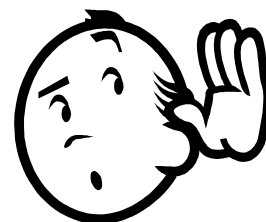


# The Charismatic Tongues Debate— Gibberish or Communication?

## An Analytical Study of the NT Charismatic Controversy



## Study 23

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What kind of blinders do you wear? The horse wears blinders so that he will not see things around him.

He is supposed to walk in a straight line and the things around him would be distractions. But blinders made of leather, with monograms neatly engraved, are not the *only* kind of blinders. In one sense, the horse is ahead of us. *He* has blinders *forced* on him. We human beings make our own blinders and once they are in place, we *greatly* resist their removal—we either glory in them or ignore the actuality that they are there. It is a fact that each one of us carries around *in* his intellect some set of prejudices, preconceived opinions that act as blinders *to* the intellect and effectively shut out reality. These blinder-prejudices are of many kinds—some are born with them. Many, however, are fitted with blinders much later in life. The person, who will tear off his blinders and begin to look around even if it hurts his vanity, pride, and ego, will *quickly* grow in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

*Nevertheless, self-imposed ignorance is of all things the heaviest handicap to such decisive action.*

Knowledge is the great enemy of blindness, partial and absolute, physical or spiritual. Knowledge fights against superstition and irrationality and wins every battle. Knowledge has the ability to free all of us from the blinders we wear. Let us attend each to his individual set of blinders now. Make no mistake. Each of us *does* where a set; the problem is to identify them and tear them off. Opportunity to remove blinders comes toward you so very slowly that you cannot help seeing it, if you *will* see it. It creeps up like a snail, passes you, seems to make up its mind that you are not the person to seize opportunity, *and it is gone in a second*. Some of us miss opportunity because we are too dull to try. Others let opportunity go by, too much startled when they see it, or they are too bewildered to recognize it, to take hold of it. We are like the man who sees his first deer in the forest and forgets to use his gun. 🐾

—Partially adapted from "The Book of Today" © 1928 by Arthur Brisbane

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**Does the Bible teach that Christians should *now* “speak in tongues” during worship services, or at any other time, for that matter? What are “unknown tongues” or “new tongues” according to Holy Writ? How important is speaking in tongues?**

**K**NOWLEDGE puffs up, but love edifies, according to the apostle Paul. An eternal truth often overlooked in our rush to doctrine: Biblical Christianity—*God’s* religion—is a *heart* religion. It is *not* a religion of intellectualism—it is *not* necessary that one knows or understands all things in order to qualify as a Biblical Christian. This ought to set a number of minds at ease.

**“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.**

**“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, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.**

**“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

**“Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away” (1Cor.13:1-8).**

*You don’t have to know all there is to know about Christ or the Bible in order to be a true follower of Jesus Christ.* However, when questions regarding doctrine are raised, it is advisable to begin to educate yourself in the word and to become better acquainted with what the scripture actually teaches. Thus this study on the New Testament phenomenon called “speaking in tongues” has been created.

**“Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know” (1Cor.8:1-2).**

That last line bears repeating: *“If anyone thinks he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.”* This is the essence of pride—one is wrapped up in one’s own sense of importance, which, as this passage indicates, is not very important after all.

Few places exist in the Bible depicting the activity called “speaking in tongues.” Thus, the support for this activity is sparse. Yet, a number of preachers and congregations participate in the exercise of *tongues*, supposedly on the basis of being “baptized with the holy spirit.”

One minister of a charismatic group claims that unless you speak in *tongues* upon baptism (by full immersion), you have not received the gift of the holy spirit which is characterized as the “Holy Ghost.” (Scripturally, the “Holy Ghost” and the “Holy Spirit” are one and the same.)

**Tongue:** 1. A manner or style of speaking in regard to tone, meaning, intonation, etc. 2. A nation, as distinguished by its language (archaic), 3. Synonym: speech, language, dialect, idiom, discourse. [Webster]

Notice that “common usage” defines “*tongues*” as actual languages—a method of communicating information.

**Old Testament, Strong’s:**

#3956... from #3960: the *tongue* (of man or animals), used literally (as the instrument of licking, eating, or speech), and fig. (speech, an ingot, a fork of flame, a cove of water)— + babbler, bay, + evil speaker, language, talker, *tongue*, wedge.”

In the Old Testament, *tongues* usage had a lot to do with actual communication, be it by a “babbling” or an “evil” speaker. Naturally, scripture has to be interpreted according to its context—the place in which it is found, rather than simply with a set definition of a word here and there. Usage is why so many choices are available with most words, and this is true in virtually every language.

**Question:** How important overall is “speaking in *tongues*” as a doctrinal matter?

This depends on the importance *the practitioner* places on *tongues*. It was mentioned earlier that one charismatic pastor believed *tongues* speaking to be an essential part of the baptismal process. Consequently, he and others would construe *tongues* speaking as an essential element of salvation! But does the Bible agree with the charismatic movement regarding the *charismatic concept* of speaking in tongues?

Actually, it *is* important for one to understand the nature of the *tongues* doctrine as a process of growth in Christ. If you understand the phenomenon, you are less likely to be deceived by extra-Biblical doctrinal claims. Otherwise, it is *not* a salvation issue. Far better to speak in love and practice justice, mercy, and faith (**Matt.23:23**).

**New Testament, Strong's:**

#1100—**Glossa**, “of uncertain affinity; the *tongue*; by implication a *language* (spec., one naturally un-acquired):—*tongue*.”

[James Strong, New Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.]

Notice that Strong's Exhaustive Concordance defines the New Testament (NT) Biblical Greek word for *tongue* according to our common usage today—that is, a *tongue* is considered a recognizable language or pattern of speech.

**Language:** L. *lingua*, a *tongue*, language, literally, the *tongue*.

The expression or communication of thoughts and feelings by means of vocal sounds, and combination of such sounds, to which meaning is attributed; human speech... Speech is the language of articulate sounds. [Webster]

For a spoken series of syllables to be anything *other than* a recognizable language meant to impart information immediately from one to another, is to corrupt or to skew the very definition of the word “language.”

It is self-evident that a language (or a *tongue*) was created as a vehicle to convey intelligible and intellectual thoughts via a particular set or pattern of sounds. These sounds are in turn, to be interpreted by the listener according to an established complementary recognizable speech pattern. This results in communication. Such a language is neither gibberish nor unintelligible. A genuine language is not a random series of grunts, unconnected unintelligible sounds, or child-like jabbering which assault one's ear. Language is creative: speech patterns create word-pictures in the mind. Why would an intelligent Almighty God reverse the creation process by reverting to an unintelligible cacophony of noises? When the languages were confounded at the infamous Tower of Babel, the people retained their ability to communicate to *some* degree (**Gen.11:1-9**). Conclusion: “charismatic” speaking in tongues does not represent communication; it is therefore gibberish.

For instance, the words “sofa” or “house” immediately conjure up pictures in one's mind of the subject. Random gibberish is the essence of confusion because our minds are at a loss to create word-pictures. When the sounds of the usual “speaking in *tongues*” strike our ears, they are meaningless—they do not compute—and they are intellectually rejected. Human beings automatically recoil from harsh and confusing noises.

