

DO ALL SPEAK WITH TONGUES?

A Biblical Study of the Gift of Tongues in the Historical Account of Acts
and the Doctrine of Paul's Epistles

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CHAPTER 1

THE ORIGIN OF THE GIFT

ACTS 2

Before His ascension into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ appears to the eleven apostles and commands them to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. He also encourages them by foretelling unique and miraculous gifts and protection that would be given to them.

Mark 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Mark 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Mark 16:17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

Mark 16:18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Mark 16:19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

Mark 16:20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

The Lord makes these promises to the early disciples:

- They will cast out devils.
- They will speak with new tongues.
- They will be miraculously protected from serpents and poison.
- They will miraculously heal the sick.

In Acts chapter 2 we see the fulfillment of the Lord's promise of speaking with new tongues.

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

Acts 2:2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to **speak with other tongues**, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:5 And **there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven**.

Acts 2:6 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 2:7 And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?

Acts 2:8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

Acts 2:9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

Acts 2:10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

Acts 2:11 Cretes and Arabians, **we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.**

Acts 2:12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

The gift of tongues is one of the most controversial subjects in the Church today, but most of the confusion can be resolved by simply defining exactly what this gift was. And this account of the apostles receiving this gift for the first time gives us an excellent description of the gift, and how it functioned. The apostles have been commissioned to preach the Gospel, and we are specifically told in verse 5 that there are Jews in Jerusalem from “every nation under heaven.” The Jews who had been scattered during the captivity still returned to Jerusalem to observe the Day of Pentecost. And these Jews now spoke the language of the region where they had been born. Verses 9–11 actually list specific places where they had come from. And as the apostles begin to proclaim the Gospel and the “wonderful works of God,” the Bible explicitly states that all these Jews from different regions, who all spoke different foreign tongues, now heard the Gospel *in their own tongue*. They heard the wonderful works of God proclaimed in the language of the country where they were born. This passage is very clear on this point—in fact, it is repeated several times:

Acts 2:6 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 2:8 And how hear we every man **in our own tongue, wherein we were born?**

Acts 2:11 ...we do hear them speak **in our tongues** the wonderful works of God.

This is the true Biblical gift of tongues—the miraculous, God-given ability to preach the Word of God in a foreign tongue that the person had never learned and spoken before (a language that was unknown to the person, but which they could now speak fluently through the miraculous gift of tongues). This was a vital gift for the spreading of the Gospel during the apostolic period. In fact, as we will see later in our study, the gift of tongues was specifically given as a sign for *unbelievers*—as a means of evangelizing unbelievers and winning souls to Christ in the transitional period of the book of Acts.

tongue, *n.* **8.** the language of a particular people, region, or nation: *the Hebrew tongue.* **9.** a dialect. **10.** Often, **tongues.** a people or nation distinguished by its language. Is. 66:18; Rev. 5:9.¹

¹ Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language.

glwÜssa (transliterated *glossa*). **2.** a tongue: **a.** the language or dialect used by a particular people distinct from that of other nations.²

“Unknown tongues” simply means “unknown languages”—languages that the person does not know how to speak. To speak in a “new tongue” is to simply speak a language you have not spoken before. This is the way that “languages” and “tongues” have always been used—to refer to the different languages or tongues of different peoples and countries. This is how the word “tongues” has always been used in common speech and in the Bible itself, as we can plainly see from the following scriptures in Revelation. Pentecostals try to redefine the word “tongues” as some form of ecstatic utterance that involuntarily comes out of the speaker’s mouth. But there is no basis for this whatsoever, from the Bible, from history, or from the common usage of this word.

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

Rev 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

Rev 9:11 And 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 hath *his* name Apollyon.

Rev 10:11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

Rev 11:9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

Rev 13:7 And 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 14:6 And 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 16:16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

Rev 17:15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

² Strong’s Greek definitions (word # 1100). I include this specifically for those who think they can get around this issue by playing the Greek Game.

We can see that there is no possible way that the gift of tongues still exists today, by simply defining this gift according to its description in the Bible. The gift of tongues was not an emotional experience in which the person began speaking in incoherent utterances that no one can understand. It was specifically the miraculous God-given ability to speak in *foreign tongues* that the person had never actually learned. There is not one Christian alive today who has this ability, and there never has been since the apostolic era.

CHAPTER 2

THE FALL OF ISRAEL AND THE RISE OF THE CHURCH THE STORY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Book of Acts is a story of transition. It is the inspired description of how God set aside Israel for a time, and raised up the Church, the Body of Christ, of which you and I are members today. The Gospels are the story of the First Advent of Christ, in which Israel's Messiah appeared in the flesh to take away their sins and offer them the Kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament. The Lord came to the lost sheep of Israel, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Matt 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, **Go not into the way of the Gentiles**, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

Matt 10:6 But **go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel**.

Matt 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, **The kingdom of heaven is at hand**.

Matt 10:8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

Matt 9:35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and **preaching the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Mark 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

The Jews rejected their Messiah, and delivered Him to the Romans to be crucified. But still the Lord in His magnificent grace gave them opportunity to repent, accept their Messiah, and inherit the Kingdom. For forty days after the Resurrection, the Lord appears to His disciples, teaching them about the Kingdom, and opening their understanding of the Scriptures.

Luke 24:45 Then **opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures**,

Luke 24:46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

Luke 24:47 And that **repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem**.

Luke 24:48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

Luke 24:49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but **tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high**.

And in Acts 1, before the Lord's ascension, they are still eagerly anticipating the Kingdom.

Acts 1:1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

Acts 1:2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

Acts chapter 1 is the continuation of the accounts at the end of the Gospels, regarding the appearances of Jesus Christ to His disciples. The Age of Israel has not yet been set aside, and He is still teaching them "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

Acts 1:3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, **being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:**

Acts 1:4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

Acts 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Acts 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, **Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?**

Acts 1:7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

The disciples ask, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" We can see that at this point, the disciples still fully expect the fulfillment of the prophesied Kingdom for the nation Israel. And this is not, as some theologians have speculated, an ignorant or foolish question. This is after the Lord Himself has spent forty days teaching them, and we are specifically told that their understanding of the Scriptures was opened. Also, the Lord does not correct them and say that the Kingdom is no longer being offered. They ask Him at what time the Kingdom will come, and He simply says this is not for them to know. The restoration of the Kingdom to Israel depends on Israel's acceptance or rejection of their risen Lord.

In these opening chapters of Acts, the Church Age has not yet begun, and the "mystery of Christ" (Jew and Gentile in one Body) is not yet known. The Gospel of the Kingdom is still being preached *to Jews only*, in fulfillment of *Old Testament prophecy*, as we can see in this account from Acts chapter 2, following the giving of the gift of tongues.

Acts 2:14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye **men of Judaea**, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

Acts 2:15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

Acts 2:16 But this is **that which was spoken by the prophet Joel**;

Acts 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

Acts 2:18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

Acts 2:19 And **I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:**

Acts 2:20 **The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come:**

Acts 2:21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Acts 2:22 Ye **men of Israel**, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

Acts 2:23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

Peter is exhorting his fellow Jews to repent and believe in Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified and slain. He declares that this is the fulfillment of the prophecies given by the prophet Joel. The wonders in heaven, including the darkness of the sun, moon, and stars, is repeated numerous times in Scripture as the sign of the Lord's triumphant return to establish his 1,000-year Kingdom. Again, the Church Age and the Body of Christ have not yet come; this is God's final plea with the nation of Israel to accept the Gospel of the Kingdom, and to see the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

Acts 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 2:43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

Acts 2:44 And all that believed were together, and **had all things common**;

Acts 2:45 And **sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men**, as every man had need.

