

**SPEAKING IN TONGUES: A Biblical Perspective**  
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**BIBLICAL EVIDENCE**

**What does the Bible teach about tongues speaking?**

**First Statement:** Tongues was always an earthly, foreign language; never multi-syllabic gibberish or an angelic language.

(1) Acts 2:4–6; "<sup>4</sup>And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues....<sup>6</sup>they were each one hearing them speak in his own language." Foreigners from 15 different nations were hearing the gospel in their own earthly language.

(2) Acts 10:46; "For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God." This must have been an earthly language, because the listeners could understand that they were exalting God. If it had been multisyllabic gibberish or an angelic language, they would not have understood what was being said.

(3) Acts 19:6; "...and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying." The listeners could not have known that these disciples of John the Baptist were prophesying if they were not speaking a known earthly language.

(4) 1 Corinthians 12:10; "...to another various kinds of tongues (genos), and to another the interpretation of tongues." This is the translation of racial languages into a language known by the congregation. The gift of "interpretation of tongues" rules out the modern idea that multi-syllabic gibberish is legitimate tongues speaking. It must be a translatable language.

(5) 1 Corinthians 13:1; "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." Paul spoke with tongues of men, NOT tongues of angels. WHY not angels? There are two reasons:

a. The structure in the Greek is a third class conditional sentence (*'ean* with subjunctive mood), which expresses a hypothetical idea, not reality as stated.

b. The context of 13:1 is expressing a hypothetical case for angelic tongues. Notice the exaggeration in verses 2–3 with the term "all" being repeated, and having faith to move mountains. These are exaggerated, hypothetical statements by which Paul is making his point about showing love through spiritual gifts. Speaking with the tongues of angels corresponds to the unreal "all" in the succeeding statements.

c. Given the third class sentence and the exaggeration in the context, this verse would most accurately read; "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels (which I do not), and have not love..."

(6) 1 Corinthians 14:10–11; "There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me." Tongues was considered to be a language known in the world.

(7) 1 Corinthians 14:21; "In the Law it is written, 'By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to me,' says the Lord." This quotation from Isaiah 28:11 refers to the Assyrians who would come and deport Northern Israel. This is the Assyrian tongue, or language, an earthly language.

**The Point of Statement One:** Most Pentecostal and Charismatic preachers and teachers today believe strongly in the concept of Christians having a heavenly language understandable only to God. Most tongues speakers today claim to speak with a non–earthly language. **To suggest that God's gift of tongues is anything beyond an earthly, translatable language is to allow mysticism, fanaticism, and psychosomatic dissociative reaction into the mind and body of Christians.** Tongues were always an earthly, foreign language, never multi–syllabic gibberish or an angelic language.

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**Second Statement:** Tongues were given as a sign for unbelievers for the purpose of authenticating the message of the apostles to those unbelievers. Tongues were not given as a sign for believers.

(1) 1 Corinthians 14:22; "So then, tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe."

a. 1 Corinthians 14:21 quotes from Isaiah 28:11 regarding the Assyrians coming to take Israel into captivity (722 B.C.). The teaching of Isaiah is that Israel will know that her judgment is near when they hear tongues, or languages of her Assyrian captors. Later, Southern Israel would be given this same sign of languages, only it would be the Babylonians (586 B.C.). In the first century, the Romans came to destroy Jerusalem (A.D. 70). Since Rome occupied Israel when the church began, it was the tongues of the Roman Empire that served as a sign for Jewish unbelievers. Paul uses "sign" to stand for a miraculous authentication pointer (Rom.15:19; 1 Cor.1:22; 2 Cor.12:123; 2 Thess.2:9), and as an authenticating sign elsewhere (Rom.2:11; 2 Thess.3:17).

b. Tongues were brought on miraculously by God three times in the book of Acts (2:4, 10:46, 19:6). In each case, there was needed a supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit to convince a NEW group that this new movement known as the "church" was legitimate. The following three Ω's explain this:

ΩActs 2:4; "...and began to speak with other tongues." This was the beginning of the church. This was something altogether different from the Law. When the Holy Spirit came upon those first Christian disciples in that upper room, it was necessary to have a miraculous sign to show unbelieving Israel that God was truly working in a new and different way through the Holy Spirit.