We are created in the image of God (**Gen.1:26**). Ideally we are supposed to have the mind of Christ, if Christ is in you, insofar as Biblical Christians are concerned (**Rom.8:10; 2Cor.13:5; Col.1:27**).

*“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom.12:2).*

A Biblical Christian's mind is supposed to be *renewed*, not jarred into insensibility or drummed into a trance-like state.

**“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2Tim.1:7).**

Christians thus are to have a sound mind, not one that cannot understand what is being said in their presence, even by their own mouths. Christians should not permit themselves to go into a religious coma or stupor, or give themselves or control of their minds, over to any spirit, especially one they don't know, understand, or recognize.

Almighty God is not the author of, the god of, or the creator of, confusion. Gibberish results in confusion. (Besides, God is not in the “spirit-possession” business.)

**Gibberish:** (Ice. *Gabba*)—

rapid and inarticulate talk; unintelligible chatter; incoherent. [Webster]

**“For God is not [the author] of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (1Cor.14:33).** It is anything but peaceful in charismatic churches when the congregation is filled with spontaneous outbursts of “unknown *tongues*” speaking. (If you listen carefully, you may even hear the word “gabba” repeated time and again in a *tongues* monologue.)

**“Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order” (1Cor.14:39-40).**

Paul admonishes the Corinthians not to forbid anyone from speaking in a *tongue*, yet he adds that all things in this regard are to be done decently and in order. Do you suppose rolling on floors in fits of uncontrollable laughter glorifies Yahweh God or Christ?

Does lying on floors as if in a coma, pushing people over backwards, jumping up and down, waving arms with eyes rolled back as though possessed by a demon or malevolent spirit, falling down in a seizure, or demonstrating other frenetic physical manifestations, represent orderliness in godly *worship* services (**cf. Isa. 28:13**)? (These fits often accompany tongues.) From the physical evidence, charismatic exhibitions appear strikingly similar to exotic island voodoo dances much more than they demonstrate genuine biblical Christian worship.

**Question: Does “speaking in *tongues*” have anything to do with evangelizing heathen people in their own language?**

**Y**es, but first, we have to determine what *evangelizing* means. The word “evangelist” ap-

pears only twice in scripture: **Acts 21:8** and **2Tim.4:5**. In one case, Phillip is called an evangelist, and in the other, Timothy is exhorted to do the work of an evangelist. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, tells them that Jesus Christ gave some people to be evangelists (**Eph.4:11**). Voltaire was credited with saying, *If you would speak with me, define your terms*. Good advice.

The Greek word for evangelist is **euaggelistes**, Strong's #2099. It means simply *preacher of the gospel*.

An evangelist, therefore, preaches the gospel or the good message. And since the commission to the Church (the body of Christ) is **"Go... make disciples of all nations..." (Matt. 28:18-20)**, one *must* be a preacher of the good news in order to fulfill this commission. (A preacher is simply one who preaches, with or without regard to church hierarchy or rank.) Ergo, the activity of preaching the good message of the gospel under the direction of Christ is evangelizing or "gospeling." If speaking in *tongues* has nothing to do with evangelizing, then speaking in tongues has nothing to do with the gospel or salvation *whatsoever*. Speaking in *tongues*, as it is *currently presented*, is useless for doing any work of the gospel. Then, what purpose does speaking in *tongues* serve? What advantage is there in speaking in *tongues*?

**"I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1Cor.14:18-19).**

The apostle Paul, in speaking to the Corinthians, was adamant: without some order and interpretation for understanding, speaking in an unknown, foreign, or new *tongue* is worse than useless. In fact, *tongues* activity may even run people off who are genuinely seeking Christ. Such linguistic demonstrations serve no legitimate biblical purpose within services unless as Paul suggests, the interpretation is *immediately* made available.

The answer to the question above is "Yes, speaking in *tongues* *does* have a lot to do with evangelizing heathen peoples in their own language." The Bible, as you may well know, has been translated into virtually every language in the world. All the major and most of the minor languages have their version of the Scriptures. Rather than jumping up in services, the interpreters have set down in offices, and laboriously interpreted (translated) the *entirety* of the Bible for millions of people. And they continue to translate. (*That's* a labor of love.)

Where is the great need for individuals to travel nearly anywhere, especially among the brethren, jabbering in a foreign language reminiscent of the first century *tongues* miracle? Why would God support ongoing *tongues* speaking—the **Acts 2** kind—in this modern age of instant translation and multi-lingual Bibles? On the other hand, it is quite reasonable to as-

sume that God does *not* support the confusion and babble that now passes for *tongues*.

**Question: What about "new tongues" versus "unknown" tongues?**

The biggest difference is that one is scriptural and the other is not. (But this is *not* to assign a value of righteousness or unrighteousness to either one. Something being scriptural or not by nature does not intrinsically make that thing either good *or* bad.)

**"And these signs will follow those who believe: In my name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues..." (Mk.16:17).** (Some early manuscripts do not include Mk.16:9-20.)

The scripture does not say believers *must* speak with new *tongues* or languages. However, many Christians *do* speak with new languages. Witness the missionary movement wherein the native language is learned and virtually adopted by the missionary.

Besides, the Bible has *already* been published in hundreds of languages today. Some of the most obscure nations and *tongues* around the world have a Bible in their language.

As for "*unknown*" *tongues*, the phrase appears six times in **1Cor.14** in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible, but does not appear in the *New* King James Version (NKJV) at all. In *all six cases* of the appearance of the word *unknown* in conjunction with *tongue* in the KJV, the word *unknown* was added by the translators (italicized) and therefore does *not* appear in the original manuscripts.

**Question: Is a "new" tongue a "foreign" tongue, as in an exotic or different language from that of the speaker—a language of which he has no previous knowledge or understanding?**

**Why not?** It would seem reasonable that newness as a feature is defined as that which one has not previously had. A new house is one that you have not owned in the past. Once you live in it, the house becomes less than new—it is a used house. (This is especially true of automobiles.) But it is *still* a house. We often talk about a *new* baby in the same vein. A new language is *still* a language (or *tongue*). A new language is not, by definition, nonsense, or gibberish. A new language is understandable and readable; otherwise, it is not a language. A legitimate language is not a series of disassociated grunts, wheezes, and garbled verbiage.

Yes, a new *tongue* or language would be a "foreign" one—foreign to the person speaking it but only until he begins to use and understand it. Fluency and vocabulary largely determine one's confidence in a new language. Thereafter it is not foreign to him; it becomes a new and useful skill in his possession. A new house, by the

same token, would be foreign to a non-owner of the house, but it would change status as soon as the person bought the place.

However, the “new” *tongue* spoken by an evangelist (preacher of the gospel), would not be new to the person or persons to whom the message is directed, since the speech would be in their native *tongue*. Case in point:

The first NT day of Pentecost is described in **Acts 2**. They—the twelve disciples—were together for one reason. They were all in *agreement* or of one accord (**v.1**). (Unity does not mean uniformity (**cf. Acts 1:14**). Sameness or semblance does not mean symmetry. Agreement of purpose or to be *of one accord* does not mean conformity or agreement in the aggregate. Surely, those prayers they offered were not all identical and repetitious.)

We’re told that the actual number of disciples “*in those days*” was about 120. However, the number of people *in the upper room* cannot be set at 120 by this passage. The twelve disciples just returned from witnessing Jesus being taken up to heaven (**Acts 1:11**). They then left that area, traveled a Sabbath Day’s journey (less than two miles), and entered the upper room (**vv.12-14**).