Acts 2:46 And they, **continuing daily with one accord in the temple**, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

Acts 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Here we see the early disciples living communally—selling their possessions to be shared among all the believers³—and still assembling in the Temple. This is further proof that

³ See also Acts 4:34–37.

this “church” of early Acts is not the Church of Jew and Gentile in the Body of Christ, in which every man gives individually “according as he purposeth in his heart.”⁴ This is the gathering of Jewish believers called by God to receive their Messiah under the Gospel of the Kingdom, in anticipation of the Kingdom foretold by the Old Testament prophets.

In the following chapter, Peter and John are going to the Temple yet again to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, and in Acts 3:1–10, we have the account of Peter healing the lame man. We then see Peter evangelizing the Jews with another powerful message:

Acts 3:11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon’s, greatly wondering.

Acts 3:12 And when Peter saw *it*, he answered unto the people, **Ye men of Israel**, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go.

Acts 3:14 **But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;**

Acts 3:15 **And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.**

Acts 3:16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Acts 3:17 And now, brethren, I wot that **through ignorance ye did *it***, as *did* also your rulers.

Acts 3:18 **But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.**

Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

Acts 3:20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

Acts 3:21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

The Jews had crucified their Messiah in ignorance, but Peter now calls upon them to repent. They are now without excuse. They have now been given “many infallible proofs,” including the resurrection, the empty tomb, the appearance of the Lord to numerous eyewitnesses, and the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. And they have seen the fulfillment of all the prophecies of “those things...that Christ should suffer” in His First Advent, recorded in their own Scriptures. And now they have the opportunity to see the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning His glorious Second Advent, and the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel, yet they would not hear.⁵

⁴ 2 Corinthians 9:7.

⁵ The parable of Luke 13:6–9 also demonstrates the extended offer of God’s grace to Israel after the earthly ministry of Christ: “He spake also this parable; A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these

The twelve apostles⁶ continue to preach in the Temple and evangelize the lost sheep of the house of Israel until the martyrdom of Stephen at the end of Acts chapter 7. This is where Saul of Tarsus appears for the first time, who will soon become Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, and the great teacher of the doctrine of the “mystery.” Saul is converted when the Lord Jesus Christ appears to him on the Damascus road in Acts 9:1–6, and in verses 26–28, he meets the disciples at Jerusalem. And we now see a significant change in God’s plan with the vision He gives to Peter in the following chapter.

Acts 10:10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

Acts 10:11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

Acts 10:12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

Acts 10:13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

Acts 10:14 But Peter said, **Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.**

Acts 10:15 And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, **What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.**

Acts 10:16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Immediately after Peter’s vision, the messengers from the Roman centurion Cornelius⁷ arrive. And God now sends Peter to minister to the Gentiles for the first time. Until now, the apostles know nothing of evangelizing the Gentiles; they have only been preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom to Israel. And this is evident from Peter’s conversation with Cornelius:

Acts 10:28 And he said unto them, **Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.**

Acts 10:29 Therefore came I *unto you* without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

Acts 10:30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

Acts 10:31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

Acts 10:32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of *one* Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why encumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, **let it alone this year also**, till I shall dig about it, and dung *it*: And **if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.**” After the Jews’ final rejection of God’s continued offer of grace and plea for repentance, Israel was set aside, and the “mystery of Christ,” the one Body of Jew and Gentile, began.

⁶ See Endnote #1 on the apostleship of Matthias, page 14.

⁷ We will see more of Cornelius in Chapter 8.

Acts 10:33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

Acts 10:34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, **Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:**

Acts 10:35 **But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.**

In the next chapter, Peter explains this new revelation of God to his Jewish brethren, and “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, ‘Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life’” (Acts 11:18). And it will now take some time for the news to spread to the other disciples, who are still “preaching the word **to none but unto the Jews only**” (verse 19).

When we carefully consider this chronology of events, it is impossible that the Church and the mystery of Christ (Jew and Gentile in one Body) could have begun at Pentecost back in Acts chapter 2. The conversion of the Apostle Paul, the revealer of the doctrine of the mystery, does not take place until Acts 9, after the martyrdom of Stephen (Israel’s final rejection of the offer of the Kingdom⁸). And the Gospel is not sent to the Gentiles until after Peter’s vision in Acts 10.

If our Pentecostal brethren wish to claim Acts 2 as the pattern for the Church today, then they should be preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom in the city of Jerusalem; they should be proclaiming the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy to the Jews; they should be living communally and sharing all their property; they should be performing wondrous, undeniable miracles and healings; they should have miraculous protection from serpents, scorpions, and dangerous beasts;⁹ and they should also be able to miraculously speak in foreign languages, which is the true gift of tongues described in Acts 2. They must follow the pattern of the early chapters of Acts consistently, or they must acknowledge that this is not the pattern for the Body of Christ today.

In the inspired historical account of the book of Acts, we see the progression of God’s great purpose and the period of transition from Israel under the Gospel of the Kingdom to the Body of Christ under the Gospel of Grace. We see the beginning of the revelation of the “mystery”—the Church of Jew and Gentile. We see significant changes taking place under God’s divine direction. The question we must now address is how did the miraculous gifts, including tongues, fit into God’s plan.

After Acts chapter 2, the most complete description of the gift of tongues is found in 1 Corinthians chapters 12–14. And the following two passages tell us something very important about the miraculous gifts and tongues in particular.

⁸ See Endnote #2 on the unpardonable sin, page 15.

⁹ See Mark 16:15–20, Luke 10:17–20, and Acts 28:1–6. More on this in Chapter 9.

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

1 Cor 14:21 In the law it is written, With *men of* other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

1 Cor 14:22 Wherefore **tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not**: but prophesying *serveth* not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

In his first letter to Corinth, Paul declares that a time is coming when the miraculous gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will end. He also states that the gift of tongues was given as a sign for unbelievers, rather than for believers; furthermore, it was a sign for the Jews in particular, for it was prophesied in their Law¹⁰ that God would speak to them in “other tongues.”

At this point, we should also consider the chronology of Paul’s epistles, since he is the one who predicted the end of these miraculous gifts.¹¹ Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians were all written during the period of the book of Acts. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon are the “prison epistles” written shortly after the end of Acts, when Paul has been imprisoned at Rome. And 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are the “pastoral epistles” written later in Paul’s life.

In the epistles written during the time of Acts, we read about the miraculous gifts operating in the churches.¹² But in the post-Acts epistles, we have a very different picture. In the four prison epistles, written shortly after Acts 28, there is not the slightest reference to the miraculous gifts. In fact, when Epaphroditus became sick, Paul was not able to heal him, as the miraculous gifts had already ceased.

Phlp 2:25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

Phlp 2:26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

Phlp 2:27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

Phlp 2:28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

Phlp 2:29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

¹⁰ See Isaiah 28:11–12. More on this in Chapter 6.

