

# Tongues Have Ceased – The Scriptural Proof

By Lucien J. Le Sage, Jr.

*“Whether there be tongues, they shall cease...”* (1Cor 13:8). It is my belief that the Bible teaches that the Biblical gift of tongues has ceased for our present day, and I will attempt to show that the present day tongues movement is not the tongues of the 1<sup>st</sup> century Church.

It is remarkable to me that people can read 1st Corinthians chapters 12 through 14 and come away and say that Paul was encouraging the use of tongues rather than trying to wean the infant church of the Apostolic age away from the use of tongues and prepare them for the time that they would cease.

## The Purpose of Signs and Wonders

We need to start by first establishing the Biblical basis for signs and wonders. The Jews had been under the Mosaic system of worship for some time and had long waited for the promised Messiah. So, when Christ came on the scene and the Apostles preached Jesus to be the Son of God, some proof was necessary so that men, especially the Jews, would have no excuse to reject the Gospel message. The Jews were zealous of signs for proof of anything. You may remember that the scribes and Pharisees wanted a sign from Jesus (Matt 12:38). Jesus’ answer to them was *“an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign”* (Matt 12:39). It is one thing for God to grant signs, but another to seek after signs in order to believe. The fact that the Jews were zealous of signs is made evident by Paul’s words in 1Cor 1:22 where he states, *“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.”*

The Bible tells us that the apostles authenticated what they were preaching with signs and wonders. *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was **confirmed** unto us by them that heard him; God also **bearing them witness**, both with **signs and wonders**, and with divers **miracles**, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”* (Heb 2:3-4). Notice the writer says “them” and not “us.” In the days that Christ’s apostles preached they only had the Old Testament and were preaching that the Old Testament ceremonial system had been replaced. They were preaching that Messiah had come and fulfilled all that the Old Economy’s system of worship had pointed to. That was a thing that needed to be backed up by signs and wonders. Now, how do we back up what we are preaching to be true? By the Bible, and nothing else! As Paul said, *“Let God be true and every man a liar.”* (Rom 3:4) Jesus tells us that His *“word is truth”* (John 17:17).

Concerning the purpose of signs during the time immediately following Christ’s resurrection and ascension we read in Mark’s gospel, *“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and **confirming the word with signs following**”* (Mk 16:20). It should be pointed out at this point that tongues were for a sign, not to them that believe but to them that believe not (1Cor 14:22).

## **Biblical Tongues were a Language**

The second thing that needs to be pointed out is that the tongues of the New Testament church were a language and not as one writer put it, "Shung da la mee ah" over and over. In the Acts of the Apostles we see that on the day of Pentecost that the disciples spoke in the native languages of men from other regions who had come to Jerusalem to worship as Jews. These devout Jewish men from various nations heard the disciples speak the wonderful works of God in their native tongue. "*And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?*" (Act 2:7-8). (See Acts 2:8-11 for the languages that they spoke.) The disciples spoke these languages without ever having learned them. I have heard it said that after a very young age if a man learns another language, he speaks that language with an accent. Yet these men were amazed that the disciples, who were all Galileans, spoke their native languages as though they were the disciple's own language. "*Are not all these which speak Galilaeans?*" they asked. This was truly a sign and a wonder from God. Now, if no one could have understood the language, then it would have been no sign at all. The fact that Biblical tongues was a human language that could be learned is evident in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:16, 23-24 where the word "*unlearned*" is used for those who had not learned the tongue. It has also been pointed out by other writers on this subject, that expert linguists have examined recordings of modern tongues and say they are not languages of any kind. These same language scholars say that no more than two vowel sounds and very few syllable clusters are present, and that the sounds they make are related to their native language and not to another language and bear none of the marks of any possible language.

## **What about Unknown Tongues?**

In the King James Version the term "*unknown tongue*" is used several times in the translation of Paul's epistle to the Corinthians. However if you will notice, the word "*unknown*" is in *italics* which means the word is supplied by the translators and was not in the original Greek. The word is put there for clarification, yet it has led to confusion. The tongue was indeed "*unknown*" to the person speaking it, but was a known language to someone in the world. As we have already shown Biblical tongues were languages used by or known to ethnic groups in the world. They are not some unknown language or gibberish.