The next scene opens with Peter standing up in the midst of the 120 disciples. When did the other 108 come into the upper room? They didn’t. They were somewhere else. This preaching event happened some time later, “*in those days*,” which was no doubt sometime between the meeting in the upper room and the day of Pentecost (*vv.15-18*).

Chapter 2 opens with the statement, “**When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place**” (**Acts 2:1**). Thus begins the activities on the day of Pentecost, some forty to fifty days after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But this gathering on Pentecost must have taken place about 10 days after Christ’s ascension.

“**The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up... alive after his suffering... being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God**” (**Acts 1:1-3**). [Pentecost comes fifty days after Passover (**Lev.23:5-14**) and Christ was our Passover Lamb (**cf. Ex.12:21; Mark 14:12; 1Cor.5:7**) who was sacrificed for all sinners.]

“**And being assembled together with them, he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, “which,” he said, “you have heard from me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now”**” (**Acts 1:4-5**).

Evidently, Pentecost was only a few days away—less than ten.

“**And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sit-**

**ting”** (**Acts 2:2**). Notice that they were sitting in a house, not an upper room. By itself, this proves nothing, except that the upper room has now been left out of the story.

“**Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them**” (**Acts 2:3**). Upon who did the holy spirit rest as though divided *tongues* of fire? [Note that the scripture does *not* say it *was actual* fire or that this was a *baptism of fire*. It only *appeared* as fire. This was a baptism of the holy spirit—the visible receiving of the *power* of the spirit of Christ for a particular reason; to be witnesses to the end of the earth.]

“**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth**” (**Acts 1:8**).

The phrase “*to the end of the earth*” could be viewed as “*until time is no more*” or “*throughout the entire earth*.” Either perspective would be accurate in history.

“**I [John the Baptizer] indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire**” (**Matt.3:11**).

The baptism of Christ is twofold, but not necessarily for every person. First, he baptizes new believers with the holy spirit of power, so as to be better equipped to serve God and spread the Good Message to others (or evangelize), and second, he baptizes with fire. Notice that the fire, however, is reserved for the chaff, defined as unbelievers. John addressed *both* believers *and* unbelievers, since some hearing him were baptized for the repentance of sin, and some were not.

“**His winnowing fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly clean out his threshing floor, and gather his wheat into the barn; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire**” (**Matt.3:12**).

The wheat represents the children of God who are saved and given eternal life, and the chaff pictures unbelievers who reap a reward of fire that cannot be quenched by anyone.

“**But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death**” (**Rev.21:8**).

The chaff represents the children of the world, unbelievers, etc., who will suffer a baptism of fire that consequently ends in eternal death. This “baptism of fire” is neither the receiving of the holy spirit nor speaking in tongues.

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

The 120 disciples were filled with the holy spirit. They began to speak with “other tongues”

meaning “other languages”—not gibberish. Gibberish is defined as rapid, unintelligible, incoherent chatter. It comes from the Icelandic word “gabba” meaning “to mock.” Charismatic gibberish is a mockery of the Biblical speaking in tongues.

**“And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5).**

The people in the city, and thus those having access to the Pentecost event, were from all over the known world. This fact also underscores the place of the event—it had to be a large relatively open area or arena where these events took place.

**“And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language (Acts 2:6).**

Here is the crux of Biblical speaking in tongues and proof positive that at the very least, a miracle of the hearing had occurred. It bears repeating. “Everyone” [all who were present from around the world] heard the disciples speaking “in his own language.” This statement may also point to a miracle of speaking in other (foreign) languages as well, as opposed to the miracle of the audience hearing recognizable native speech from unlearned individuals.

**“Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, ‘Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?’**

**“Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:7-11).**

The disciples were from Galilee and unlearned. They were not from Jerusalem, and they were not conversant in all those foreign tongues. The above passage offers additional evidence that the tongues being spoken were bonafide, recognizable languages—not gibberish.

**“So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘Whatever could this mean?’ Others mocking said, ‘They are full of new wine’ ” (Acts 2:12-13).**

Unbelievers made excuses but others were shocked when they realized that the disciples were expounding on the wonderful works of God in their own language. They all understood what was being said. And this is important: No one had to interpret anything. It bears repeating: Interpreters were unnecessary.

**“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it**

**is only the third hour of the day” (Acts 2:14-15).**

Peter stood up “with the eleven” implies that only the eleven were speaking with other tongues, but there is a principle to be invoked here—maybe a couple of them: the implicit must always be interpreted by the explicit, and, never add anything to scripture that may be unwarranted. A conclusion based on mere implication may be dead wrong. Remember, **Acts 2:1-4** indicates all 120 were baptized with the holy spirit.

**“But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of my Spirit on all flesh...’ (Acts 2:16).**

Peter is telling us two important things here that many of us seem to miss:

(1) That which was happening in front of the present multitudes in the first century, was the fulfillment of a particular scripture, **Joel 2:28-32.** Peter said, **“But this is what was spoken”** to his listeners. The event was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. The fulfillment, however, was apparently not total. A few things had yet to transpire in their generation.

(2) This date represents the beginning of the last days (cf. **Heb.1:2; 2Pet.1:20**).

**“This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he poured out this which you now see and hear” (Acts 2:32-33).**

Additional testimony of the fact that, what was seen resting on each disciple was not a fire, but the holy spirit. Being baptized with the holy spirit is a far cry from being baptized with fire. Fire has a way of refining precious metals and destroying most everything organic (**Mal.3:3**).

**Question: Should the practice of tongues speaking be used within a Christian worship service?**

**R**ather than answer that question head-on, Paul answers it obliquely.

**“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church (1Cor. 14:1-4).**

A prophet is not necessarily a “fore-teller” of events. One who prophesies may simply speak under inspiration of the holy spirit as an inspired person.

It is obvious here that Paul prefers inspired speaking above speaking in tongues. According to Paul, a person speaking in a tongue does not

speak to men. (Note: Just because one speaks to God does not mean God is listening!) Apparently, Paul is presenting a different slant on tongues than that which we find in the second chapter of **Acts**. Paul *seems* to give *tongues*-speaking some validity, but do not be fooled by his presentation. It may not be what it appears to be at first glance.

All we can glean about *tongues*-speaking in the first century is that a *tongue* represented a viable language. Paul uses the same Greek word here (Strong's #1100) for *tongues* as is used in **Acts** chapter two, therefore in context, we ought to use the same definition as before. Paul is referring to a real language, not gibberish. And Paul has a secret we all need to learn. (Another question we might entertain is whether *tongues*-speaking is even Christian in origin—or whether it is a manifestation something *other-worldly* that Christians should guard against.)

**“For though I am free from all [men], I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those [who are] under the law, as under the law, that I might win those [who are] under the law; to those [who are] without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those [who are] without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all [men] that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you” (1Cor.9:19-23).**

Paul's secret of success, beyond his closeness with Christ, was his ability to “be all things to all” so that he might save some. Consider this in conjunction with the tongues controversy. It is clear that Paul does not agree with the current method of tongues worship. What did he do? He became a speaker of tongues to a far greater extent than did any of the Corinthians. Paul says he became “**all things to all men**” (1Cor.9:19-23).