¹¹ In our Bible today, Paul’s writings are grouped according to his letters to the churches (Romans through 2 Thessalonians) and his letters to other people (1 Timothy through Philemon). They are then arranged according to their length, from the longest to the shortest.

¹² See Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12–14, 2 Corinthians 12:12, Galatians 3:5, and 1 Thessalonians 5:20.

Phlp 2:30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

Just a short time earlier, Paul had been able to heal all those who were sick on the island of Melita (Acts 28:7–9). But now he cannot heal one of his closest friends and co-laborers in the Word of God, who was “sick nigh unto death.” And this is consistent with what we read in Paul’s three final epistles, the Pastorals. Again we have no reference to the function of the miraculous gifts, and we see that Paul was unable to heal Timothy and Trophimus.

1 Tim 5:23 Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.

2 Tim 4:20 Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.

It is also noteworthy that Paul sets forth very detailed and thorough descriptions of the qualifications for elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, yet he does not make even the slightest hint that they need to speak in tongues. Even when addressing these important positions of leadership and service in the Church, tongues is never mentioned as a requirement for spirituality and service.

Acts 28:23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening.

Acts 28:24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

Acts 28:25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers,

Acts 28:26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

Acts 28:27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Acts 28:28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

This is the close of the book of Acts. “Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.” These are the Lord’s last words to Israel as a nation “until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in” (Romans 11:25). The miraculous signs and miracles, and tongues in particular, had now fulfilled their purpose—to reach out to the nation of Israel with God’s gracious offer of the Kingdom, which they once again rejected. At this point, these miraculous gifts passed away, and therefore they are absent from all of Paul’s subsequent epistles.

The “sign gifts” were signs for God’s “sign people”

The close of the Book of Acts was also the close of God's dealings with the nation of Israel for now nearly 2000 years. Acts 28:25-28 stands as God's last words to the nation of Israel for nearly two millennia. The Jews sought after signs (1 Cor. 1:22) so God gave them signs—among the Gentiles!—in order to provoke Israel to jealousy (Rom. 11:14). But with the close of Acts, God sets aside Israel for a time, and when God gave up on the “sign people” for a time, the sign gifts passed out of His program.¹³

¹³ Pastor Dennis Kizonas, *When Did the Gift of Tongues Cease?*, available online at <http://www.bereanbiblesociety.org/articles/1064006213.html>.

CHAPTER 2

ENDNOTES

1

The Apostleship of Matthias

It is a popular trend among modern theologians to question the legitimacy of the apostleship of Matthias (see Acts 1:15–26). This claim is often based on the assumption that Paul was the twelfth apostle, therefore Matthias could not be. Paul, however, had his own unique separate commission. He was the apostle to the Gentiles and the preacher of the mystery of Christ. It is in Paul's epistles that the mystery is fully taught and explained. (There is much that could be said on this subject, but that is not the primary purpose of this book.) At the beginning of Acts, however, the mystery is unknown and the eleven are taking the Gospel of the Kingdom to the house of Israel. The Lord has already promised them that they will "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28, Luke 22:30). The Age of Israel has not yet been set aside, and there is still a legitimate offer of the Kingdom being made; therefore, it was a real possibility that this time would come in the apostles' lifetime. And throughout the Age of Israel, the casting of lots had always been a legitimate means of discovering God's will. Also, Paul himself recognizes the authority of "the twelve" apart from his own in 1 Corinthians 15:5.

1 Cor 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

1 Cor 15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

1 Cor 15:5 And that **he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:**

1 Cor 15:6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

1 Cor 15:7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

1 Cor 15:8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

Paul states that after the resurrection, the Lord was seen by the *twelve* (not the "eleven") before He was seen by Paul. And if He was seen by the twelve before He was seen by Paul, then "the twelve" is obviously separate from Paul.

Also, this would have been an extremely serious mistake, to give apostolic authority to a man who was not chosen by God, at this critical time in Israel's history. Yet there is not the slightest hint in Acts 1 or in the following chapters that there was anything wrong with Matthias' appointment—quite the opposite, in fact.

Acts 1:12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

Acts 1:13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

Acts 1:14 **These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication,** with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Acts 1:15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty.)

Acts 1:16 Men *and* brethren, **this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled,** which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

Acts 1:17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

Acts 1:18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

Acts 1:19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, *Aceldama*, that is to say, *The field of blood*.

Acts 1:20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take.

Acts 1:21 Wherefore of these men which have **companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,**

Acts 1:22 **Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.**

Acts 1:23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

Acts 1:24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

Acts 1:25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

Acts 1:26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

There is nothing here to indicate that the apostles, as well as the 120 other disciples, are doing anything rash or foolish. We are told that they “continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.” And a few days later, on the day of Pentecost, we read that that “**they were all filled with the Holy Ghost**, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). The apostles, as well as all 120 of these disciples, are filled with the Spirit, and evangelizing the lost sheep of the house of Israel through the miraculous gift of tongues, a mere few days after Matthias is selected as the twelfth apostle. Everything we are told about the disciples during this time indicates that they are faithfully serving and obeying the Lord, which would be very strange if they had just committed such a terrible blunder. And as the ministry of the apostles continues, we see the entire twelve (including Matthias) functioning in their leadership of the brethren:

Acts 6:1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples were multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

Acts 6:2 Then **the twelve called the multitude** of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

Acts 6:3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

Acts 6:4 But **we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.**

Are we to believe that all this time there is an impostor exercising apostolic authority over God’s people?

Also, the qualification for the twelfth apostle was that he had to be a man who “companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us.” This was certainly a requirement that Paul would not qualify for.

One final note on this issue: critics of Matthias will often emphasize the fact that he is not mentioned again by name after Acts 1. This, however, is also true of most of the twelve. The only ones who are mentioned later by name are Peter, John, and Philip. To say that this has any bearing on Matthias’ apostleship is merely an empty assumption.

2

The Unpardonable Sin

Mat 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

Mat 12:25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

Mat 12:26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

Mat 12:27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? therefore they shall be your judges.

Mat 12:28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

Mat 12:29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man and then he will spoil his house.

Mat 12:30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

Mat 12:31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

Mat 12:32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come.

There has been much discussion among theologians regarding the meaning of this unpardonable sin (see also Mark 3:22–30). And sadly, these passages are still abused by legalistic churches today who strike terror into the hearts of the people, when they teach the congregation that they could actually commit a sin that God would not pardon. And the tragic result is that many of God’s own eternally saved children are living with the overwhelming fear that they are headed for an eternity in hell. However, we are promised numerous times in the New Testament epistles that we are saved by grace alone without any good or merit of our own (Ephesians 2:8–9), every single sin we would ever commit was forgiven the day we believed in Jesus as our Savior (Colossians 2:13–14), we now possess the very perfect righteousness of Christ (Romans 4:5), we are completely justified in God’s sight (Romans 3:24), nothing can separate us from His love (Romans 8:38–39), and He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).

As always, we must consider these passages in their context and in relation to the rest of Scripture. This is still the Age of Israel, and Israel’s Messiah has come, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. However, the Jews, and especially the scribes and Pharisees, reject Him, and attribute His miracles to the work of devils. They are blaspheming against Jesus Christ, their own Messiah. Jesus then warns them that this blasphemy can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. And we can see that there is still hope for even these corrupt scribes and Pharisees at the crucifixion. As our dear Lord hangs on the Cross to receive the judgment for the sins of the world, with those same scribes and Pharisees watching and mocking Him, He utters those wonderful words, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Jesus is still offering forgiveness to even the most evil of men, the very ones who blasphemed against Him and conspired to have Him crucified.