## **When did Biblical Tongues Cease?**

I can remember in my early years of being a Christian that a young man, who was a song leader in the Baptist church I attended, made the statement that tongues had ceased when the Bible was completed, and I responded in a rebuking sort of way, "Where did you get that?" He couldn't give me a good answer, other than it was what he was taught. He had only heard that, and he couldn't give me a Biblical reason. I had hoped he could have, for I would have believed him. It was a few years later, under sound teaching in a sovereign grace Baptist church, that I learned that the young man was indeed right.

*“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1Co 13:8-13).*

Before we go any farther let us point out that there will be a time when only the three gifts of faith, hope and charity will abide. In 1Co 13:13 we read, *“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”* Concerning “charity” Paul had already said, *“Charity never faileth”* (1Co 13:8). The word “abideth” means to “remain” or “continue.” When Paul said that prophecies would “fail” and special knowledge by revelation would “vanish away,” he used a Greek word that meant to be “abolished” or “cease.” He did not mean that the prophecies would fail to come to pass or be true, but that the gift of prophecy would cease in the church.

The fact that charity (love of God) is the only gift that will never fail, tells us that there will be a time in which all of the gifts are in existence. There will be another time when the three; faith, hope and charity are in existence. Then finally when charity by itself will be in existence. The Charismatics that I have spoken with tell me that all the gifts are still in existence until Jesus returns, but there is a problem with that position, for when is the time of faith, hope and charity? When Jesus returns for me I will not need faith and hope. This is proven by the definitions that the Bible gives concerning both of these gifts. Concerning faith, we read in the book of Hebrews, *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things **not seen**”* (Heb 11:1). When Jesus comes, I will see him for myself and will no longer need to see Him through the eyes of faith. I realize that it may be argued that the disciples had faith when they were with Christ at His first coming; but at that time he came as a humble servant and many, especially the religious leaders of Israel, rejected Him as the Messiah. When He comes in glory there will be no question as to who He is. When God’s people are glorified with Him the need for faith will have come to an end. Concerning hope we read, *“For we are saved by hope: but **hope that is seen is not hope**: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we **see not**, then do we with patience wait for it”* (Rom 8:24-25). The second coming of Jesus is that blessed hope. When Christ comes for me my hope will be realized and brought to fruition. At that time, when I see Him and I am with Him, I will only need the love of God for all eternity. These verses tell us that the time of faith, hope and charity in the church age must be before the Lord returns for His people. This means that tongues, prophecy and special knowledge will be done away with before the return of Christ. Now, when is that time? Paul is telling us in his epistle to the Corinthians when that point in time will be. It is when *“that which is perfect is come”* (1Co 13:10). No wonder Paul said, *“Now abideth, faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”*

I know many interpret *“that which is perfect”* to be the coming of Jesus Christ and His millennial kingdom; but as we have just pointed out, the three gifts of faith, hope and charity must exist by themselves before His coming. And not only that, but also the word “that” suggests a thing and not a person. Why don’t we let the Bible itself tell us

what is the meaning of *“that which is perfect.”* According to the lexicon, the word perfect in the King James Version comes from a Greek word meaning: “brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; full grown, adult, of full age, mature.” Now ask yourself, what was completed in this age before the Lord’s return? Well, again, why don’t we let the Bible tell us. In 1 Corinthians 13:11 we read, *“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”* This verse is immediately after the verse that mentions, *“that which is perfect”* which shows us that Paul means exactly what the lexicon says concerning the word “perfect.” And what were the childish things that Paul had in mind that would be put away when that which is perfect or complete had come? Well, it should be obvious to any reader that he was speaking of the early gifts of tongues, prophecy and special revelation knowledge given to the members of the infant church during the apostolic age. But, lets go on. If we look closely in the book of James we will see a sort of parallel to what Paul is writing about in chapter 13 so that we may clearly see what Paul meant by the words, *“that which is perfect.”*