And why is the tongues controversy only rampant in the Corinthian Church? **“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you” (1Cor.1:10-11; cf. 3:2-3)**

Why did Paul become a speaker of *tongues*? He apparently did not attend the Pentecost meeting. A simple and sensible answer exists: *Paul took part in tongues so that he might save some that would otherwise be lost by the contentious behavior of zealots within the Corinthian Church.* (Contentions within the church causing a loss of membership take place today.) It is that simple. *And this is key.* Otherwise, Paul's participation in *tongues* and his sugges-

tions about interpreters do not square with the original *tongues* demonstration in **Acts 2**.

His participation and advice or suggestions about *tongues* as they were probably being done in the Corinthian Church, would have signaled a change in methodology. Now, all of a sudden, interpreters are needed in order to make some kind of sense of the affair going on in the Corinthian Church. How did this change come about? Was the holy spirit *really* involved with the Corinthian *tongue* experience? Who thought up the idea of interpreters? Wasn't it Paul? Did they have interpreters before Paul brought up the idea, or were they just going forward without them and without anyone understanding the *tongues* whatsoever? Interpreters of *tongues* are not mentioned prior to Paul's writings in **1Corinthians**.

The only places interpreters are mentioned in the Old Testament (OT) are in **Genesis 40-42** and in **Daniel** when dreams needed interpreting.

**“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?**

**“Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way” (1Cor.12:27-31).**

The apostle Paul would go to nearly any extreme for the gospel's sake, so that he and the brethren could experience the gospel, united as one in Christ. There's a lesson in this for all of us. Why do you suppose a *tongues* controversy came up *only in the Corinthian Church*?

Paul did not necessarily agree with *tongues* worship, and he no doubt thought it was harmful, but banning it outright would probably have caused a riot, and, he would have lost many converts. *Better to gain a few converts at the expense of being misunderstood than to lose the entire Corinthian Church.* With this in mind, Paul's letter becomes more relevant and understandable.

**“I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification” (1Cor.14:3-6).**

Paul is clear: he prefers edification of the church, and a *tongue* without interpretation does not edify the church.

**“But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?” (1Cor.14:6).**

Paul gives four areas that are better to be utilized than tongues.

**“Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air” (1Cor.14:7-9).**

A sound without clarity is confusing. An undecipherable trumpet blast is worthless. Open-forum thoughts or prayers cannot be known unless the words are understandable to everyone’s ears in the congregation, otherwise they fly right over their heads into oblivion.

**“There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me” (1Cor.14:10-11).**

Speaking in tongues alienates brethren! Today it represents a stumbling block. They become strangers and foreigners within the same worship service.

**“Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel. Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret” (1Cor.14:12-13).**

As unnecessary as tongues speaking seems to be, Paul finally offers a compromise (and a challenge) to the zealots within the congregation. Folks, this passage is not a clear support of speaking in tongues within a worship service.

**“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding” (1Cor. 14:14-15)**

More evidence of Paul being all things to all men—he will pray and sing with understanding—not with the unfruitful outbursts of tongues speaking.

**“Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue” (1Cor.14:16-19).**

“Understanding” is the operative word. Paul is not ready to throw in the towel yet and let the zealots have their way. He clearly says he would rather not speak in *tongues* in the church. And we ought to follow this good mature advice, rather than giving in to zealots who prefer to

make demonstrations and spectacles of themselves. In a sense, Paul is saying that speaking in *tongues* is not a salvation issue—speak that way if you must. But his consistent preference is to *not* speak in *tongues*, especially within worship services.

**“Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature. In the law it is written: ‘With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear me,’ says the Lord” (1Cor.14:20-21).**

Paul exhorts them to grow up! Although God might allow people to go through their exercises in *tongues*, they remain deaf to him. The reason they remain deaf is for the same reason we remain blind *and* deaf; we *refuse* to tear our eyes away from our idols, and we *refuse* to listen to God when it contradicts our personal desires.

**“Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe” (1Cor.14:22).**

Paul divides the issue and in a sense suggests they take their *tongues* speaking elsewhere—to the world of unbelievers. Maybe Paul realizes that the world will laugh them to scorn and at the same time he won’t have to bother with them anymore. At least they will have learned a lesson. But *tongues* speakers do not follow this advice today. They prefer to practice their stock-in-trade within sight and hearing of the brethren. When was the last time you saw a charismatic standing on a busy corner talking in *tongues*? And if you saw one somewhere doing this, were unbelievers being convicted and brought to Christ by the person’s action? More likely, the individual would have been hauled off to a mental institution.

**A Challenge:** If you *really* believe in *tongues* speaking according to the Bible, why not hit the bricks with your doctrine, and preach to unbelievers in *tongues* from a street corner? Do it in the open air where unbelievers are gathered. This would certainly go a long way to support your doctrine and may help prove the veracity of your dogma. Get out of the churches and go wherever unbelievers are found. Show *them* your signs and wonders. Convict *them* of their ways, and let believers alone. Have you not the courage of your convictions? But if you fail in this or if you refuse to go—you are *in the wrong business!*

**“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them” (Matt.7:19-20).**

**“Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are**

**uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?” (1Cor.14:23).**

Paul tries again to reason with the zealots. He was no fool. If the gospel is supposed to go to the world of unbelievers so that they might come to believe in Christ, and they visit your congregation, why run them off with fanatical outbursts?

**“But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you” (1Cor.14:24-25).**

**The Bottom Line:** *In all things, glorify Yahweh God and Jesus Christ.* Be examples to the world; let your light shine so that they can see it, understand it, and want some of it.

**“Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” (Jn.4:35).**

The fields were white with harvest in the first century and they are *still* white today. But sitting around in a refuge doing *your thing* and babbling to one another brings no one to the wedding supper. It does not advance the gospel.

**“Then he said to him, ‘A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, ‘Come, for all things are now ready.’ But they all with one accord began to make excuses... So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.’ And the servant said, ‘Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.’”**

**“Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited [called?] shall taste my supper’” (Lk.14:16-23).**

The idea is to compel people to come to Christ, not drive them away. We’re supposed to make it so exciting to know Christ that people will want to be where he is.

Whether by accident or by design, many denominations restrict *their* membership based on narrow “secular church” guidelines—often where those guidelines do not exist in the body of Christ—the Church *Christ* said *he* would build (**Matt.16:18**). And the body of Christ is the *only* important church in the universe today or ever.

What a sad commentary it is to witness man’s devotion to man’s religious machinations in the whole world. And man’s way—the way of the secular church—is precisely why the way is broad that leads to destruction whereas the way

leading to eternal life in Christ is narrow—and few there be who find it.

**“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matt.7:13-14).** Paul continues speaking to the Corinthians about tongues:

**“How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.**

**“If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God” (1Cor. 14:26-28).**

Even in Paul’s day, zealots wanted to jump up and have their say. Everyone wanted to speak or prophesy, or in some way, let the church know that *they* had something important for everyone else, or that they were closer to God than others—but where was the humility in these services? Was there no one humble? Apparently not, since so many were clamoring for attention. Paul said, *“Let all things be done for edification”* and *“If there is no interpreter... keep silent in church...”* which apparently was his way of silencing the crowds of self-seeking vain zealots.

**“And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words” (Matt.6:7).** (Shades of the “Lord’s Prayer”!)

Notice that Paul was echoing the words of Christ.