ΩActs 10:46; "For they were hearing them speaking with tongues." This was the beginning of the conversion of Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. God used the supernatural manifestation of tongues to prove to Peter that Gentiles also could be converted. For Peter, it took a three-fold repetition of his vision and the speaking in tongues to convince him that God would be converting both Jews and Gentiles into the church.

ΩActs 19:6; "and they began speaking with tongues." This was a belated introduction of this new work of the Holy Spirit to disciples of John the Baptist. They had virtually been left in the dark about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, so they received the Holy Spirit by apostolic laying on of hands. The speaking in tongues was used by God as a sign to themselves and others that God was indeed working in this new movement.

**\*The use of tongues in Acts was employed as an aid to faith, serving to authenticate God's message and activity.**

(2) Mark 16:17–18 says, "And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues, they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and the will recover."

**The Point of Statement Two:** Tongues were given as a sign to authenticate the work of God in the early stages of the church. Tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers. Tongues used for any other purpose (in private prayer or extensive church usage) are an invalid usage.

**Third Statement:** The gift of tongues, along with gifts of miracles and healings, were associated with the ministry of the first century apostles. When the first century apostles died off, the miraculous paraphernalia connected with the apostle's ministry also died off.

(1) 2 Corinthians 12:12; "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles." There are many truths to learn from this verse.

a. Biblically speaking, a true apostle was an individual who had been chosen personally by Jesus Christ Himself to be a follower of Christ. In the gospels, Jesus handpicked his 12 disciples. After the church began in Acts 2, the disciples were then called apostles. But notice in the following verses the requirements for those who would be called true disciples or apostles of Jesus:

ΩActs 1:21–22—in the selection of Matthias as the replacement for Judas, it was necessary for Matthias to have companied with the Lord, to have been around since the baptism of John, and to have been a witness of Jesus' resurrection.

ΩActs 9:4–5—Paul became an apostle because he had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ in His resurrected state. Paul was a true apostle because he visually encountered Christ.

Ω1 Corinthians 9:1; "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?" Paul vindicated his apostleship by stating that he had seen the Lord (in Acts 9).

ΩEphesians 2:19–20 describes the church, God's household, "having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone." When a building is being constructed, the foundation is first laid. Once the foundation has been laid, there is no longer any function for additional foundation stones. The superstructure is then built upon the foundation (Eph.2:21–22). This verse teaches that Christian era apostles and prophets were foundational to the church, and that once the foundation work of the apostles and prophets was completed (such as church planting and writing the New Testament), their function ceased. Biblically speaking, there are no more apostles or prophets operating in the church today. [More on cessation of prophecy below]

(2) Hebrews 2:3–4 teaches that the miraculous events associated with sign gifts was PAST TENSE to the Jewish recipients of the letter to the Hebrews; "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will." The recipients of this letter were second generation Christians who had not had the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit repeated in their presence. The presence of miracles in the first century was intended to confirm in the minds of unbelievers the authenticity of the gospel message of Christ. The writer of Hebrews seemed to be unaware of the existence of the sign gifts in the church at the

time he wrote Hebrews (A.D. 68).

(3) As noted above, tongues was used three times in Acts (chs. 2, 10, 19). In each case, there were apostles present to verify that the gift of the Holy Spirit has been given to each of these three unique groups. The unique groups were: Acts 2—unbelieving Israel living in Jerusalem; Acts 10—Gentiles who first got saved; Acts 19—disciples of John the Baptism who had not known about the coming of the Holy Spirit."

The apostles were always associated with the use of the sign gifts and miracles in the early church. With the cessation of the gift of apostleship came the cessation of the use of the sign gifts, since these gifts were called "the signs of a true apostle" (2 Cor.12).

(4) Mark 16:17–18 says, "And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues, they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." If tongues was still operative today, then Christians should also be able to drink deadly poison and be bitten by poisonous snakes with no ill effect. The fact that Christians die every year from poison and snakebites testifies to the fact that these miracles (including tongues) were intended for authentication during the apostolic era.

**The Point of Statement Three:** Since the Bible teaches that the gift of apostleship only operated during the early years of the church, that makes the apostolic period unique in the church age. When John, the youngest apostle, died near the end of the first century, the apostolic era also came to an end. The end of that era also brought about the end of the sign gifts, since the sign gifts were directly associated with the apostles who had personally encountered Jesus.