## **The Mirror of God’s Word**

In James chapter one we read, *“For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed”* (Jam 1:23-25). Here we see that the word of God is called the *“perfect law of liberty.”* The Greek word used for “perfect” in James is the exact same word that Paul used for “perfect” in 1 Corinthians 13. We also see from James that the *“perfect law of liberty”* is something that a man looks into as he would a “looking glass” or mirror. The word for “glass” in the book of James has the meaning of “mirror” according to the lexicon and is the same Greek word translated “glass” in 1Cor 13:12. When a man looks into a mirror he sees himself. He comes “face to face” with himself. James says, *“For he beholdeth himself.”* Who else do you see when you look into a mirror? The word of God is what reveals to us that we are depraved sinners and in desperate need of a savior. We would never come to that realization without looking into the **mirror** of God’s word and we would go on thinking that old lie, “we’re not such a bad person.” The Bible tells us that *“there is none that doeth good, no, not one”* (Romans 3:12). So, we see from James, that the word of God is called *“the perfect law of liberty”* and is compared to a mirror or glass that someone would look into and behold his own self. Now if we take this understanding given in James and apply it to 1 Corinthians 13, then we will have a better understanding of what Paul is speaking of in his epistle to the Corinthians. Notice in 1Cor 13:9-12 that they only had revelation knowledge and prophecy in part or portion. They had only pieces of it and not the whole completed revelation. Paul said that they looked through a glass darkly at that time. Again, glass has the meaning of a mirror and the word *“through”* has not the idea of looking through it as it being transparent, but looking by means of it, or a channel. If you take a lexicon, you will see that is exactly what the meaning of *“through”* is here. Also, the word *“darkly”* in the King James version means “obscured.” Now, if they at that time only had parts of God’s revelation, then would not their vision be obscured? How can you look into a mirror that is only in pieces or parts and get a clear picture? When the mirror is complete, which James says is the word of

God, we get an un-obscured view of ourselves. Then I can perceive myself even as I am perceived through the mirror of God's completed word. Notice that Paul says "*face to face*" in 1 Corinthians 13:12, but then says we shall "*know*," and the word "*know*" means to perceive, even as I am known. In other words, I will perceive myself even as I am perceived. When you look into a mirror you see yourself as others see you. You are "face to face" with yourself. So, when we look into the mirror of God's completed word (if we have been given eyes to see through the quickening of the Holy Spirit) we see ourselves as God sees us. Then we lose all self-righteousness and are compelled to flee to Christ.

## Is the Word of God Complete and is it Enough?

In the Book of Revelation we read, "*For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:*" (Rev 22:18). Some will say that what is meant here is adding to the Book of Revelation and not to the Bible. Despite that argument, no one dares to add modern day "revelations" to the Bible. I guess false teachers will only take their "revelations" so far and dare not add their "words of prophecy" to the Bible. If God really has given men a word or a prophecy, then why don't we add it to the book? They won't dare do that, will they? Paul in his second letter to Timothy writes, "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2Tim 3:16-17). Paul says that all of the scripture was enough to make the man of God perfect, or fully mature and thoroughly furnished. Sounds like the scripture is enough for the man of God. It may not be enough for the carnal man and the sign seekers, but it is enough for the man of God. I know the Bible may not be enough for people that have to see something, or someone who needs to feel the carnal sensation of "warm honey flowing down [his] body from the tip of [his] head to the bottom of [his] feet," as one young man told me of his experience when he spoke in tongues, but the Bible is enough for the man of God. When that which is perfect or complete is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

Some may argue that the gift of tongues was not "that which is in part." This is true since the Bible said "*we know in part and prophecy in part*," but the gift of tongues was to cease along with prophecy and special knowledge. How does a person speak a tongue in part anyway? Yet prophecy could be a piece of the whole as also knowledge, and notice, tongues is sandwiched between knowledge and prophecy and is said to cease with them. If tongues is still in existence then so is the gift of prophecy and special revelation knowledge. Some will argue that prophecy is simply speaking God's word, so that when we speak the Bible we are prophets in that sense. While this may be true, it does not appear that would apply here in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians. Are we to assume that when faith, hope and charity exist by themselves that we are not to speak God's word? So then the word "prophecy" can not mean simply speaking God's written word as it is used in 1 Corinthians 13. "*When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him*" (Deut 18:22). It appears that one of the tests of false prophets was whether the thing came to pass. The foretelling of the future along with edification is the sense of Paul's