**“Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane [irreverent, contemptuous; lit. “forth (outside) the temple”: not sacred, common] and idle [useless, vain, empty] babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer” (2Tim.2:14-17a).**

Paul is consistent in his desire to keep order in the churches. In effect, Paul told them all to “Shut up!” and to stop their vain and useless babblings. He said this earlier regarding *tongues*, using logic and reasoning, when he spoke of the speaking in *tongues* only being for unbelievers, and not for believers at all. But did the zealots listen? Apparently not, since Paul eventually compromised by advising the zealots to babble to unbelievers or to make sure an interpreter was on hand.

Believers have nothing to gain by hearing someone speak in a *tongue*—even if an “interpreter” happened to be in the crowd. Paul was no dummy. Believers were found *inside* the

church—unbelievers were mostly elsewhere—somewhere *outside* the church, and hopefully, perhaps, outside of Paul's hearing.

And what of the interpreter—how were the believers in the church to know that what the interpreter said was in fact what was being spoken by the one doing *tongues*? Obviously, no one could know. It might be noted here that the interpreter was also one of the zealots (cf. 1Cor. 14:26-28).

**“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged” (1Cor.14:29-31).**

Again, Paul emphasizes order in the church. Even prophets, who are “inspired” speakers, are to take turns so that “*all may learn and all be encouraged.*” Learning cannot survive pandemonium.

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

Paul gives his punch line, effectively saying that speaking in a *tongue* within services is confusing, at best.

**Question: Isn't speaking in a *tongue* a form of prayer?**

Considering *tongues* speaking to be a form of prayer is not a new thing. Yet, the form may be the problem.

**“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues [from Greek, a bringing together, an assembly] and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward (Matt.6:5).**

Jesus Christ was very explicit about open-air prayer. These prayers that Christ pointed out were not simply opening or closing prayers. They were prayers that were going on all the time—prayers that highlighted the piousness of the prayer-giver. They had plenty of form but no substance.

Any prayer that elevates and glorifies man is not sanctioned for use in the body of Christ. But they are offered up even in churches advocating and advertising purity of doctrine. Many prayers in the churches of God, unfortunately, turn into agonizing, long drawn out sermonettes, and often, the prayer-giver nearly reiterates the sermon. These long-winded prayers are boring to the listeners and perhaps to God also. How can we say “amen” to such thoughtless, careless, and perhaps disrespectful, ramblings?

One other aspect of open-air prayer is the mindless tag line often given after prayers, especially in the churches of God: “*In the name of our soon-coming king.*” Anyone tagging this line at the end of a prayer has at that *very* moment declared to the assembly that he is a prophet—a

foreteller of the future. The blindness of those spouting such drivel is beyond comprehension.

**Fact:** The word “soon” is relative to what the listener thinks it is, and to common usage.

Common usage dictates that “soon” has an air of immediacy about it—hours, days, weeks, perhaps, but certainly not years. Two years, ten years, or twenty years is definitely *not* soon. And praying such nonsense may very quickly turn the self-appointed prophet into a self-anointed *false* prophet. Worse, the person, more often than not, is completely unaware of his status change. What a pathetic state of affairs.

**“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words” (Matt.6:6-7)**

Prayers are supposed to be private matters between the petitioner and Almighty God. The use of vain repetitious prayer is widespread in certain parts of secular Christianity. And speaking in *tongues*—the repetition of a limited and nonsensical vocabulary of phrases and sounds—*is vain repetition.*

**Question: Does the holy spirit do the praying and intercession when someone speaks in *tongues*?**

In the first place, we have to understand that there is only one divine intercessor with God. This intercessor is neither the virgin, Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, nor the holy spirit. It is Yahshua, or Jesus Christ.

Another thought: Is it necessary or scriptural to suggest that an intercessor is needed with our Father? Why? It's not at all certain that a need exists for an intercessor with the Father—after all—are we not his children? And if children, we *already have* direct access to the Father.

**“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world” (1Jn.2:1-2).**

John testifies that Jesus Christ is our advocate with the Father. It is strange that John doesn't make the case for the holy spirit (supposedly a separate person according to the Trinitarian view) being an advocate or an intercessor with God.

**Advocate:** One who pleads the cause of another in a court of law, a counsel, or counselor. One who defends, vindicates, or espouses a cause by argument; an upholder. [Webster] **Synonyms:** apologist, intercessor,

interceder, champion, supporter, paraclete, pleader, promoter, mediator, middle-man.

Clearly, an advocate is the same as an intercessor, and interestingly enough, other synonyms for advocate are *paraclete* and counselor, both words that are used to describe the holy spirit. Yet, did not Christ *already* intercede on our behalf when he took the penalty for all our sins, past, present, and future, upon his back? The advocate (comforter, etc.) was sent so that *power* could be passed on to believers. In effect, baptism and the laying on of hands to receive the gift of the holy spirit *plugs us into* that heavenly source of immense power (**Acts 2:38**).

Using the analogy of an ideal physical father, is there any reason why we *cannot* come *directly* to our heavenly Father with our own petitions, prayers, intercessions, or needs? If not, then you need an intercessor. His children need no intercessor in their personal prayers. The only problem: *maybe Almighty God is not your Father*. According to Christ, his brethren are able to come directly to his Father:

**“Now it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, [that] one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.’ So he said to them, ‘When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven...’ ” (Lk.11:1-2a).**

**COMFORTER** is supposed to be a title of the Holy Spirit. The Greek term is used four times in Jesus’ parting talk with his disciples, **Jn.14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7**. Jerome left it untranslated in the Latin Vulgate, and the word has passed into the English language as “Paraclete.” Wyclif translated it as “counfortour,” however, and Tyndale as “comforter.” It was capitalized in the Geneva Bible and KJV.

The Greek word translated “advocate” in **1Jn.2:1**, is applied to Jesus Christ himself. It means one who is called; Bishop Samuel Hinds wrote that the call may be “for any purpose of need, whether to strengthen, to console, to guide, to instruct, to plead and intercede for, or otherwise to aid.” As applied to the Holy Spirit, RSV translates it “Counselor.” [*King James Bible Word Book*]

Capitalization of proper names, etc., was absent from the early writings. It did not appear in the early Biblical manuscripts at all until long after Christ and all the apostles died.

### Capital Letters and the Bible

Can you imagine a book without capital letters? How would you figure out proper names or places? But that’s the way the Bible (manuscripts) were originally written! So, who determined which names were to be capitalized and which were not? The translators made the decision, of course. Take the “Holy Spirit.” Why do you suppose it is capitalized? *Why do most churches of God and others*

*that do not accept the Trinity doctrine also follow this practice?*

**The Convention:** “Use a capital letter in proper names, principal words in formal titles, whether of people, places, works of art, organizations, government divisions, calendar divisions, or anything that has a proper name.”

Translators probably capitalized “holy spirit” because *they* believed it was a *person* of the “Holy Trinity.”

**Historically:** “Capitals are the large letters (majuscules) used in writing and printing, as distinguished from the smaller letters (miniscules). From the times of ancient Greece and Rome until about the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, all books were written without any distinction regarding the size of letters. But gradually, it became the practice to begin a book (later, also, the chief divisions and sections of a book) with a large capital letter, usually illuminated and often richly ornamental. Today, the initial letters of certain words, particularly proper nouns, and of all words in certain positions (as at the beginning of sentences or as items in a list) are printed or written as capitals” (*Encyclopedia Americana @ 1989, vol.5*). [*The Fellowship Commentator, #96-1, p.3*]

Yet, some folks who read present day Bibles place *much* emphasis on capitalized words as though the capitalization *itself* were proof of deification. But the translators placed capital letters at the beginning of the words “holy” and “spirit” simply because they believed the words ought to be capitalized. Evidently, however, not all translators went along with this scheme.