**Fourth Statement:** Tongues ceased when the maturity of the church was achieved at the closing of the canon of Scripture in the first century.

1 Corinthians 13:8–11; "Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things." Paul is teaching several truths in these verses:

(1) Tongues, knowledge and prophecy represent that which is partial ("in part") and incomplete.

(2) Tongues is for childhood ("I used to speak as a child"). Tongues was intended to cease as manhood arrives ("when I became a man, I did away with childish things").

(3) Tongues, knowledge, and prophecy will cease when the perfect (teleion) comes.

It is critical to understand what Paul means by "perfect" (teleion), because this will determine the approximate time of the cessation of tongues. **Many commentators, even some who believe that tongues ceased in the first century, believe that the coming of the perfect is a reference to the second coming of Christ. This view is fraught with several weaknesses:**

First, Paul never uses the word 'teleion' to refer to absolute perfection. His usage always carries the idea of maturity, wholeness, or completeness.

Second, to refer to 'teleion' as perfection speaks of a quality rather than a quantity, and would not be appropriate as the complement to "in part," which refers to quantity. Since the phrase "in part" is the idea of quantity, the idea of teleion should also carry the idea of quantity. Thus it should be translated "complete" or "whole."

Third, Paul's own statement in chapter 13 indicates that these revelational gifts (knowledge, tongues, prophecy) were already considered a dying breed of gifts in the early church. In 13:13 he says, "But NOW abide faith, hope, love, these three." His use of the word "now" indicates that the shift from the partial to the complete was already happening by the A.D. 60's.

Fourth, if the revelational gifts were to cease at the second coming (that is, if teleion was a reference to the second coming), then faith, hope and love would continue on for eternity after the second coming. But faith and hope will not be necessary after the second coming of Christ. The cessation of the "in part" gifts should be placed some time before the second coming of Christ.

Fifth, if tongues were to continue until the Second Coming of Christ, then knowledge and prophecy would also be operative until then. Prophecy has already been determined to be a foundational gift for the early church (Ephesians 2:20), and there has not been demonstrated since the first century any Christian prophet whose predictions are 100% accurate (test for prophets in Deuteronomy 18:20 is 100% accuracy). Since there are no prophets today, there are also no biblical tongues speakers today.

Sixth, the Old and New Testaments teach that prophecy and miracles will start up at the second coming of Christ when Jesus establishes His kingdom rather than cease (Isaiah 35:5, 61:1; Acts 2:17). If the 'perfect' in 1 Corinthians 13 was the second

coming, then these revelational gifts should cease then. But they will not. They will start up again at the second coming. It is not possible that this perfection could refer to the second coming.

**\*Rather than take the "perfect" as the second coming of Christ, it is best to understand how Paul used the term "teleion" in this book. In this text, Paul is comparing two important Greek words, napios and teleion. There are two other texts in 1 Corinthians where Paul also compares these two words:**

Ω1 Corinthians 2:6; 3:1; "Yet we do not speak wisdom among those who are mature (teleion);....And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes (napios) in Christ."

Ω1 Corinthians 14:20; "Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes (napios), but in your thinking be mature (teleion).

Both of these verses use "teleion" as the idea of spiritual maturity achievable in the human condition, during the present age. When Paul says in chapter 13 "I put away childish (napios) things" and "tongues will cease.....when the perfect (teleion) comes," he is comparing the same two terms and refers to a time when the church would become mature in its completeness of revelation, since tongues, knowledge and prophecy are revelational gifts. These gifts are "in part," while the maturation of the church would be "teleion," or completeness. The sole means of direct revelation from God in use by the church today is the Bible. The canon of Scripture was completed when John the apostle wrote the book of Revelation in the early A.D.90's. While these gifts were necessary in the early church before the canon was completed, they became unneeded in the church once the canon was complete. This was the time when the church moved from a state of dependency and incomplete knowledge to a state of independence and complete knowledge.

The idea of seeing "face to face" (1 Cor.13:12) is not a reference to seeing Jesus at the second coming, but rather continues the metaphor of completeness as indicated by teleion. Seeing through a glass is figurative language used to illustrate the idea of "in part." Therefore, face-to-face would naturally be explained as figurative since it follows logically after seeing through a glass. When the Scriptures were written, the church could see face to face. The spiritual maturity of the church was acquired when it possessed complete revelation from God.