discourse on prophecy in his epistle to the Corinthian church. I have read that Benny Hin had made a prophecy that Castro would die in the 1990's, yet Castro is still alive. He also prophesied that the homo-sexual community in America would be destroyed by fire in the 1990's, yet that did not happen either. Do not be afraid of Benny, he's just another false prophet with millions of followers. The lexicon says concerning the word translated prophecy in 1 Corinthians 13, "a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproof and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden; esp. by **foretelling future events.**" How do we declare God's purposes today? Do we receive direct revelation from God, as some claim; or do we simply go to God's word, the Bible, to speak the mind of God? Is it "Sola Scriptura" or something more? Concerning the gift of prophecy, some will probably make the argument that the two witnesses that are mentioned in the Book of Revelation will "*prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days*" (Rev 11:3). I believe the two witnesses that will prophesy in the book of Revelation are Old Testament prophets of Israel brought back to earth. The church will be gone at that time and God will be dealing with Israel again. The church age will be ended and it will be the time of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. The Jews reject the New Testament, and these two witnesses shall fulfill and complete the last book of the New Testament. They will not be adding to, but fulfilling what has been written in the Book of Revelation given by Jesus Christ to John. They will not be part of the church age. The church has the New Testament.

## **Full Gospel or Another Gospel?**

Most Charismatic churches call themselves "Full Gospel" to distinguish themselves from those who believe that tongues have ceased or at least do not practice it in their churches. Now, does that mean that churches that do not speak in tongues only have part of the gospel? A person cannot be saved apart from hearing and believing the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Paul tells us what the gospel is. It is that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and that this death was according to the scriptures (the Old Testament scriptures which indicated a substitutionary and vicarious death); that he was buried and rose again the third day, according to the scriptures. Should I trust in anything more? Is there another message in which I need to place my faith? Is the object of our faith anything more than the atoning work of Jesus Christ? Is the object of our faith in something we have done or some feeling or experience? If it is, then I am afraid we have **missed Christ!**

## **The Sovereign Bestowal of these Gifts**

When all of the gifts were in existence, did all have the gift of tongues? Was it God's will that every member in the early Church speak in tongues? The Biblical answer is a resounding NO! Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 said there were differences in the operations of God, but the same Lord, and he went on to say, "*For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will*" (1Cor 12:8-11). Paul then made an analogy of the church to the human body. The human body has

many members and they all serve the body in a particular function. The whole body could not be an eye, else, where would be the hearing? And if the whole body were an ear, where would be the smelling? Paul then went on to list the order and importance of the gifts when he said, “*And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues*” (1Cor 12:28). Isn’t it interesting that the gift which seems most important to some is listed last? Notice Paul said, “*God hath set some*” (emphasis added), not all, with certain gifts. He asks the question in the very next two verses, “*Are all apostles? Are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?*” Well the obvious answer is **no**. I remember reading these verses to a young Charismatic man and when I read, “*do all speak with tongues,*” he immediately said “yes.” A man would have to be either ignorant or in complete rebellion to what Paul is writing about to answer “yes” to any one of those questions. The questions that Paul is putting forth are rhetorical questions in which no answer is expected, but are asked to make a point because the answer is so obvious to even the most casual reader. It would be like asking the question, “Is every citizen of the United States the President?” No one would answer “yes,” would they? Now, for a man to answer “yes” to Paul’s rhetorical question, “*do all speak with tongues?*” can only indicate that he is so carried away with his experience that even the word of God won’t bring him in line. When we get to that state we are in serious trouble. The fact that the gifts were bestowed in a sovereign manner and that not all members in the early church had the gift of tongues should forever silence those who teach that unless a man or woman speaks in tongues he or she is not saved. Such a teaching leads men to trust in an experience and not in the person and work of Christ. What would a handicapped person who cannot speak, think of such doctrine? It should also silence those who teach that every Christian can speak in tongues. Tongues have ceased!

## **Pentecostals and Tongues**

Several years ago, I heard a Pentecostal preacher on the radio quote John 3:3 the following way: “Except a man be born again, and speak in tongues as the spirit giveth him utterance, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Is a not this a very dishonest use of God’s word? What the Bible does say is “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” I realize that most Charismatics do not take speaking in tongues to that extreme and I am not sure all Pentecostals do either. This kind of interpretation is a direct contradiction to the teaching of scripture. As Paul plainly teaches in his epistle to the Corinthians, even during the apostolic age not all believers had all of the gifts, but they were bestowed in a sovereign manner to believers in the church or local assembly.