Some have asked why blasphemy against the Spirit would be distinguished from blasphemy against the Son, and carry more serious consequences, since all three members of the Trinity are equal. But when we consider once again God’s progressive revelation of His will, and the continued offer of the Kingdom to Israel before the revelation of the mystery, it provides us with an answer. Throughout the Old Testament, God the Father had sent His prophets again and again to reach out to His people. And the rebellious Israelites continued to reject and even kill God’s prophets, until He finally sent them His beloved Son. At the crucifixion, Israel had now rejected the testimony of the Father and the Son, and all that remained, as Israel’s last hope, was the extended offer of the Kingdom and the coming of the Holy Spirit, which was prophesied by Joel and fulfilled at Pentecost. As C. R. Stam wrote, “...after all their sin and blasphemy against the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit *did* come down at Pentecost, working among them so mightily and confronting them with such overwhelming proof of our Lord’s kingdom rights that their continued rejection of Him was utterly inexcusable and unpardonable.” (See C. R. Stam, *Acts Dispensationally Considered*, Volume I, page 239.)

The unpardonable sin and the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit was a specific warning to unbelieving Israel to repent while the Kingdom was still being offered. The Jews committed the unpardonable sin when they rejected the Holy Spirit and the final offer of the Kingdom. They were then set aside, and the Gospel was sent to the Gentiles. This unpardonable sin that the Lord warned the Pharisees about in Matthew 12 and Mark 3 had to do with Israel under the Gospel of the Kingdom, and has no application to us today. In fact, all the apostles’ letters to the churches are completely silent regarding the unpardonable sin and the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. This would certainly have been very irresponsible on their part, if this were actually a danger to us today, as some legalistic churches are still teaching.

CHAPTER 3

DIVERSITIES OF GIFTS

1 CORINTHIANS 12

1 Cor 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

1 Cor 12:2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

1 Cor 12:3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

1 Cor 12:4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

1 Cor 12:5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

1 Cor 12:6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

1 Cor 12:7 But the **manifestation of the Spirit** is given to every man to profit withal.

1 Cor 12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

1 Cor 12:9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

1 Cor 12:10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues;

1 Cor 12:11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

1 Cor 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ.

1 Cor 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

1 Cor 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many.

The point that Paul repeatedly emphasizes throughout this passage is that all of God's people have *different* gifts, but they are all members of *the same body* and receive their gifts from the same Spirit. Pentecostal churches teach that *everyone* should have this same gift of tongues, but Paul's point is the direct opposite—that we are all individual Christians with *different gifts*, but we all serve the same God together. It is also interesting to note that tongues is just simply mentioned within a list of spiritual gifts, without any particular prominence being given to this one gift. In fact, this is the only New Testament epistle that even mentions the gift of tongues. Paul, Peter, John, James, and Jude, with all their instructions to the early churches concerning spirituality and the Christian life, and with all the issues they had to address, never even make reference to tongues, except in this one passage where Paul is correcting the abuses of this gift in the most carnal church of all—the church at Corinth. In Paul's many references to the

baptism of the Spirit, he never connects it to tongues in any way.¹⁴ Also, he never mentions tongues when discussing the believer's spirituality.¹⁵ This is strange indeed, if this gift entails all that Pentecostals claim it does.

Let us carefully note the Apostle Paul's wording in this passage:

1 Cor 12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

1 Cor 12:9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

1 Cor 12:10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

Please note that Paul does not say, "To all are given divers kinds of tongues." To one is given a certain gift, and to another is given a different gift. We consistently see throughout the Biblical descriptions of the spiritual gifts and tongues in particular, that this was never a gift given to all Christians.

Paul then expounds further on the principle that we all have our own gifts and our own unique calling before God—our own place in the Body of Christ. He uses the analogy of actually comparing the believer to a part of the body.

1 Cor 12:15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

1 Cor 12:16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

1 Cor 12:17 If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling?

1 Cor 12:18 But now **hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.**

1 Cor 12:19 And if they were all one member, where *were* the body?

1 Cor 12:20 But now **are they many members, yet but one body.**

1 Cor 12:21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

1 Cor 12:22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

1 Cor 12:23 And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness.

1 Cor 12:24 For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that *part* which lacked:

1 Cor 12:25 That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.

¹⁴ See Romans 6:3–4, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27, Ephesians 4:4–5, Colossians 2:11–12.

¹⁵ See 1 Corinthians 2:12–16, 1 Corinthians 3:1–4, Galatians 6:1, Ephesians 5:18.

1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.

God has placed each member in the body individually, as it pleases Him. And Paul clearly states in verses 15–17 that one member can never be considered any less a part of the body *just because that member has a different gift than another member*; and he uses the foot, hand, ear, and eye as examples. He goes even further in verses 22–24, and says that the members who appear to be weaker should be *honored by the other members*. And he then tells us in verses 25–26 that the purpose of what he has just taught is that “there should be no schism in the body”—to preserve the unity of the Body of Christ. And this is where the Pentecostal denomination has completely missed the teaching of this passage. Their view is the opposite of Paul’s. They teach that all the members *must* have this gift of tongues; and, rather than honoring brethren who appear weak as Paul commanded, they look at anyone who does not speak in tongues as if there is something wrong with them. And tragically, many of them will even tell that poor brother or sister that they are not even saved. This is what creates schism in the Body of Christ—the very danger that Paul is warning us about.

1 Cor 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

1 Cor 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

1 Cor 12:29 *Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?*

1 Cor 12:30 *Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?*

1 Cor 12:31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.

For any of my Pentecostal brothers or sisters who may be reading this, there is simply no way to get around this passage. Paul is continuing his dissertation on the principle that the members of the body *do not all have the same gifts*. In verse 29, he asks the rhetorical question, “Are all apostles?” The obvious answer is of course “No.” “Are all teachers?” Again, “No.” Are all workers of miracles? No. Do all have the gifts of healing? Certainly not. And then the next question: “*Do all speak with tongues?*” And again the answer is obviously “No.” This is an undeniable declaration of Scripture that, even during the Acts period, *not all Christians spoke in tongues*.

Paul then tells the Corinthians that he has “a more excellent way” to show them—which leads into his great dissertation on love and unity in chapter 13.

CHAPTER 4

A MORE EXCELLENT WAY

1 CORINTHIANS 13

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

1 Cor 13:2 And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, **I am nothing.**

1 Cor 13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, **it profiteth me nothing.**

1 Cor 13:4 Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

1 Cor 13:5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

1 Cor 13:6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

1 Cor 13:7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Paul makes a very strong point here, as he is describing to the Corinthians this “more excellent way.” He declares that no matter what kind of gifts and service we have, if we do not have charity (Christian love) for our brethren, we are *nothing*. What is far more important to God than speaking in tongues (or any other gift) is our love for one another and the unity of the Body. Pentecostal doctrine elevates the gift of tongues as proof of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and a so-called “second blessing” of God’s grace. Yet Paul is clear that one could have this gift, and it could profit him nothing. To elevate the gift of tongues as proof of the ministry of the Spirit is completely unscriptural.