**The Point of Statement Four:** It is theologically critical to understand that spiritual gifts such as tongues, knowledge, and prophecy were revelational gifts, used for the purpose of conveying propositional truth from God to man. It is also critical to accept the fact that the completed Word of God is God's complete revelation to mankind, and that God is not currently engaged in bringing fresh revelation into Christianity. Since

there are no proven New Testament prophets giving accurate and direct revelation to the church today, it logically stands that tongues ceased along with prophecy, since all three revelational gifts were to cease together (1 Cor.13:8).

**Fifth Statement:** In the early church, tongues was considered to be the least important of all the spiritual gifts.

(1) Tongues is last in Paul's list of gifts. First Corinthians 12:28; "And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues." Paul's use of first, second, third refers to order of importance. Tongues is last on the list. Given the fact that Paul only mentions tongues in the Corinthian letter suggests that tongues speaking had been running wild at Corinth.

(2) **Paul considered speaking in tongues as a sign of spiritual immaturity.** First Corinthians 13:11; "When I was a child, I used to speak as a child...when I became a man, I put away childish things." Rather than being a sign of spirituality or having a special communion with God, tongues is a sign of immaturity.

(3) Paul considered the edifying gifts to be more important than tongues, since the others gifts are used with a directly understandable language. First Corinthians 12:31; "But earnestly desire the greater gifts." **Even in the first century, when biblical tongues was in use, it was considered a lesser gift.**

(4) **Paul reprimanded the Corinthians for their private and selfish use of tongues, teaching that prophecy is a greater gift.** First Corinthians 14:4-5; "One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but one who prophesies edifies the church. Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying." Paul is not suggesting that tongues can be used for self-edification, but is rather rebuking the Corinthians for their selfish use of tongues. As these verses indicate, spiritual gifts are to be used for the edification of the church, not for self. Tongues cannot do that, because its purpose is for a sign to unbelievers.

(5) Paul again states that tongues is an inferior gift not intended for wide usage in the church. First Corinthians 14:19; "...in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than 10,000 words in a tongue." Tongues were not an important gift for the church or for usage in the church gathering.

**The Point of Statement Five:** It is a common teaching among charismatics today that tongues is a useful and important gift for individuals in the church. That notion has no basis in Scripture, since the above Scriptures teach the inferiority of the gift.

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**Sixth Statement:** According to the New Testament, there are at least eleven principles or guidelines that all Christians with the gift of tongues must observe.

(1) The tongues speaker must be using an earthly, translatable language. [See Statement One above for verification]

(2) The tongues speaker must have obtained the gift through a sovereign act of God the Holy Spirit, not by self-effort. 1 Corinthians 12:11, 18, 24. Possessing the gift of tongues was never a matter of personal choice.

(3) There should be a balanced distribution of the spiritual gifts in any Bible believing church. First Corinthians 12:17 and 30 teach that certain Christians have certain gifts. This means that any church containing mostly born again members should have a diversity of ALL the gifts of the Spirit. It would NEVER be appropriate to suggest that anyone who desires could speak in tongues, or that everyone in the church should speak in tongues.

(4) The tongues speaker must be able to speak more than one earthly language, since 1 Corinthians 12:10 says, "to another various kinds of tongues." Here a singular person receives a plurality of tongues.

(5) The tongues speaker must exercise the gift in love. 1 Corinthians 13:1; "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."

(6) The tongues speaker must use his gift to edify the church, not to edify self. 1 Corinthians 14:5, 12, 26. These Scriptures state that it is not permissible to use tongues for the edification of self, just as it is inappropriate to use any spiritual gift for the edification of self.

(7) Tongues must be used as a sign for unbelievers. 1 Corinthians 14:22. [See Statement Two above for verification]

(8) The use of tongues by Christians in the assembly must not cause confusion. 1 Corinthians 12:3; 14:6, 16, 23, 33.

(9) Only two or three could use the gift in a public service. 1 Corinthians 14:27; "If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn."

(10) The language of the tongues speaker must be interpreted, or the speaker must remain silent. 1 Corinthians 14:27–28; "...and let one interpret; but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church."