## **A More Excellent Way**

If tongues, prophecy and special knowledge were not to cease then why would Paul say, “*and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way*” (1Cor 12:31) than the extraordinary gifts? If tongues were to continue, then why would Paul make the statements, “*For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding*”

*also*” (1Cor 14:14-15). *“I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue”* (1Cor 14:18-19). In our day we have the “more excellent way” of expounding the completed scriptures.

## **Why do Charismatics Not Follow Paul’s Commands?**

In the fourteenth chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, Paul laid out some specific rules for the exercise of the spiritual gifts that were still in existence in the early Church. There were only suppose to be two or three at the most that should speak in tongues; it had to be done one at a time and there must be an interpreter. If there was no interpreter then they were to remain silent. Listen to Paul’s words, *“If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God”* (1Cor 14:27-28). Even if what Paul meant was two or three sentences at the most the same rule applied about an interpreter. Then there is the other rule that Paul laid out: *“Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church”* (1Cor 14:34-35). What is truly amazing is that not only do women speak in tongues in Charismatic Churches, they even preach. That is a long way from what Paul commanded. Paul then went on to say at the end of that chapter, *“If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant”* (1Cor 14:37-38). Tongues have ceased!

## **Why Not Poison and Snakes?**

*“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover”* (Mark 16:17-18). Those that use these scripture to try to prove that tongues are for all believers in all ages must also take the other things mentioned in these two verses. Some have tried to handle poisonous snakes and when bitten have become ill or died. It is one thing to handle a poisonous snake and another to be bitten and shake it off as if nothing had happened. This is exactly what happened to the Apostle Paul in the Book of Acts. *“And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god”* (Acts 28:3-6). Now that’s a real fulfillment of Mark 16, not the snake handling that goes on in some of these churches. Where is the raising of the dead that was wrought at the hands of the Apostles to prove what they were preaching? Paul and Peter raised the dead. If this scripture teaches that tongues are for all believers in all ages then it also teaches that those who do not speak in tongues are not believers. We know from other scripture that

this is certainly not the case. They were the signs of the early church in general but not a mark of every believer, nor the mark of every age. As Paul said, “*Whether there be tongues, they shall cease.*”

## **Tongues Cross All Denominational Lines**

If the modern day tongues movement is of God, then why do the same tongues appear in many denominations that teach different doctrines? If the Bible teaches the eternal security of the believer, which it certainly does, then why do most churches that speak in tongues teach that a man can lose his salvation and then regain it again later? How can the same Holy Spirit that is supposed to be still giving out this gift lead in so many directions when it comes to doctrine? Does the Holy Spirit lead one man to believe one thing and another man something so different, especially when it comes to the doctrine of salvation? The thing that separates denominations is their understanding of scripture. Thus the modern day tongues movement tends toward non-denominationalism. The fact that they boast of this is incriminating if anything. What they really mean is that doctrine is not that important. We, as Baptists, believe that the church is a local visible assembly with our only head being the Lord Jesus Christ and not some board or earthly man in some city. Our only rule of practice and doctrine is to be the completed word of God, the Bible.

## **How Do We Try the Spirits?**

“*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*” (1Joh 4:1). In the early church, if there was no interpretation of a tongue, then how could the spirits be tried? And what do we try the spirits against? The word “*try*,” according to the lexicon, means to “test, examine, or prove.” The only way we can do this is to compare what is being said to the scripture. Now if there was no interpretation of a tongue and proof that the interpretation was accurate and not made up, then there was no way to try the spirits. In Paul’s letter to the Corinthians he said, “*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*” (1Cor 12:1-3). Evidently someone had spoken in a tongue in the Corinthian church and had actually cursed Jesus Christ and did not realize it. Evidently someone knew the language in which he spoke and realized that the person was cursing Christ, and this event must have been reported to Paul. The context of what Paul is dealing with must be tongues because he goes on to say “*that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*” Now we know that many call Jesus Lord in their own tongue but that is not necessarily by the Holy Spirit. In fact Jesus said, “*Many will say to me in that day, **Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you*** (emphasis added): *depart from me, ye that work iniquity*” (Mat 7:22-23). Now these men say that Jesus is Lord, yet Jesus professes unto them that He never knew them. It was not that He knew them at one time and then they lost their salvation, but rather at no time did he ever know them. So then, they never said that Jesus was Lord by the Holy Spirit. This, along with the context of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, leads us to believe

