nations, races, languages and dialects (all summed up in the word tongues).

This means the language spoken was a definite language spoken, written and understood and the word tongues as used by ancient writers and the early church simply means a language different from one's own native language (i.e., one that was previously unknown to the speaker). Since there is no express New Testament instance of tongues being used to evangelise others it appears its primary purpose was to evidence to the unbelieving Jews that God was now calling the Gentiles into His Kingdom. Prior to this the Jews viewed themselves as the holy race with God and the Gentiles as an unclean race without God.

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### **Tongues in the Book of Acts.**

The following verses show that people can be filled with the Holy Spirit without having the miraculous gift of being able to speak in tongues (foreign languages and dialects that they have not learned).

- Peter, *filled with the Holy Spirit*, said, "Rulers of the people and elders" (Acts 4:8).

Though Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit when he spoke everyone clearly understood what he said.

- When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were *all filled with the Holy Spirit* and continued to speak the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31).

Everyone was filled with the Holy Spirit, but when they spoke everyone clearly understood what they were saying.

He (Barnabas) was a good man, *full of the Holy Spirit* and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord (Acts 11:24).

Barnabas was filled with the Holy Spirit when he spoke and everyone clearly understood what he was saying.

- Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and *of the Holy Spirit* (Acts 6:3-4).

Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit and proclaimed the gospel and everyone clearly understood him.

- Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be *filled with the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 9:17).

Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit and everyone understood when he spoke.

- Saul, who was also called Paul, *filled with the Holy Spirit*, looked intently at him (Elymas the magician who was a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus) (Acts 13:9).

Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit and Elymas clearly understood Paul when he spoke.

- The disciples were *filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit* (Acts 13:52).

The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and everyone clearly understood them when they spoke. These verses show that people can be filled with the Holy Spirit without having the supernatural gift of being able to speak in tongues (foreign languages and dialects that they have not learned).

## **Tongues in the Book of Revelation.**

The following verses show that tongues is an Understandable Language in the Book of Revelation.

- They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of *every kindred, and tongue* and people, and nation (Rev. 5:9).

Tongue in this context applies to multitudes of languages and people from different nations and races it is clearly referring to a structured human language.

- They had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the *Hebrew tongue* is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue his name is Apollyon (Rev. 9:11).

Tongue in this context applies to the Hebrew language.

- He said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and *nations, and tongues* (language) and kings (Rev. 10:11).

Tongue in this context applies to multitudes of languages and people from all different nations.

- They of the people and *kindreds and tongues* and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, (Rev. 11:9).

Tongue in this context applies to multitudes of languages and people from different nations and is clearly referring to a structured human language.

- It was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all *kindreds, and tongues* and nations (Rev. 13:7).

Tongue in this context applies to multitudes of languages and people from different nations and races.

- I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and *kindred, and tongue* and people (Rev. 14:6).

Tongue in this context applies to multitudes of languages and people from different nations and races and is clearly referring to a structured human language.

- He gathered them together into a place called in the *Hebrew tongue* Armageddon (KJV) (Rev. 16:16).

Tongues here refer to the Hebrew language.

- He saith unto me, “The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and *nations, and tongues*” (Rev. 17:15).

Tongue in this context applies to multitudes of languages of people from different nations and races and is clearly referring to a structured human language. Tongues in the book of Revelation is always used in the sense of an understandable and structured human language that can be translated and understood by all who are listening. The Greek word for tongues is ‘glossa’ which also means a structured human language.

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## **Unintelligible Speech and Utterances (Glossolalia).**

Unintelligible speech or utterances is called Glossolalia it refers to speech that approximates words and human languages and is usually associated with intense emotional religious excitement. It occurred not only in ancient Greek religions, but also in modern religions and cults.