(11) Women are never permitted to speak with tongues in the church assembly. 1 Corinthians 14:34; "Let the women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak."

**The Point of Statement Six:** To fulfill all these guidelines for tongues speaking is virtually impossible today. Charismatic Christians and churches regularly abuse the clearly stated regulations laid down by the apostle Paul. **If Christians followed all of these guidelines today, the modern tongues movement would soon disappear.**

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**Seventh Statement:** The apostle Paul's pro-tongues statements in 1 Corinthians were given to temper the harshness of his argumentation with the Corinthians, not given to suggest that Christians today should seek tongues.

- (1) 1 Corinthians 14:5; "Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues...."
- (2) 1 Corinthians 14:18; "I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all."
- (3) 1 Corinthians 14:39; "...and do not forbid to speak in tongues."

**All of the above statements are given in the context of Paul's explanation that prophecy is better and more desirable than tongues.** Given the fact that Paul was coming down so hard on the Corinthians for their abuse of speaking in tongues, these statements were given in the midst of his rather heated argumentation for the purpose of balancing his argument. Paul was not trying to silence tongues speaking all together, but was merely pointing out that prophecy is superior to tongues. What he means by the above pro-tongues statements is this: "Even though prophecy is superior to tongues, it doesn't mean tongues has no purpose or value for the church." And of course, that usage was limited to the first century when the church was in its infancy stage.

**The Point of Statement Seven:** It is a very common defense for those in the pro-tongues movement to appeal to the above three verses and apply them directly to Christians today. That simply is not appropriate, given the fact that **the letter [1 Corinthians] was written to the first century Corinthian church, and that the context of those statements concerned the superiority of prophecy over tongues. Even when Paul said he wished all could speak in tongues, he was not expecting universal compliance. He had made the same statement about celibacy (7:7).**

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### **Other questions regarding speaking in tongues**

(1) **Is tongues something that can be learned, practiced, or otherwise achieved based upon a believer's personal decision to get it? No.** The New Testament

contains no indications that tongues was induced artificially as in pagan religions by liquor, narcotics, frenzied dancing, rhythmic repetition of formulas, self-mutilation, or emotion-charged rituals. As a spiritual gift, tongues were never an issue of desire, skill, or talent. Those who spoke in tongues in no way earned, looked for, or expected to speak in tongues, because in each case in Acts they had never heard of or experienced such a phenomena before.

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit gives gifts according to His own will. 1 Corinthians 12:11; "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills." In Acts 2, 10, and 19 tongues were given to individuals who had no idea it would happen. It was a sovereign act of God, just as in Corinth. A Christian who uses 'starter' words to get tongues is opening the door of his mind to mysticism and uncontrolled psychosomatic behavior. He is not opening the door of his heart to the Holy Spirit.

**(2) Is Romans 8:26 talking about speaking in tongues?** Romans 8:26 reads, "And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." Many charismatics use this verse to explain how they got tongues. They suggest that they were at their wits end about something and did not know how to pray about it. So the Holy Spirit took over and the tongues started. The problem with this is that Romans 8:26 is not referring to any audible prayer sound or language, but refers to groanings too deep for words. When the Holy Spirit prays, there are no words. **The intercessory work of the Holy Spirit in praying for Christians takes place continuously, unknown to Christians, just as Jesus' intercessory prayer takes place without human knowledge or understanding** (1 John 2:2).

**(3) Is tongues making a comeback as the "end" draws near?** **No.** Joel 2, as quoted in Acts 2:17, says that the restoration of signs and wonders will come when the day of the Lord begins, which is after the rapture of the church. In 2 Timothy 3, when Paul refers to the last days of the church age, he says nothing about the restoration of the miraculous gifts, but instead predicts a great falling away from the faith. [See end of Dr. Moulton's paper for commentary on his statement regarding 2 Tim 3:2.] We do not expect a revival of signs and wonders until after the rapture. Since tongues is associated with the babyhood stage of the church according to 1 Corinthians 13:8-13, and tongues ceased when the church left its babyhood stage, there is no reason for the church to return to tongues.