that Paul is dealing with an incident in which a man called Jesus accursed in another tongue or language. So, this spirit was tried or tested by someone who understood the tongue or language that was spoken in which Jesus was cursed. Should this not make a person cautious about speaking in an unknown tongue in which there is no positive interpretation? The spirits could not be tried without a real interpretation of the tongue. Concerning the modern day tongues movement, when it comes to interpretation, we should point out that other writers on this subject have shown that interpretations seem to differ in length greatly from the tongue that was spoken. Language being what it is and the fact that words can only carry so much meaning, there should be a basic parallel between the length of an interpretation and the tongue. This leads one to believe that their interpretations have nothing to do with what is spoken in an unknown tongue and are probably “made up.” As an example of how interpretations are “made up,” I read of a story in which a man got up and quoted one of the Psalms in Hebrew and then someone else got up and gave an interpretation that had nothing to do with the Psalm. These interpretations are not the work of the Holy Spirit but are the works of men.

## **The Work of the Holy Spirit**

From what I have read, many tongues leaders say that the initial evidence of the Holy Spirit in a man is the gift of tongues. They say you can be saved and yet receive the Holy Spirit later. If the initial evidence of the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues then how could it be said that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb (Luk 1:15), and yet John the Baptist never spoke in tongues? How can tongues be the initial evidence of the Holy Spirit when it is clear that even during the Apostolic age not all members of the local church had the gift of tongues?

It is evident from the teaching of the scriptures that every true believer has the Holy Spirit residing in him. If he does not, then he has not been saved. In Paul’s letter to the Romans he said, “*So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*” (Rom 8:8-9). Paul says that every believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit until the very end. “*In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,*” (Eph 1:13). “*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*” (Eph 4:30).

The work of the Holy Spirit is to convince men of sin (John 16:8). It is the Holy Spirit that takes a depraved sinner and quickens him to life, whereby he sees his lost condition and is then given faith to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work for a place of safety. Paul told the Ephesians that they had been quickened after being dead in trespasses and sins (see Eph 2:1-5). Jesus told His disciples that it is the “*Spirit that quickeneth*” (Joh 6:63).

## **The Holy Spirit Does Not Speak of Himself**

It seems that the Holy Spirit is glorified and spoken of more than the Lord Jesus Christ in most Charismatic/Pentecostal churches. Yet we see from the very words of Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit would not speak of Himself but would focus men’s

attention on Christ Himself. *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”* (Joh 16:13-14). The Holy Spirit glorifies the work and person of Christ. His work is to quicken sinners to life and convict them of their sins, showing them through God’s Word that they are indeed wretched and that their only hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ and His shed blood. It is the Holy Spirit that shuts a man or woman up to the completed work of Jesus Christ in their behalf and so He points them to Christ rather and not to Himself. It is the Holy Spirit that strips a man of all self-righteousness and brings him to a place where there is nowhere to turn, but to Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that takes the Gospel message and makes it real to the sinner. It is the Holy Spirit that makes a man understand that Christ is the *“end of the law for righteousness.”*

## **God Told Me**

I was watching a religious television show recently in which a Charismatic preacher said that he was taken to heaven and was shown all the wonders of heaven. He proceeded to describe these wonders and how that God spoke with him. He then revealed to his audience what God had told him. If such a thing were really true, we should add it to the back of our Bibles. I find it interesting that this man could describe heaven in such detail and relate all that he had heard, and yet the Apostle Paul said that he knew a man that was caught up into paradise where he heard things which were not lawful to be uttered (see 2Cor 12:4). It is a very dangerous thing to say, “God told me” and mean that God spoke to you by any other means than His Word, the Bible. I realize that the Holy Spirit may impress on our hearts certain things and then use God’s word to speak to us, but it is quite another thing to say that God spoke to us in an audible voice. God’s word is complete and it is all that we need *“for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”*

## **Diabolical experiences**

A very close preacher friend recently related to me a story about an experience that was related to him by two men who had “got the holy ghost.” They told him that when they “got the holy ghost” they had sexual orgasms. Both men said this happened to them. They told my preacher friend that it was the greatest thing they had ever experienced. If a man believes this is the work of the Holy Spirit then God help him. A young man related to me that when he “got the holy ghost” that he felt warm honey flow from the top of his head down to his feet. When I tried to talk with him about Christ and sin he was not even interested. He was obsessed with “honey flowing from the top of his head down to his feet.” That was his salvation experience. This is not the work of the Holy Spirit. I recently read of a man who was in this movement in which he witnesses a man “slain in the spirit” and lay on the floor stiff as a board all through services. After services were over they carried him out and put him in a vehicle where he remained stiff until about midnight. When he recovered he said that he wanted to move but could not. He said that he had no control over the situation. The Holy Spirit does not take over men’s bodies in this manner.