The following are some of the many religions and cults that spoke in unintelligible speech while in a heightened state of mental and emotional exhilaration and excitement: -

- The prophet Montanus in the 2nd Century.
- The mendicant friars.
- The French Protestant Camisards in the 18th century.
- The French catholic Jansemists in the 17th and 18th century.
- The members of the Catholic Apostolic Church in England in the 19th century.
- Some of the early Quakers.
- The Shakers and some early converts to Methodism.
- In modern times it occurred during various Protestant revivals in the U.S. in the early 20th century.
- These revivals resulted in the establishment of many Pentecostal churches.
- During the 1960s speaking in tongues also occurred in some of the older Christian churches including the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran churches.
- Some Mormon Churches practiced it and it occurred in various groups of the Holiness people.

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### **Tongues, Unlearned and Languages.**

The word, unlearned implies two things: -

1. To people who haven't learned something (in this context a structured human language).
2. To something that can be learned.

### **Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek Language.**

**Hebrew:** was the first language or dialect spoken to the people in Canaan by the tribes of Israel when possessing the land, of Canaan. It was still the Jewish vernacular in 713 BC, and remained the literary language permanently, but in colloquial use Aramaic replaced it (some believed Hebrew was spoken in Galilee in New Testament times). Over the first centuries of the occupation of Palestine both literary and colloquial language was spoken.

**Literary:** refers to the language used by men skilled in learning.

**Colloquial:** refers to the language used in everyday speaking.

**Vernacular:** refers to the language native to the country.

**Aramaic:** was a common eastern language the leaders understood, it was a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew and developed into various dialects and became the language of the Assyrian diplomacy. Aramaic speaking conquerors seduced the Jews to worship idols so that those speaking Aramaic and Hebrew were so different that the people of Jerusalem did not understand the former Aramaic.

Nevertheless Aramaic remained the vernacular and colloquial language of the Palestinians from the time Israel returned from Babylonian exile and slowly infiltrated the Hebrew vocabulary and ultimately replaced it.

**Greek:** was the other colloquial dialect of New Testament times it provided the literary language for New Testament writings.

**Christ:** spoke Aramaic, Greek, and read the Scriptures in classical Hebrew.

**Paul:** knew Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin (Philippians 3:4-6) he was a pure blooded Hebrew who had retained the Hebrew language and customs of his fathers, in contrast to Jews who had developed Greek languages and customs.

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## **Overview of Tongues.**

### **Tongues as of Fire rested on each One of Them.**

The phrase, "Tongues as of fire" Does not mean literal tongues of fire descended onto them, it is simply a biblical expression used to depict the power of what is happening that the eye cannot see and what is spiritually taking place in the lives of those receiving this life changing powerful, spiritual and holy gift sent by God and the words, "Tongues as of fire rested on each one of them and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:3-4) shows that this gift fell on everyone in the room and not just the apostles.

### **The Miracle.**

Those that had this gift were not proclaiming revelations or prophecy, but telling the people all the mighty miracles and wonders they had seen Christ do with their own eyes while he was with them on earth. The miracle here is not that they were given revelations or prophecy, but that they could proclaim in a different language to their own native language all the glory and wonder they had seen while with Christ.

### **Was the Miracle of Tongues in the Speaking or the Hearing?**

Some religious teachers argue that the miracle that occurred was not in the speaking but in the hearing of the listeners, but this theory is flawed for three reasons: -

1. It was only the people in the upper room that the power of the Holy Spirit fell upon.
2. Those listening said, "We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God," showing that the miracle is in the speaking not the listening.
3. Jesus told those in the upper room to wait for the promise of the Father to come, thus the miracle was to come on those in the upper room not the crowds.

### **Peter addresses the Crowd.**

Peter stands with the eleven apostles and directs his message primarily to the Jews by saying, "Men of Judea and all in Jerusalem." Peter primarily aims his attention to the Jews because this gift was a sign for the unbelieving Jews to evidence to them that God was now pouring His Spirit out on all flesh meaning Jews and Gentiles alike (Acts 2:14-21).