**“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit” (Matt.28:19, New American Bible).**

**“I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the holy Spirit” (Mk.1:8, NAB)**

**“He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit” (1Thess.4:8, KJV).**

**“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt.28:19, KJV).**

Most Christians, however, believe that the name ought to be capitalized because they believe that the holy spirit is a person, the same way the translators have presented it. And if it *is* a person, *it* may well be able to pray in a “spiritual *tongue*” through humans at will. But that would be called *possession*.

### Names and Titles of the Christ

A number of titles applied to Jesus Christ are related to his person and ministry. In his Messianic titles, he is the *aforepromised*; the *anointed one*; the *Messiah (Christ)*; the *Son*

(*Only Begotten; seed*) of God; *king* of the Jews; the *Lion* of Judah; the *Comforter*; the *Counselor*; the *Prophet (prophecy)*; the *Suffering Servant*; the *Lamb* of God; the High *Priest (great)*; the *Dayspring (east)* and *Day-star*.

In terms of his preeminence and authority, he is *Lord; Head; Prince; Chief Shepherd; Chief Cornerstone; ... the firstborn (of the dead)*; the *firstfruits*; the *forerunner*.

[*Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary Topic Finder*]

According to Vine's Dictionary, Jesus Christ is *the comforter, the counselor, and mediator*. The holy spirit is not mentioned. And did you notice that the King James Word Book pointed out that the word "comforter" was capitalized in the Geneva Bible and in the King James Version. Evidently, it was *not* capitalized in previous versions. This fact might reveal a 16<sup>th</sup> century reversal from the viewpoint of the "comforter" as *not at all* being a "person" of a "Triune" god, to the opposite perspective. It may point to a time in history when the "comforter" began to be looked upon as a "person" of the Trinity.

If we can dispel the notion that the holy spirit is a "person" who is directing you by living inside you as though you were possessed, the concept of "holy spirit-directed" *tongues* speaking should also fade away. Once the realization is made that the holy spirit is not a "person" but a very special power—actually much more than a simple power since it ties in with the spirit in man in a spiritual and mysterious way—then what can it be? *Let's speculate a little bit.*

Once *God's* spirit is removed from the picture, the activity of *gibberish tongues* becomes more closely related to a *possibly* demonic or otherworldly manifestation via a manipulation of man's desires and naiveté.

Let's be candid: Does anyone seriously believe that televangelist Robert Tilton, who "speaks in *tongues*" seemingly on demand, even to the ridiculous point of "hearing a joke from God" on one televised occasion, has the spirit of Christ moving in him? (According to one televised source, outlines of listeners' hands that were to be prayed over and upon by Tilton were found in the trash dumpster outside his office—but the offerings the people sent in had been extracted from the envelopes.) And what of Richard Roberts, yet another televangelist and the son of Oral Roberts, who gets so full of "the spirit" that he has been televised in paroxysms or sudden fits of laughter during services? (I have seen this.) Do these kinds of spasms and outbursts glorify Yahweh?

**"For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1Cor.6:20).**

Rolling on the floor in spasms of uncontrollable laughter and/or spouting unintelligible phrases do not glorify God or Christ.

**"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which**

**war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God [Yahweh] in the day of visitation" (1Pet.2:11-12).**

If it is *not* the spirit of Christ directing *gibberish tongues* (and gibberish is *not* of Christ), then what else could it be *but* another spirit? And if the person is not actually possessed by a demon (*one does not necessarily have to be possessed by a demon to exhibit strange behavior*), then certainly some influence of a spirit-led kind is involved. [Evidence of genuine demon possession is rare outside of scripture, except in anecdotal tales and made-for-TV yarns. Facts are hard to come by since demonic spirits are difficult to nail down.]

Whether the influence is only the spirit in man or man's spirit coupled with negative spiritual influences is difficult to tell. In short, *tongues* speaking *may possibly* be spiritually dangerous. According to the Bible, demons *do* exist, and it is certain that they *do* influence nations *and* individuals. God is *not* a god of confusion, and he is especially *not* part of the pandemonium evidenced during what is supposed to pass for godly worship among charismatic groups.

**Question: Sure, speaking in *tongues* sounds like confusion, but aren't *tongues*-speakers supposed to have someone interpret for them?**

Interpreters were not originally needed, according to the narration of the event at the first New Testament Pentecost meeting. Interpreters were introduced into the *tongues* controversy by the apostle Paul for a very special reason: to quell the uproar created by certain unruly zealots in the Corinthian Church.

**"So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'Whatever could this mean?' Others, mocking said, 'They are full of new wine.' But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour\* of the day' " (Acts 2:12-15). (\*Counting from day-break or dawn, as the 1<sup>st</sup> hour.)**

When Peter and the others spoke in *tongues*, some of the people present suggested that the men were drunk. But did they make this suggestion based on the unintelligibility of what the men were saying? This seems unlikely, since no interpreters were called upon to do their interpretation. It appears more likely that the scoffers heard it all and just dismissed what was being said. Otherwise, something probably would have been said about the scoffers *not* understanding their words.

**Palestinian people** ordinarily ate in the morning and in the evening (Ex.16:12; 1Ki.17:6). The evening meal was called “sitting at the table” (Matt.9:10). It was scheduled when the day’s work was over (Ruth 3:2-7; Lk.17:7-8). Early morning eating, however, was frowned on (Eccl. 10:16); and Peter could argue that the third hour (9 A.M.) was too early for drunkenness (Acts 2:15). [*Nelson’s new illustrated Bible dictionary*]

Although the possibility *does* exist that scoffers might not have understood all the languages—more likely they did understand that which was spoken in their *tongue*—but they were unable or unwilling to recognize the miraculous event for what it was. Yet evidently, the speakers needed no “interpretation”—no one stood up from the audience to interpret the new *tongue*. *And this is key*. The interpretation *did* take place! It was done miraculously in the minds, hearts, and brains of probably both the listeners and the speakers. “...we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God” (v.11b).

Again, the scripture is clear: the languages were heard as though instantly translated into the *tongue* or the language (and dialect) of the listener. No human had to stand up to interpret for the speaker as the practice is today, and as Paul (cleverly?) suggested to those in the Corinthian Church.

What was the result of the first-century style interpretation? It was awe and *wonder*, because they *did* hear the wonderful works of God spoken in their ears. Listeners were thrilled to hear the Bible in their *tongue* and were moved to action—they were converted.

(By contrast, listeners to a charismatic speaking in a *tongue* as done today will *not* hear God’s word spoken in their ears.)

According to the record, thousands were converted and baptized. Thus, they must have been “heathen” or “lost” prior to their conversion. The apostles were not preaching “to the choir” or speaking *tongues* to believers, but to *unbelievers*; exactly the same method Paul later highlights regarding the use of *tongues*.