**(4) Is tongues a sign of a post-conversion baptism of the Holy Spirit?** **No.** Prior to the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 the believers in Jerusalem waited for the baptism of the Spirit. But since the day of Pentecost, the baptism of the Spirit is given to Christians the moment they trust in Christ as Savior. Notice the teaching in 1 Corinthians 12:12; "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jew or Greeks,...." To

be baptized by the Spirit means to be placed (dipped, since bapto means 'to dip') into the body of Christ. This occurs instantly at salvation, not subsequent to it. All Pentecostal churches and many charismatic churches teach that tongues is a sign of the Holy Spirit baptism.

**(5) Does Isaiah 53:4–5 promise physical healing in the atonement of Christ?**

Isaiah 53:4–5 reads, "Surely our griefs he Himself bore, and our sorrows he carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed."

This verse is commonly understood by charismatics to teach that Christ's atonement provides healing for Christians who have faith. The weaknesses of that interpretation are many. First, the word "heal" in literature does not always refer to physical healing. The context of the usage of that term, just like any other biblical term, must be analyzed to explain the meaning of "healed." Humankind's problem in Isaiah 53:4–5 is not physical illness, but spiritual illness because of sin. Notice in verse 5 the terms "transgressions" and "iniquities." The atonement of Jesus Christ provided healing from sin, forgiveness of sins. By the scourging and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, he made provision for humanity to be "healed" from its sin problem. The healing in Isaiah 53 is healing from sin-sickness, not physical sickness. Hebrews 12:13 also uses the concept of healing in a spiritual healing sense.

Second, In the church today, God can choose to heal a sick or diseased individual through prayer as taught in James 5:13–16. But it cannot be said that the physical weaknesses of the body have been healed by the atonement of Christ, since Paul says in Romans 8:23 that **Christians must wait for the coming redemption of the body.** Our bodies will be redeemed at the rapture of the church when the perishable will put on the imperishable (1 Cor.15:53f). If the atonement provided physical healing, then Christians should not get sick and should not die. Experience shows that this is not the case. **Even the most faithful Christians get sick and die all the time.**

Third, even Paul's own associates in ministry were not always healed, though Paul had the gift of healing. Timothy had a stomach ailment that Paul said could be controlled by the use of wine (1 Timothy 5:23). Epaphroditus was sick for a period of time until God restored him (Philippians 2:25–27). Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20). Paul himself struggled with a physical ailment he called a "thorn in the flesh." He prayed three times for its removal and it never went away, because God intended for that ailment to have a spiritual purpose in his life (2 Corinthians 12:7–10). If there was healing in the atonement, then there would not be sickness in the lives of those who have been atoned. **Only sin was dealt with at the cross.**

First Peter 2:24 repeats the thought of Isaiah 53:5, "and He Himself bore our sins....on

the cross....for by His wounds you were healed."

**(6) Was tongues a private prayer language in the early church? No.** Since tongues was a spiritual gift, and all spiritual gifts are for use for the benefit of others, then tongues could not be a private prayer language. It would make no logical sense for God to give only certain Christians (those who had been supernaturally given the gift of tongues) a special way to pray, while not providing this avenue of prayer for other spiritually gifted Christians.

**(7) What does it mean to "pray in the Spirit" (1 Cor.14:14–15)? To pray in the Spirit simply means to pray, not to pray in tongues.** Paul recommended that all prayer be of the spirit and of the mind; "I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also" (14:15). Tongues speaking by itself is unfruitful prayer, because the meaning of the communication is not understood. To pray in ecstatic speech or even in New Testament tongues without engaging the mind is a heathen practice. With biblical tongues there was never a passive, trance–like state of total emptiness.

## **THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE**

### **What does church history teach about tongues speaking?**

#### From the Apostolic Fathers

The opinions of both Irenaeus (Against Heresies, V. vi. 1) and Chrysostom (Homily (xxix) on 1 Cor. 12:1–11) are that the gift of tongues was the ability to speak in unlearned foreign languages. Apart from Mark 16, Acts and 1 Corinthians, these are the only references to tongues known to be in writing in the first four centuries of the church. There is not one shred of evidence in the extensive writings of the early church fathers that speaking in tongues was practiced in the churches after the first century.

#### From the Didache

The Didache is a marvelous ancient document that provides a glimpse into the kinds of things that were happening in the churches of the early centuries A.D. There is no evidence from the Didache that any "signs and wonders" were occurring in the church at that time.