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

1 Cor 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

1 Cor 13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

1 Cor 13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

1 Cor 13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

1 Cor 13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity.

As we noted in chapter 2, Paul declares that the miraculous gifts of tongues, prophecy, and knowledge will all cease. Acts is a transitional book, which unfolds God’s progressive plan, as Israel is being phased out and the Body of Christ (the mystery) is being revealed. It would take some time for the full revelation of the mystery after Paul’s

conversion and Peter's vision, and also for this new revelation to spread to all the disciples who were still preaching the word to Jews only. The miraculous gifts continued until Paul received the full revelation of the mystery and communicated it to his brethren, which he did primarily in the prison epistles.

Eph 1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Eph 1:7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

Eph 1:8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

Eph 1:9 Having made known unto us **the mystery of his will**, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

Eph 1:10 That **in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ**, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

Eph 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ **for you Gentiles**,

Eph 3:2 If ye have heard of **the dispensation of the grace of God** which is given me to you-ward:

Eph 3:3 How that by revelation **he made known unto me the mystery**; (as I wrote afore in few words,

Eph 3:4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand **my knowledge in the mystery of Christ**)

Eph 3:5 Which **in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men**, as it is **now revealed** unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

Eph 3:6 That **the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body**, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Eph 3:7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

Eph 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

Eph 3:9 And to make all men see what is **the fellowship of the mystery**, which from the beginning of the world **hath been hid in God**, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

Col 1:24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh **for his body's sake, which is the church**:

Col 1:25 Whereof I am made a minister, **according to the dispensation of God which is given to me** for you, to fulfil the word of God;

Col 1:26 Even **the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints**:

Col 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of **the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles**; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

In these great passages in Ephesians and Colossians, Paul sets forth the mystery of Christ—the Gospel of Grace going out to the Gentiles, who are now “fellowheirs, and of the same body.” This is the mystery that “in other ages was not made known” and was

“hid in God,” but is now “made manifest” through the preaching and writing of the Apostle Paul.

During the course of the book of Acts (especially the period after Stephen’s martyrdom, Paul’s conversion, and Peter’s vision), the mystery is still being revealed. At the end of Acts, when Paul is in prison, and begins writing the prison epistles, the mystery is now fully revealed, and the transition from Israel to the Church is now complete. At this point, the Church now has the full knowledge and understanding of the mystery of Christ.

Col 1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with **the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;**

Col 1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Col 2:1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

Col 2:2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and **unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;**

When Paul writes the prison epistles, the Church now has “all wisdom and spiritual understanding” and the “full assurance of understanding” of the mystery of Christ. However, during the Acts period, when 1 Corinthians was written, the Church did not yet have the full revelation:

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

1 Cor 13:9 For we **know in part**, and we **prophesy in part**.

1 Cor 13:10 But **when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.**

When Paul writes to the Corinthians, he says, “We know in part, and we prophesy in part.” This is during the Acts period when the transition is still taking place, and the mystery is still being revealed to the Church; therefore, the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge are still functioning. But when the full, complete revelation was received by Paul and communicated by him to the Church, then “that which is perfect” had come, and the Church now had the full understanding of God’s great purpose in the mystery of Christ. And “that which is in part” (the temporary gifts of prophecy, tongues, knowledge, etc.) would now be “done away.”

These were the gifts that were specifically needed to communicate the Word of God and His divine testimony during this transitional time. These miraculous gifts were needed as signs to the Jews for the offer of the Kingdom, as well as the establishment of the Church

in its foundational stages. Once the revelation of God's purpose in the mystery of Christ was complete, the miraculous gifts had served their purpose.

Before the end of the Book of Acts, during the Acts period, and in the letters written during the Acts period, the Lord had only revealed part of the "dispensation of grace" (Eph. 3:2) to the Apostle Paul, but He had not yet revealed the entire message to him. It was still only "in part" during the Acts period, but with the close of the Book of Acts, the Lord completed the revelation of the "Mystery" (see Eph. 3:3,4,9 and Col. 1:26,27, etc.). "That which is perfect" was finally revealed in all its fullness to the Apostle Paul and at that moment, those things which were only "in part" passed away from God's program.¹⁶

¹⁶ Pastor Dennis Kizonas, *When Did the Gift of Tongues Cease?*, available online at <http://www.bereanbiblesociety.org/articles/1064006213.html>.

CHAPTER 5

EDIFICATION OF THE CHURCH

1 CORINTHIANS 14:1–20

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul further explains how the gift of tongues should function, and also gives us the specific purpose of this gift.

1 Cor 14:1 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but rather that ye may prophesy.

1 Cor 14:2 For he that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for **no man understandeth *him***; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

1 Cor 14:3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men *to* edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

1 Cor 14:4 He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue **edifieth himself**; but he that prophesieth **edifieth the church**.

1 Cor 14:5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for **greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying**.

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

The Corinthian church was notorious for its carnality, and the Apostle Paul had to correct them on many issues, including the gift of tongues. He had to remind them that the purpose of the gift was to edify others, not to edify oneself. And if someone stood up in the assembly and began giving a message in a tongue that no one could understand, he would not be edifying anyone but himself. Therefore, it is clearly required that there *must* be an interpreter present, who could interpret the message for others; otherwise the gift *would not even serve its purpose*, which was to minister to others. All spiritual gifts and ministries were given by God to edify *others*. Their purpose is to build up and minister to the Body of Christ, not oneself.

Rom 14:18 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

Rom 14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith **one may edify another**.

Rom 15:2 Let every one of us **please his neighbour for his good to edification**.

Rom 15:3 For even Christ **pleased not himself**; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

1 Cor 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of **spiritual gifts**, seek that ye may excel to **the edifying of the church**.

2 Cor 12:19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but **we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying**.

Eph 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and **gave gifts unto men. ...**

Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for **the edifying of the body of Christ**:

1 The 5:11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and **edify one another**, even as also ye do.

What is being practiced by Pentecostals today is a very dangerous abuse of the gift of tongues. As we noted in chapter 1, their ecstatic, incoherent utterances are not remotely close to anything described in Scripture. And their methods for exercising their “gift” are far removed from the Biblical instructions and principles governing the gift of tongues. Wherever the gift of tongues is mentioned, it is always described as a ministry to be used in an assembly of believers, for the edification of others. But what we see in Pentecostalism today is thousands of people operating in a false, unbiblical “gift of tongues” without any regard for the declarations of God’s Holy Word. We see people making a spectacle of *themselves* and elevating *themselves* as the only ones who have the Holy Spirit—promoting themselves as the elite of Christianity, who have supposedly attained something that the rest of their brethren don’t have. And this is an obvious violation of Paul’s command in 1 Corinthians 12:22–24. Many Pentecostals also practice their “gift of tongues” at home or in private, which is also totally foreign to Scripture. They are only seeking to edify *themselves*, which, as we have just seen, is contrary to Scripture. And for those around them, such as family members and friends, this does not provide any edification. It only confuses them or makes them feel spiritually inferior, because they haven’t “received the Holy Spirit” yet.

1 Cor 14:26 How is it then, brethren? **when ye come together**, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto **edifying**.