All *legitimate* language is governed by law. Some noises coming from the human throat passing for languages or *tongues* are not languages, but gibberish, sounds that convey no real intelligence or information to another individual. Many examples of non-language outbursts are standard fare in a number of church denominations. This example is gibberish because the laws of linguistics do not govern such eruptions of human voice-noise and babbling.

Question: Sometimes we don’t know what or how to pray, so does the “Helper” intercede for us?

### The Target Passage:

**“If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another helper, that he may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; but you know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (Jn.14:15-18).**

Notice the last line: Christ is the one coming to you. He does not say another *person* will come to you. Remember, capital letters denoting personal pronouns were not in the original Greek manuscripts. In fact, the helper above is called the “spirit of truth” rather than another “person.”

The word “he” in the above passage should be neuter as opposed to masculine. Notice in the boxes below that the pronoun “he” could be translated in any number of ways including “it.” *“It” and “he” are derived from the same Greek word!* Who decides *which* English word will be used? The translators do.

It has been said that the *holy spirit* in some manner speaks through the person when he speaks in *tongues*. But notice the passage carefully. It clearly says Christ will come to you and that Christ is in you. Now, which is it—Christ or the spirit (as a separate person or entity) that resides in Christians?

**“Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded.”** The minds of the children of Israel were blinded from the shining face of Moses. **“For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.”** Since Christ is the instrument by which the veil is taken away, those who reject Christ—the real Christ—continue to be blind.

**“But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.”** Who continues to read Moses before their congregations? (Moses may be considered the first five books of the Bible, called the *Torah*, plus any other references found elsewhere, such as in the NT and the Ten Commandments. Paul’s primary reference is the contingent of representative *physical Israelites* living in Jerusalem during the first century, but the passage can well be pressed into service in our regard as *spiritual* Israelites (Gal. 3:26-29). Nearly every Christian church and denomination reads Moses to some degree or another before their congregations. **“Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”** Here is the answer: Turning to the Lord removes the veil from your mind and your understanding is opened up. **“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2Cor.3:7-17).** The Lord is the spirit. What spirit? Why, the holy spirit that resides in every true believer in Christ.

**“Not only [that], but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body... Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now he who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit [is], because he makes intercession for the saints according to [the will of] God” (Rom.8:23, 26-27).**

This passage does not support a spirit entity within Christians taking over their body and praying through the human with a different language, however it may be characterized.

**“For though he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you. Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?— unless indeed you are disqualified” (2Cor. 13:4-5).**

By contrast, Paul is clear that it is Christ in you (via God’s spirit). Further, he says we live by the power of God (cf. Rom.8:10 & Col.1:27).

**“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.**

**“For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days” (Acts 10:44).**

This scripture *does not* say that those speaking in *tongues* were speaking any particular language or gibberish. It merely records the fact that the event happened. The point of this passage is that they received the gift of the holy spirit *before* they were baptized.

**Personification: a figure of speech in which a thing, quality, or idea is represented as a person.** CONSIDER: *The ship has been hit, and she may go down. He made his hands to understand. All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee? This stone shall be a witness unto us; for it has heard all the words of the Lord which he spoke to us.*

The New Testament in English has a number of examples of *personification*. Many are obvious, but at least one has been accepted as literal: “he” with respect to the holy spirit.

The pronoun “he,” when referring to the “holy spirit,” points to “personification.” In Greek, pronouns must always agree with nouns, regardless of whatever else is going on in the pas-

sage. According to Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, the same Greek word translated as “he,” is a word that can be translated into English as “he,” “she,” or “it.” Unlike English, Greek nouns have gender, even if the object it describes has no intrinsic gender of itself. The word *table* for instance, is described *with gender* in Greek and in other languages, but not in English. Yet, it is obvious that a chair is neither male nor female. (In Spanish both table, *mesa*, and chair or saddle, *silla*—are feminine. The word *tabernero*, a tavern-keeper, is masculine. *Taxi* in Spanish is masculine. In German both chair, *stuhl* and table, *tisch*, are masculine while *rube*, a sugar beet, is feminine and *rubin*, a ruby, is masculine.)

In the Greek language, all nouns have gender, number, and case. And it is necessary to abide by the Greek rules of grammar when using that language—we must not simply append *our* rules to the Greek, and expect to gain insight from the scripture. *Here’s our problem:* Nouns in English do not have gender, therefore we have difficulty sorting out, identifying with, and understanding why an obviously neuter object (chair, table, etc.) should be described as having gender. And, we *assume* that if the translator installed a word such as “he” in the New Testament text, whatever is described by that word is necessarily a being or personage of one sort or another. We could not be more wrong on this count.

In the Greek, the gender of the word itself has no bearing on the actual gender (if any) of the thing the word describes or names. Under Greek (plus Spanish, German, and others) grammatical rules, gender is nothing more than a classification device.

The three genders of Greek grammar, masculine, feminine, and neuter, are *not* determined *as in English* by conditions of sex. We cannot simply extend or project our grammatical rules into the Greek. In the Greek, names of inanimate objects are of different genders. The terminations or endings of words are a considerable guide as to what gender is in use.

Thus, the word “he” in respect to the holy spirit proves nothing regarding the “person” of the holy spirit. We cannot *honestly* make the claim that *because* the word “he” is used in describing the holy spirit, that the holy spirit therefore, is a masculine personality, or, that the holy spirit is a separate “person”—wholly apart from the Father or Jesus Christ. Those who use this as “proof” that the holy spirit is a separate being (as in the Trinity doctrine) are basing their argument on linguistic ignorance. Their argument is built upon a foundation of sand.

Many Christian exegetes and readers make deceptive and illusory extensions that depend on English translations of the Greek (not bad in itself), the *translators’* capitalization of proper names (not found in the early manuscripts), and the *translators’* consensus and compromise regarding extant doctrines. Add all this to the modern reader’s *own* ideas of grammar based

on *his* understanding of *English* and it is only a short trip to arrive at erroneous conclusions which are then held to be scripturally pure.

An automatic *English* reaction to the word “he” is that the word always has a masculine/personal identity as opposed to neuter/impersonal. This is one reason why the “politically correct” crowd rallied against the usage of “he” as a pronoun in publications. Witness the resulting offensive acceptance, even in many religious magazines, including the churches of God, of the overbearing and artificial “he/she his/her” constructions. To placate a strident minority voice, this unnatural and silly articulation system was developed. The next logical step was, of course, to attempt to remove all gender-based language from our Bibles.

Scripture is clear—a distinct separation exists between Jesus Christ and the Father. They are presented to us as separate beings and each is connected to a theology. The holy spirit, on the other hand, is seen as proceeding *from* the Father as an extension *of* the Father. The holy spirit is clearly subservient to *both* the Father *and* Jesus Christ. The Father speaks to you *by* the spirit, but the spirit is not shown acting independently from the Father or Christ. The holy spirit is not shown speaking to you *by* Christ or the Father. Besides, the holy spirit is never presented to us with a discernable body type. So, to present the holy spirit *as though* it were a person speaking on his own, whether through the agency of a human, or otherwise, is a gross error.