## Paganism at Corinth

Paganism had existed in the city of Corinth long before Paul had preached the Gospel there and a church was established. The “mystery religions” had spread all over the Gentile world and Corinth was by far no exception. I have read that on the towering hill of Acropolis stood the great temple of Aphrodite who was the goddess of love. To that temple were attached one thousand sacred prostitutes. It is no wonder Paul had to deal with immorality in his letter to the Corinthians. Among the pagans it was believed that ecstatic experiences was evidence that a god had entered their body. The temple prostitutes practiced "glossolalia" (tongues) before Pentecost. As you can see, the diabolical experiences mentioned above are very similar to the experiences of paganism that was going on in Corinth.

Prostitutes, pagans, witches and heretics speak in the same type of tongues as the modern tongue movement (uttering of unintelligible sounds and babblings).

### If Tongues have Ceased then What is Going On?

John MacArthur, Jr., in his book Charismatic Chaos, believes modern tongues falls into one of three categories. First, they may be satanic or demonic. He points out that some who are against the tongues movement want to put all tongues speaking into this category. This is probably not the case in all tongues speaking, but I believe Satan is probably behind the movement in general. In his book he quotes former tongues speaker Ben Byrd who believed that some of his extraordinary abilities were “psychic and possibly satanic.” MacArthur pointed out that the Encyclopedia Britannica contains articles on “glossolalia” (tongues) among pagans in their worship rites. There are reports that in Africa demon possessed persons can speak fluently in Swahili or English, although under normal circumstances they would not understand either language. Evidently Satan can give people the power to speak in tongues. There are incidents of tongue speaking among those who practice the occult. We need to remember that Satan has ministers that appear as ministers of righteousness. In fact this was something that Paul warned the Corinthian church about when he said, *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if **his ministers** also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works”* (2Cor 11:13-15).

Secondly, MacArthur points out that tongues speaking may be a learned behavior. He thinks that most tongues speaking falls into this category. MacArthur points out that there are seminars held that instruct people on how to receive this gift. They encourage people to speak funny little sounds. Moody Adams in his book Jesus Never Spoke in Tongues, tells of “pump-priming” people to get them to speak in tongues. I recently read an article by a former Charismatic who said that he was being encouraged to speak in tongues, so he just started to “jibber jabber” and then the pastor told him, "That's it, keep speaking, that's the tongue you have received. You must now cultivate the language by speaking it as much as possible." People are just being deceived by this method. As MacArthur said, “Why a person would have to learn how to receive a gift from the Holy

Spirit is baffling.” Many probably like the attention that it brings and that it makes them look spiritual to others. Well, if you are so spiritual, then acknowledge that the things that Paul wrote to the Corinthian church are the commands of the Lord.

Thirdly, MacArthur thinks that tongues can be psychologically induced. He says “the condition in which most people sense the euphoria of the tongues experience seems to be closely related to the hypnotic state.” He says that after an extensive study of tongues-speakers by Kildahl and Qualben; they concluded that people who were submissive, suggestible, and dependent on a leader were those most likely to speak in tongues. MacArthur points out that would be tongues-speakers are often instructed to enter into “passive renunciation of willful control.”

## **In Conclusion**

One of the most dangerous things a person can do is to seek after spiritual experiences that are not in God’s word. To seek after something that God says has ceased and then experience something that does not really resemble the original is a frightful situation. If you are seeking something that you have seen others, who may have seemed very spiritual, have and want to have it also, then I admonish you to stop, think, and examine God’s word. Follow His word rather than the teachings of men. Please do not trust in what you see or feel, rather trust God’s word. *“Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”* If you are involved in such a movement, then my suggestion would be to come out of it immediately, and find a church that teaches salvation by God’s sovereign grace and holds the Bible as its only source of doctrine and practice. Tongues have ceased!

**May God Bless.**