We must also keep in mind what we have already learned from Acts chapter 2. The gift of tongues was the ability to speak the Word of God in foreign languages in order to communicate truth to others who did not speak the local language. But if someone in the church began preaching the Word in a foreign tongue, many of his brethren would not understand him—and this made it necessary to have someone else present who had the gift of interpretation, so that they could translate for the rest of the brethren. If there was no one to interpret, then the brethren would not be edified, and the one speaking in tongues would only be edifying himself. In this sense, the gift of prophecy was greater than the gift of tongues, which is why Paul states: “Greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.” Paul certainly did not elevate tongues as modern Pentecostalism does. And he is setting

forth very specific instructions governing the use of the gift of tongues to prevent the abuse of this gift and to prevent confusion in the church. Later in this chapter, he reminds the Corinthians that “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (verse 33); and, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (verse 40).

Pentecostals will often emphasize the first phrase of 1 Corinthians 14:5: “I would that ye all spake with tongues”; and they try to use this to support their teaching that we should all be speaking in tongues today. However, this does not change the fact that the true Biblical gift of tongues as defined in Scripture does not exist anywhere today, in Pentecostal churches or any other kind of church. Secondly, Paul has already made it very clear in 1 Corinthians 12:30 that not everyone has the gift of tongues, and he cannot be contradicting himself. Here in 1 Corinthians 14:5, Paul is simply emphasizing the importance of these gifts in the early Church, and that they should desire these spiritual gifts so that they can edify the church (as in verse 1). And to confirm this point, Paul also says here that he would love to see all the Corinthians prophesy (even more so than speaking in tongues): “I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied...” And obviously, not all the Corinthian believers were prophets (as Paul has already stated in 1 Corinthians 12:29). Again, he is emphasizing the importance of this gift to the early Church, and that the Corinthians should desire this gift and use it properly. If the Pentecostals are going to claim 1 Corinthians 14:5 as a “proof-text” for everybody speaking in tongues, then they have to be consistent and also say that everybody should be a prophet.

1 Cor 14:7 And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

1 Cor 14:8 For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

1 Cor 14:9 So likewise ye, **except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.**

1 Cor 14:10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them *is* without signification.

1 Cor 14:11 Therefore if **I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian,** and he that speaketh *shall be* a barbarian unto me.

Here Paul again illustrates the importance of things being done decently and in order, and the danger of speaking in tongues without an interpreter present. He warns the Corinthians that they will be speaking “into the air” and will sound like a “barbarian” to those around them. In fact, later in verse 23, he specifically warns them that if this gift is not exercised properly, then the unbelievers will think they are crazy—and this would defeat the primary purpose of the gift, which was to evangelize unbelievers: “If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, **will they not say that ye are mad?**” In many Pentecostal churches today this is exactly what we see happening—the whole church speaking in tongues (or think that they’re speaking in tongues), and the unbelievers see this and say that those Christians are all crazy. The Pentecostal

denomination, which claims to have the greatest understanding of the gift of tongues, has missed so much of what the Bible says about this gift.

Another note on 1 Corinthians 14:23: it is also interesting that Paul says that the “unlearned” (uneducated) would not understand what was being said; in other words, one who was learned and educated *would* be able to understand. One who had education and could speak foreign tongues would be able to understand the one speaking in tongues. This further proves the point that speaking in tongues simply meant speaking in the foreign languages of other regions and countries. (See also 1 Corinthians 14:16.)

1 Cor 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

1 Cor 14:13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue pray that he may interpret.

1 Cor 14:14 For if I pray in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth, **but my understanding is unfruitful.**

1 Cor 14:15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

1 Cor 14:16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, **seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?**

1 Cor 14:17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but **the other is not edified.**

Here Paul applies the same principles to giving thanks to God in another tongue—it should be done decently and in order, and there should be someone to interpret. In this passage, Paul also explains that ministering in tongues is secondary to ministering in the language that the local church understands (which is why he gives prophecy a higher place than tongues in 1 Corinthians 14:1–5). In fact, he goes on to say that he would rather speak five words that everyone can understand than 10,000 words in another tongue, because this is more fruitful as far as teaching others is concerned.

1 Cor 14:18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

1 Cor 14:19 Yet in the church **I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.**

1 Cor 14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

The Bible certainly does not elevate the gift of tongues nearly as much as the Pentecostal denomination does. And again, while all the gifts were given for the edification of the Church, the primary function of the gift of tongues was the evangelization of the unbelievers, as we will see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

A SIGN TO UNBELIEVERS

1 CORINTHIANS 14:21–22

1 Cor 14:21 In the law it is written, **With *men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people***; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

1 Cor 14:22 Wherefore **tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not**: but prophesying *serveth* not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

Here we have another clear statement from Scripture that creates a serious problem for our Pentecostal brethren. The gift of tongues was originally designed and instituted by God as a sign for *unbelievers*—its primary purpose was *not* for ministering to believers. To make the gift of tongues a requirement for a believer’s spirituality—or even worse, a requirement for salvation—is totally contradictory to the Biblical descriptions of the function and purpose of this gift.¹⁷ The gift of prophecy, on the other hand, was indeed given primarily for ministering to believers, which again is why Paul emphasizes prophecy over tongues (1 Corinthians 14:1–5).

Paul writes in verse 21, “**In the law it is written**, ‘With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people.’” The institution of the gift of the tongues was the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy:

Isa 28:11 For **with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people**.

Isa 28:12 To whom he said, This *is* the rest *wherewith* ye may cause the weary to rest; and this *is* the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

Isaiah prophesied that God would speak to “this people” (the Jews) through the gift of tongues. This gift was given basically as a sign to unbelievers, and even more specifically, Jewish unbelievers. And naturally Gentiles and the Church itself benefited from this gift as well, but its main divine purpose was to evangelize the Jewish people, as in Acts chapter 2. Nowhere in the entire Bible is tongues ever presented as a gift for all Christians, a requirement for spirituality, or evidence of salvation.

Let us examine Isaiah chapter 28 more closely.

Isa 28:7 But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble *in* judgment.

¹⁷ For further study on salvation and the grace of God, see our booklet *Assurance of Salvation: How to Know You’re Saved*, by Pastor John Ricci. For an in-depth study of the filling of the Spirit, see *Biblical Spirituality: How a Christian Is Filled with the Spirit*, by Pastor John.

Isa 28:8 For all tables are full of vomit *and* filthiness, *so that there is no place clean*.

Isa 28:9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts*.

Here God is dealing with the rebellious Israelites, who have become so hard-hearted that the only ones that can actually be taught knowledge are “them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.” There are no adult Israelites left who are willing to listen.

Isa 28:10 For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little:

Isa 28:11 For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.

Isa 28:12 To whom he said, This *is* the rest *wherewith* ye may cause the weary to rest; and this *is* the refreshing; yet they would not hear.

Isa 28:13 But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

Here is the prophecy of the gift of tongues—the Lord reaching out to His people in grace to warn them of future judgment; “yet they would not hear.”

Isa 28:14 Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which *is* in Jerusalem.

Isa 28:15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

Again Isaiah warns these scornful, deceitful Israelites to hear the Word of God before it is too late. And he then gives them yet another prophecy of their coming Messiah:

Isa 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

This is one of the hundreds of prophecies fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ at His First Advent, as the Apostle Peter explains: “To whom coming, *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and* precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, **Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded**” (1 Peter 2:4-6). Whoever repents and believes will not be confounded, and will be saved and delivered.