### Pronoun: HE (#846: also IT)

#846 autos #3778 houtos #1565 ekeinos (Hebrew #1931)

**846. autoas, au** [perh. akin to the base of *□* through the idea of a *baffling* wind] (*backward*); the refl. pron. *self*, used (alone or in the comp. of the third pers., and (with the proper pers. pron.) of the other persons:— her, it (-self), one, the other, (mine) own, said, ([self-], the) same, ([him-, my-, thy-]) self, [your-] selves, she, that, their (-s), them ([-selves]), there [-at, -by, -in, -into, -of, -on, -with], they, (these) things, this (man), those, together, very, which. comp. **HE:**

**Note:** This pronoun is generally part of the translation of a verb. Frequently it translates the article before nouns, adjectives, numerals, adverbs, prepositional phrases and the participial form of verbs. Apart from these, it translates one of the following:

**1. autos** (846), “he himself and no other,” emphatic, e.g., **Matt.1:21**, where the RV brings out the emphasis by the rendering “it is he”; **Matt.3:11** (last clause), where the repeated “he” brings out the emphasis; in some cases it can be marked only by a circumlocution which would not constitute a translation, e.g.,

**Matt.8:24**; this use is very frequent, especially in the Gospels, the epistles of John and the Apocalypse; see also, e.g., **Eph.2:14; 4:11; 5:23, 27.**

**2. houtos** (3778), “this, this person here,” is always emphatic; it is used with this meaning, sometimes to refer to what precedes, e.g., **Matt.5:19**, “he (shall be called great)”; **Jn.6:46**, “he (hath seen)”; often rendered “this,” e.g., **Rom.9:9**, or “this man,” e.g., **Matt.27:58, RV; Jas.1:25**; “the same,” e.g., **Lk.9:48.**

**3. ekeinos** (1565) denotes “that one, that person” (in contrast to No. 2); its use marks special distinction, favorable or unfavorable; this form of emphasis should always be noted; e.g., **Jn.2:21** “(But) he (spake)”; **5:19**, “(what things soever) he (doeth)”; **7:11; 2 Cor.10:18**, lit., “for not he that commendeth himself, he (ekeinos) is approved”; **2Tim.2:13**, “He (in contrast to “we”) abideth faithful”; **1Jn.3:3**, “(even as) he (is pure)”; **v.5**, “He (was manifested)”; **v.7**, “He (is righteous)”; **v.16**, “He laid down”; **4:17**, “(as) he (is).”

**Note:** The indefinite pronoun *tis*, “anyone, any man,” is rendered “he” in **Acts 4:35, KJV** (RV, rightly, “any one”); in **Heb.10:28**, RV, “a man.”

[*Vine's complete expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words* [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.]

### Question: Are tongues to be used as personal or private prayer to God?

Anything said in your personal or private prayer time is between you and God Almighty, assuming he is listening and he hears you.

### Article: *Tongues, gift of—*

The Spirit-given ability to speak in languages not known to the speaker or in an ecstatic language that could not normally be understood by the speaker or the hearers.

Apparently the only possibly direct reference in the Old Testament to speaking in another tongue or language is found in **Isa.28:11**, “**For with stammering lips and another tongue he will speak to this people.**” This seems to be a reference to an invasion of the Assyrians. They apparently would speak in another language, one probably unknown to the people of Israel. The apostle Paul later applied this verse to speaking in tongues (**1Cor.14:21**). The apostle Peter considered the phenomenon of speaking in tongues that occurred on the Day of Pentecost (**Acts 2**) as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (**Joel 2:28–32**).

In an appearance to his disciples after his resurrection, Jesus declared, **“And these signs will follow those who believe: In my name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues” (Mk.16:17).**

On the Day of Pentecost, the followers of Christ “were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (**Acts 2:4**). The people assembled in Jerusalem for this feast came from various Roman provinces representing a variety of languages. They were astonished to hear the disciples speaking of God’s works in their own languages. Some have suggested that the miracle was in the hearing rather than in the speaking. This explanation, however, would transfer the miraculous from the believing disciples to the multitude who may not have been believers.

Tongues as a gift of the Spirit is especially prominent in **1Cor.12 and 14**. In **1Cor.12** the phenomenon of tongues is listed with other gifts of the Spirit. As one of the several gifts given to believers as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, tongues is intended, with the other gifts, to be exercised for the building up of the church and the mutual profit of its members. In **1Cor.13** the apostle Paul puts the gift of tongues in perspective by affirming that though we “speak with the tongues of men and of angels” (**v.1**), if we do not have love, the gift of tongues has no value.

In **1Cor.14** Paul deals more specifically with the gift of tongues and its exercise in the church. In this chapter the tongue is not an intelligible language, for it cannot be understood by the listeners. Therefore, a parallel to the gift of tongues is the gift of interpretation. The gift of tongues was used as a means of worship, thanksgiving, and prayer. While exercising this gift, individuals address God, not people; and the result is to edify themselves and not the church (**1Cor.14:2, 4**). This gift is never intended for self-exaltation but for the praise and glorification of God. Paul does not prohibit speaking in tongues in a public service (**v.14:39**). But he seems to assign it to a lesser place than the gift of prophecy. Paul claims for himself the gift of tongues-speaking, but apparently he exercised this gift in private and not in public (**vv.14:18–19**).

The gift of tongues is to be exercised with restraint and in an orderly way. The regulations for its public use are simple and straightforward. People who speak in an unknown tongue are to pray that they may interpret (**1Cor.14:13**). Or, someone else is to interpret what is said.

Only two or three persons are to speak, with each having an interpretation of what is said. Each is also to speak in turn. If these criteria are not met, they are to remain silent (**1Cor.14:27–28**). The gifts of speaking in tongues and their interpretation are to be Spirit-inspired. Paul also points out that tongues are a sign to unbelievers. If these guidelines are not observed, unbelievers who are present will conclude that the people of the church are out of their minds.

The phenomenon of speaking in tongues in the New Testament is not some psychological arousal of human emotions that results in strange sounds. This is a genuine work of the holy spirit.

[*Nelson’s new illustrated Bible dictionary—electronic edition of the revised edition of Nelson’s illustrated Bible dictionary, Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1995.*]

### Ref: Tongues

One common language, *Gen.11:1*.

Strange *tongues*, *Isa.28:11 (KJV)*.

Speaking in language understood, *Isa.36:11*.

Gift of *tongues*, *Acts 19:1-7*.

Paul, glossolalia, *Acts 19:1-7*;

*1Cor.14:18*.

Words beyond normal vocabulary,

*Rom.8:16, 26-27*.

No mention gift of *tongues* in Romans, *Rom.12:4–8; 15:17–19*.

Role of *tongues* in Body of Christ, *1Cor.12:27–31*.

[*Where to find it in the Bible [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996 by Ken Anderson.*]

### Article: TONGUE (-S)

#### A. Nouns.

1. Glossa (1100) is used of (1) the “tongues ... like as of fire” which appeared at Pentecost;

(2) “the tongue,” as an organ of speech, e.g., **Mk.7:33; Rom.3:13; 14:11; 1Cor. 14:9; Phil.2:11; Jas.1:26; 3:5, 6, 8; 1Pet. 3:10; 1Jn.3:18; Rev.16:10**;

(3) (a) “a language,” coupled with phule (5443) “a tribe,” laos (2992) “a people,” ethnos (1484) “a nation,” seven times in the Apocalypse, **Rev.5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15**; (b) “the supernatural gift of speaking in another language without its having been learnt”; in **Acts 2:4-13** the circumstances are recorded from the viewpoint of the hearers; to those in whose language the utterances were made it appeared as a supernatural phenomenon; to others, the stammering of drunkards; what was ut-