### **The gift of Tongues is not about Eternal Salvation.**

It needs to be mentioned; that there are a variety of gifts of the Holy Spirit which all come from the same Spirit which of course is the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 12:4-11) and that there were Jews and Gentiles in the upper room who after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit were able to speak in structured human languages they had not learned.

This gift is not about salvation to eternal life (Acts 2:38) but a sign to the unbelieving Jew that from here on there is no division between Jews and Gentiles and that God was now going to save both Jews and Gentiles alike and in the same fashion i.e., though faith in Christ which is what Peter's following message to the crowd is proclaiming.

**For further information see the title: -**

- The Commonwealth of Israel (at the end of this chapter).

### **Was the Gift of the Holy Spirit limited to the Twelve Apostles?**

Because of Luke's statement, "Peter stood up with the eleven" (Acts 2:11) some believe only the apostles received this miraculous gift of speaking a language other than their own native language, but Luke is simply showing that the eleven are in support of Peter. Using this statement to support the theory God only poured out the Holy Spirit's gift of speaking in a foreign language on the apostles is seriously flawed since Luke tells us: -

- Tongues of fire rested on each one of them (in the room) and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (Acts 2:3-4).

Added to this verse seventeen says: -

- God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh.

This refers to Jews and Gentiles and men and women alike.

### **This is what was uttered through the Prophet Joel.**

Joel words, "God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh" primarily means that he will save Jews and Gentiles to eternal life in the same way, i.e., through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but obviously embraces the gifts of prophesy, visions and dreams which those following this day and during this era were clearly gifted with.

**NOTICE:** these gifts are not limited to the men only but also promised to the women, nor are they restricted to men in religious authority or those who are highly educated in the Scriptures, this gift is about showing all mankind that regardless of their birth-right or status in life God will bless them with His eternal Spirit if they are seeking Him (Acts 2:17-18).

**For further information see: -**

- Acts 2 in, Commentary New Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).
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### **Imparting the Gift of the Holy Spirit.**

The only ones who were able to pass this gift of the Holy Spirit (i.e., speaking in languages a person had never learned) onto others were the apostles and those they had passed the gift onto by laying their hands on them this is why Peter and John were sent from Jerusalem. The Scriptures do not present other believers having the ability to pass the gift on to others by the laying on of hands, but others did receive the Holy Spirit gift from God even before they were water baptised as the following Scriptures in Acts chapter ten show: -

- While Peter was speaking in Cornelius house the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word and the believers from among the circumcised (Jews) who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles because they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, "Can anyone withhold water for baptising these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we (Jews) have?" And he commanded them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:44-48).

**For further information see: -**

- Acts 2 in, Commentary NT.
  - My Experience of Speaking in Tongues in, Testimony (ON WEBSITE MENU).
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## **The Commonwealth of Israel.**

It is important to understand that the promised seed of Abraham and David is Christ, all the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore they are not limited to Israel only but extend and embrace all those who belong to Christ because God is now creating one new nation in Christ made up of both Jew and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew).

## **Jews and Gentiles become One New Nation in Christ.**

The Apostle Paul said: -

Ephes. 2:11-22 ----- <sup>11</sup>Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands—<sup>12</sup>remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the COMMONWEALTH of ISRAEL and STRANGERS to the COVENANTS of PROMISE, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup>But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup>For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both ONE and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup>by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself ONE NEW MAN (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace, <sup>16</sup>and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in ONE BODY through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles). <sup>17</sup>And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews). <sup>18</sup>For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in ONE SPIRIT to the Father. <sup>19</sup>So then you (Gentiles) are NO LONGER strangers and aliens, but you are FELLOW CITIZENS with the SAINTS (the Jews) and members of the HOUSEHOLD of God, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone <sup>21</sup>in whom the WHOLE STRUCTURE being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup>In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a DWELLING PLACE for GOD by the Spirit.

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles).

In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world.

## **The practical application of what this means to YOU: -**

If you belong to Christ, all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to YOU. The book of Revelation states: -

- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that: -

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

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