Isaiah then continues with his warnings of the coming judgment on the rebellious nation of Israel:

Isa 28:17 Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

Isa 28:18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

Isa 28:19 From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only *to* understand the report.

Isa 28:20 For the bed is shorter than that *a man* can stretch himself *on it*: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself *in it*.

Isa 28:21 For the LORD shall rise up as *in* mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as *in* the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.

Isa 28:22 Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth.

Isa 28:23 Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech.

This description of the wrath of God is followed by one more plea from the prophet: “Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech.” And still they would not hear. Throughout the history of Old Testament Israel, God sent His prophets time and time again to warn the people when they were disobeying God, and to call them to repent before it was too late and the judgment of God fell upon them. God always gives even the most wicked “space to repent.”¹⁸ But once this period of grace was over, and the time for judgment had come, the prophet’s ministry had fulfilled its purpose—it was too late for any further warnings. Similarly, the gift of tongues was a sign and a warning to the Jewish nation, who had crucified their Messiah, to repent and believe. But again “they would not hear.” And, as we have already studied in chapter 2, this resulted in the offer of the Kingdom to Israel being set aside and the introduction of the “mystery of Christ”—the Church of Jew and Gentile in one Body. The Jews of the first century followed the same pattern as the Jews of the Old Testament. They stubbornly hardened their hearts against the Word of God until it was too late to heed the warnings. And after their final rejection of God’s grace, the sign of tongues had fulfilled its purpose and was no longer needed.

Now that Israel had rejected all offers of God’s grace and were “without excuse,” they would now face severe judgment and destruction. And in A.D. 70, the Roman general Titus would besiege Jerusalem, massacre its inhabitants, and destroy the city and the Temple, as prophesied by our Lord Himself:

Mat 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, ***thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee***, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!

Mat 23:38 Behold, ***your house is left unto you desolate***.

Mat 23:39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

¹⁸ See Revelation 2:21.

Mat 24:1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to *him* for to show him the buildings of the temple.

Mat 24:2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, **There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.**

Since that time, the Jewish people have persisted in their unbelief, and have been subjected to terrible persecutions and misery for many generations. And they will not be restored and converted as a nation until the Lord's glorious return.

Rom 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, **until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.**

Rom 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, **There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer**, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

Rom 11:27 For this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

CHAPTER 7

GOD'S ORDER FOR TONGUES AND PROPHECY

1 CORINTHIANS 14:23–33

1 Cor 14:23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and **there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?**

1 Cor 14:24 But if all prophesy, and **there come in one that believeth not**, or *one* unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

1 Cor 14:25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on *his* face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

After establishing the principle that tongues were a sign for unbelievers, Paul specifically warns against the abuse of the gift, and how this would affect unbelievers. And he again contrasts tongues and prophecy, and demonstrates the superiority of prophecy over tongues. If an unbeliever enters the assembly, and sees everyone speaking in tongues that he cannot understand, he will think they are all mad. However, if he hears them prophesying in a tongue that he can understand, he will be converted and worship God. Paul then goes on to provide more detailed instructions governing the use of tongues and prophecy.

1 Cor 14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

1 Cor 14:27 If any man speak in an *unknown* tongue, **let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.**

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

1 Cor 14:29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

1 Cor 14:30 If *any thing* be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

1 Cor 14:31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

1 Cor 14:32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

1 Cor 14:33 For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

Paul encourages the brethren by reminding them that every one of them has a gift to edify the church when they come together. One has a psalm (although not everyone is a song leader); one has a doctrine (although not all teach doctrine); one has a tongue (although not all speak in tongues); etc. He also states very clearly that no more than three brethren may speak in tongues at one gathering, and also that they must do it “by course,” or in turn. There should never be more than one person speaking in tongues at the same time. All things should be done decently and in order. Paul goes on to say, “Let one interpret.” There should not be more than one person interpreting tongues at the gathering of the

assembly. The simple instructions set forth in these few verses expose the majority of Pentecostal gatherings as unscriptural.

Another fact that is obvious from this passage is this: the exercise of the gift of tongues was under the control of the speaker. He could choose to stand up and speak, or choose to “keep silence.” Speaking in tongues was never any kind of ecstatic experience, in which the believer began helplessly spouting gibberish that even he does not understand. The Spirit gives all the spiritual gifts and the power we need to use those gifts, but we are not mindless robots and puppets. There is a conscious choice in the exercise of any spiritual gift, and it is governed by the authoritative commands of God’s Holy Word. And the Lord gave very specific instructions governing the gift of tongues, and these divine commands were meant to be obeyed, and not ignored as they are in the Pentecostal denomination.

Paul then gives nearly identical instructions for the gift of prophecy.

1 Cor 14:29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

1 Cor 14:30 If *any thing* be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

1 Cor 14:31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

1 Cor 14:32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

Two or three prophets could speak at the gathering, and those with the gift of discernment would judge what they said. They also had to prophesy “one by one” for the edification of the church. And, as with the gift of tongues, the exercise of the gift was subject to the one who possessed the gift. And all this leads to the following conclusion:

1 Cor 14:33 For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

AMEN!

CHAPTER 8

THE EXAMPLE OF CORNELIUS THE CENTURION

ACTS 10

Acts 10:1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*,

Acts 10:2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.

Acts 10:3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

Acts 10:4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and **thine alms are come up for a memorial before God**.

Acts 10:5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter:

Acts 10:6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

Acts 10:7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;

Acts 10:8 And when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

The story of Cornelius the centurion demonstrates that one could be a very faithful, spiritual believer and glorify God without the gift of tongues, even during this transitional period, when the miraculous gifts were still functioning. This passage gives us a glowing description of this man Cornelius. He was a “devout” man who honored and obeyed God, gave generously to the poor, and was faithful in prayer. We do not know exactly how long Cornelius had been a believer, but it had definitely been for a significant length of time. We read in Acts 10:22 that Cornelius was “a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews.” Cornelius had been serving the Lord so faithfully and for so long that his integrity and generosity had become known throughout the nation—so much so, in fact, that the angel of God tells him that his service has “come up for a memorial before God.” So we know that Cornelius has been saved and has also been bearing a great testimony for God for quite some time, perhaps even for years. And we also know that during this entire period, he has *never spoken in tongues*. He will not speak in tongues until Acts 10:44–46, after his meeting with Peter (see passage from Acts 10 on pages 9–10).¹⁹

Acts 10:44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

Acts 10:45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

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

¹⁹ It is recommended that the reader also read the entire book of Acts, paying close attention to the changes taking place in chapters 9–11.

Cornelius lived a life of service to Jesus Christ and glorified God long before he ever spoke in tongues. This proves that, even during the transitional apostolic era, a person could be saved and also faithfully serve and glorify God without the gift of tongues. If Cornelius had died before he met Peter, he never would have spoken in tongues. In fact, there were many faithful believers who were martyred during this time—Christians who loved their Lord and Savior and were willing to lay down their lives for His Name. And it would be very foolish to assume that all of them spoke in tongues.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

1 JOHN 4:1

Mark 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Mark 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Mark 16:17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

Mark 16:18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Mark 16:19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

Mark 16:20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

As we noted at the beginning of this study, the Lord makes the following promises to the eleven apostles:

- They will cast out devils.
- They will speak with new tongues.
- They will be miraculously protected from serpents and poison.
- They will miraculously heal the sick.