#### From the Reformation

The Protestant Reformation (c.1517 A.D.ff) was a powerful work of God that brought about the salvation of thousands of souls through the discovery of salvation by faith alone. Clearly the power of God was at work when hundreds of churches were established across Europe as a reaction to the institutionalized Roman Catholic

Church. There were no gifts of tongues, miracles, or healings associated with the Protestant Reformation. One would think that since the sign gifts were given to authenticate the message of God, they would have been used by God to spur the Reformation onward. But they were not.

#### From the Pentecostal Movement

The Pentecostal Movement is a 20th century phenomena. Until the advent of Pentecostal theology and speaking in tongues at the turn of this century, there have been only scattered accounts of groups engaging in tongues, and those engagements have been non–earthly, ecstatic utterances.

#### From the Charismatic Movement

The charismatic movement is a later 20th century phenomena (ca.1960 to the present). This movement was born when Pentecostal speaking in tongues was brought into mainline Catholic and Protestant churches, to the extent that today, some 30 years after its inception, there are charismatic Catholics, Lutherans, Episcopalians, evangelicals, and others.

**Conclusion on the Historical Evidence: The historical evidence supports the biblical evidence that tongues ceased in its use and purpose toward the close of the first century A.D.** If the miraculous sign gifts had been operative from 100 A.D. and onward in the church, there would have been mention of it by the apostolic fathers, by the medieval fathers, the great Reformers, the Puritans and others, because these kinds of things do not go unnoticed. The lack of historical evidence for speaking in tongues casts serious suspicion on the activities of the 20th century tongues movement.

#### **Comments from various biblical scholars:**

**Robert Gundry**—"The New Testament presents glossolalia (tongues) primarily as a convincing miracle, only secondarily as the communication of a message, for communication alone could be accomplished more easily without other tongues...."

**Zane Hodges**—"Too often it is incorrectly assumed that the existence of an given spiritual phenomenon in the days of the primitive church must automatically presuppose that the same phenomenon should be apparent today. But no matter how often this assumption may be made, it is patently false.....The failure of the modern tongues movement to display any discernable consciousness of the plain Biblical purpose of this gift stands as a powerful argument against the movement's genuineness and validity."

**Jody Dillow**—"Even in the foundational stage of the church, when miracles abounded, tongues was considered an unimportant spiritual gift in comparison with

the others. If it was that unimportant in the foundational stage, why is it given so much eminence today? The whole point of 1 Corinthians 14 is to show the inferiority of tongues to the gift of prophecy....In verses 14–19 Paul observes that tongues are an inferior method of worship, prayer, and praise."

**C.I. Scofield**—Let it be observed that the 'tongues like as of fire' and the 'sound as of a rushing mighty wind' (at Pentecost) were lacking when God gave the Spirit to the first Gentile converts...Let us now note that the angelic chorus praising God at the time of the birth of Bethlehem's Babe was heard but once, and but by one elect company of shepherds. The star which guided the Magi of the East to the new-born Babe, served but for one trip, and that only to an elect few...The fact that the Bible does not give a hint of the manifestation of the sign gifts after the close of the Book of Acts period, must carry convincing evidence to the careful student who compares Scripture with Scripture, that they have been retired."

**Robert L. Thomas**—"Since Paul was associated with the author of Acts, he must have known that miracles, signs and wonders diminished rapidly as the church grew older. The decrease is quite sharp, whether reckoned from the usage of *dunamis*, *semeion* and *teras* (Greek words for power, sign, and wonder) in the book or from more general descriptions of evidential happenings between Acts 1 and 28. If Luke's work is a reliable guide, miraculous works to accredit the message diminished very rapidly during the first thirty years of the church's history. Along with his awareness of diminishing works of verification, Paul also knew that an objective record of "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" was little by little being put into written form (cf. 2 Peter 3:15–16). If allowed to continue, this growing canon would some day reach completion, like its Old Testament counterpart, and a new stage of the church's maturity would result."

**Closing Thesis Statement: The Bible teaches that God's gift of tongues, the miraculous giving of the ability to speak languages never learned, ceased in their use and purpose by the end of the first century, A.D. There is no time indicated in Scripture to suggest that after the first century A.D. tongues would come back.**