These again are the miraculous gifts and divine protection given to the early disciples, which we see at work in the book of Acts. Some of these gifts had already been given by our Lord to his disciples, such as casting out devils and miraculous protection from serpents.

Luke 10:17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even **the devils are subject unto us through thy name**.

Luke 10:18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

Luke 10:19 Behold, **I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions**, and over all the power of the enemy: and **nothing shall by any means hurt you**.

Luke 10:20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

The Apostle Paul himself healed the sick and cast out devils, and we also see him experiencing this protection from serpents as well:

Acts 28:1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

Acts 28:2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

Acts 28:3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

Acts 28:4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

Acts 28:5 And **he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.**

Acts 28:6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

These were special miraculous gifts given during the ministry of Christ and the apostolic period.²⁰ And if our Pentecostal brethren are indeed receiving the same gift of tongues that the apostles had, then they should also be able to cast out devils, pick up serpents and drink poison without harm, and miraculously heal the sick. They have to be consistent—they cannot just take one of these gifts and make it a requirement for all Christians, while ignoring the others. But of course, we do not see Pentecostals claiming that all Christians should be able to perform miracles of healing or drink poison. And the truth is that none of these gifts still exist today, and those who think they can still exercise these miraculous gifts fall into serious errors. The apostasy of those who claim miraculous healing power has become rampant, with hundreds of false preachers who give their listeners false hope, and rob them of their money with false healings and miracles. And there are even radical groups who still try playing with snakes and drinking poison, with serious consequences.

The modern distortion of the gift of tongues has done great damage to the Church. In many churches today, one is considered an inferior, second-class Christian if he has not received the “second blessing” of the filling of the Spirit and speaking in tongues. Many others are told they are not even saved and headed for the eternal lake of fire if they do not speak in tongues, which destroys their peace, their joy, and their relationship with their Lord and Savior—and this is truly tragic.

Even when faced with all the Scriptural evidence, many Pentecostals will still insist, “But my experience was real!” In this day and age, it seems so many are claiming to have a sensational religious experience. But all matters of faith and spirituality must be decided by the divine authority of God’s Holy Word. And God’s Word must be the Final Word on all these issues.

1 John 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

²⁰ Mark 16:9–20 is an important Biblical passage on the resurrection, the Lord’s commission to His disciples concerning the Gospel of the Kingdom, and of course the gifts He gave to them, including the gift of tongues. Many modern Bible critics, however, are trying to have this passage removed from the Bible. This is a sheer fallacy, as 618 out of 620 extant Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark, as well as the ancient translations of the second century, contain this full passage. To arbitrarily remove this passage after all these centuries is absurd and a blatant violation of the stern warnings found in the Bible itself against taking away from the Word of God. For an in-depth study on this subject, see *The Preeminence of Christ: The King James Bible versus the Modern Versions*, by Pastor John Ricci and myself.

We are exhorted to “try the spirits whether they are of God.” And we do this, not by our own preferences and what we want to be true, but rather by the truth of God’s Word. Can we afford to let our personal relationship with God Almighty depend on our own emotional experiences, and what we think we “feel,” rather than the Holy, Inspired, Infallible Book that God Himself has written down and given to us? What is the foundation of our faith?

*How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?*

Pentecostalism never existed in the Church until the early 1900’s, and one of the major seeds of the Pentecostal movement was the “Azusa Street Revival,” which took place at the church of William Seymour in Los Angeles, California, 1906–1909. Seymour followed the teachings of Charles Parham, who was apparently the first to develop the Pentecostal doctrine of tongues and spirituality. Parham’s students first began speaking in tongues at a prayer meeting at Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, on January 1, 1901. But for 1,900 years of church history this practice of speaking in gibberish as evidence of spirituality never existed. The faithful Waldensian churches of ancient Piedmont, who preserved the Bible and spread the Gospel (as well as enduring many brutal Catholic crusades) throughout the 1,000 years of the Dark Ages, never practiced anything remotely resembling Pentecostalism. The great Protestant Reformation of the 1500’s, in which Europe rebelled against the tyranny and darkness of Roman Catholicism, and millions of people heard the Gospel and read the Bible for the first time, was one of the greatest works of God in all of history. If there was ever a time when the power of the Spirit was at work, and there were many spiritual Christians glorifying God, this was certainly it. Yet there is not the slightest hint of Pentecostal doctrine and practice in any of the Christian churches of that time. It took tremendous courage, faith, and perseverance on the part of the early American Christians to win their independence and build a nation of religious liberty where you and I can be free to worship God according to our own conscience. They were one of the generations most used by God in human history. No one can claim that these were not spiritual, faithful Christians. Yet again, their faith, their Christian service, and their glorification of God were never based on any sensational experience of speaking in gibberish to supposedly attain the filling of the Spirit. It was based on the firm foundation of God’s Word, which they read faithfully and treasured above all other things.

Dear reader, if you have been a follower of the Pentecostal movement, you are now faced with a choice—the choice between God’s Holy Inspired Word and your own personal feelings and experiences. You most likely endeavored to attain this experience of speaking in tongues as a young Christian because you were told that this was necessary to be spiritual, or perhaps that it was even necessary as evidence of your salvation. But God has never placed such a burden on His people. He reminds us continually throughout His Word that He has forgiven us freely and saved us forever through simple faith in His Son, and the wonderful saving work that our Lord Jesus accomplished once and for all at the

Cross. You no longer need to strive for any kind of emotional or ecstatic experience to prove that you are a spiritual Christian, or that you are actually saved. If you have believed in the Name of Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are a child of God forever, and no emotional experience (or lack thereof) can ever change that. If you love the Lord and are diligently seeking to know His Word and do His will, then you are indeed a spiritual Christian. What God requires of us is simple obedience and faithfulness to serve Him, serve our brethren, and reach out to the lost with the Gospel of Grace.

For many this is a great relief. They've been taught that a person has to speak in tongues to prove that he is really saved, or that he really has the Holy Spirit dwelling within. So they've "learned" to speak in tongues, but when they see from Scripture that this gift is not in operation from the Lord today, they can at last cease their effort to prove their salvation and start to walk by faith and not by sight.²¹

I must also remind the reader that I love my Pentecostal brethren, and I do not overlook their love for the Lord and their service in His Name. They are my fellow members of the Body of Christ, and as long as they stand for the great fundamental truths of Christianity—such as the deity of Christ, salvation by God's grace and the Cross of Christ, the resurrection, etc.—I accept and honor them as my Christian brethren. I have met Pentecostal brethren who have a great enthusiasm and zeal for evangelism and witnessing to the lost. I have also known Pentecostal brethren who have not succumbed to the legalism of some of the more extreme Pentecostal churches, and who do indeed have a joy in their spiritual life. And for this I must honor and commend them. I believe I can learn from my Pentecostal brothers and sisters, but I also believe that they have to be willing to learn from other churches as well.

Eph 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Eph 4:3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

1 Cor 12:25 That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.

²¹ Pastor Dennis Kiszonas, *When Did the Gift of Tongues Cease?*, available online at <http://www.bereanbiblesociety.org/articles/1064006213.html>.

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