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SHOULD YOU BE "SPEAKING IN TONGUES"?

During the time of Mr. Armstrong the Church of God clearly rejected the practice known as "speaking in tongues". But after Mr. Armstrong's death many of the teachings he had endorsed were challenged and then changed by the Worldwide Church of God.

One of the things that has been questioned by some people is this issue of "speaking in tongues". So let's examine this question very carefully, to be sure we understand correctly what the Bible means by this expression.

THE GREEK WORD TRANSLATED "TONGUE"

The Greek word which is used in the New Testament in the expression "speaking in tongues" is "GLOSSA". This word has been used in Greek from the time of Homer and it has two meanings, which are clearly brought out in Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T.. These meanings are:

- 1) THE TONGUE, a member of the body, the organ of speech;
- 2) A TONGUE, i.e. the LANGUAGE used by a particular people in distinction from that of other nations.

In the Bible this word is clearly used with both of these meanings. The word "glossa" is used 50 times in the N.T., and in most cases it refers to THE LITERAL TONGUE. Some examples that illustrate this usage are:

And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and TOUCHED HIS TONGUE; (Mark 7:33)

And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and COOL MY TONGUE; for I am tormented in this flame. (Luke 16:24)

If any man among you seem to be religious, and BRIDLETH NOT HIS TONGUE, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion [is] vain. (James 1:26)

It is also used with the second meaning, referring to a specific language which is spoken by a particular people. For example:

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood OUT OF EVERY KINDRED, AND TONGUE, and people, and nation; (Revelation 5:9)

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, OF ALL NATIONS, AND KINDREDS, AND PEOPLE, AND TONGUES, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; (Revelation 7:9)

And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again BEFORE MANY PEOPLES, AND NATIONS, AND TONGUES, and kings. (Revelation 10:11)

The word "glossa" is also used with these two meanings in the Greek version of the Old Testament, known as the LXX. This is not to imply that the LXX is inspired ... it is certainly not inspired! But it shows that the people who translated the Hebrew text into Greek clearly understood the word "glossa" to have these two meanings.

Some examples where the Greek word "glossa" is used in the LXX version include Proverbs 15:2 ("... TONGUE of the wise"), Proverbs 12:19 ("... a lying TONGUE"), Genesis 11:7 ("... go to, let us ... confound their LANGUAGE"), Isaiah 35:6 ("... and the TONGUE of the dumb sing") and Isaiah 66:18 ("... I will gather all nations and TONGUES").

These verses show that these two meanings of the word "glossa" are well recognized.

THERE ARE NO OTHER MEANINGS TO THIS BIBLICAL GREEK WORD "GLOSSA".

The word ALWAYS means either:

- 1) the literal tongue in the body, the organ of speech; or
- 2) a specific language which is spoken by a specific group of people.

The word is also used in descriptive expressions, when other things are "COMPARED TO" a literal tongue ... e.g. in Acts chapter 2:3, where the visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit appeared like ... "divided TONGUES like as of fire". But such uses of the word clearly have literal tongues as their reference point.

Translated into modern English the word "glossa" either means "a literal tongue" or it means "A LANGUAGE".

In 1611 A.D., when the KJV was being translated, the word "tongue" was the common word for "language".

The English language has absorbed and taken up many words from many different sources. In this particular case:

Both the words, "language" and "tongue", are derived from the same Latin word "LINGUA". The word "TONGUE" has entered the English language by way of the Old High German "zunga" (modern German "Zunge") and the Middle English "tunge" (brought to England by the Anglo-Saxons). The word "LANGUAGE" entered English by way of the Old French word "langue", brought to England by the Normans.

The Anglo-Saxon word "tongue" retained its literal meaning as the organ of speech, in addition to meaning a language (e.g. the Anglo-Saxon TONGUE). The Norman (linguistically French) word "language" was used only with the meaning we are familiar with, i.e. the words used and understood by a considerable community of people.

When we look at the 1611 A.D. King James Version, we see that the translators definitely favoured the Anglo-Saxon word "tongue" over the French-Norman word "language". For example John 5:2:

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep [market] a pool, which is called IN THE HEBREW TONGUE Bethesda, having five porches. (John 5:2)

Here the Greek word "hebraisti" is translated as "in the Hebrew TONGUE". In the New Revised Standard Version this word is simply translated as "in Hebrew". Notice that in the Greek text there is actually no word for "tongue".

This favouring of the Anglo-Saxon word "tongue" is also seen by how the KJV translators translated another Greek word in the New Testament. That is the word "DIALEKTOS", from which we get our English word "dialect". The word "dialektos" is used six times in the N.T.. All six of those occurrences are in the Book of Acts. Only once did the translators render this word as "language" (i.e. Acts 2:6); the other five times they translated it as "tongue" (Acts 1:19; Acts 2:8; Acts 21:40; Acts 22:2; Acts 26:14). In the last three of these references this word is used in the expression "Hebrais dialektos", literally "the Hebrew language or dialect".

Keep in mind that this word "dialektos" never refers to a literal tongue. It is a word that specifically means "a language", yet the KJV translators rendered it as "tongue".

SO THE POINT WE SHOULD NOTICE:

It should be quite clear that when the KJV translators used the word "tongue", to them this word always meant "A LANGUAGE", unless they wanted to refer to a literal tongue.

"SPEAKING IN TONGUES"

Apart from a few brief isolated references, this matter of "speaking in tongues" is only discussed in TWO DIFFERENT CHAPTERS in the New Testament. Those two chapters are Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 14.

"Speaking in tongues" is NEVER referred to in any of the epistles (neither in Paul's epistles nor in the General Epistles) outside of 1 Corinthians. It simply never featured in instructing any of the New Testament congregations, apart from the Corinthians. THE ONLY REASON why this matter is mentioned in this particular epistle is because THE CORINTHIANS HAD A BIG PROBLEM WITH "SPEAKING IN TONGUES"!

To understand this subject fully, let's first examine all of the isolated references to "speaking in tongues" and THEN we can focus on the places where it is discussed in greater detail ... Acts chapter 2 and 1 Corinthians chapters 12 - 14.

GENERAL REFERENCES TO "SPEAKING IN TONGUES"

Outside of 1 Corinthians and Acts chapter 2 there are only three references to this. Let's examine all three places.

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; THEY SHALL SPEAK WITH NEW TONGUES; (Mark 16:17)

This statement is only recorded in the Gospel of Mark. In the parallel account in Matthew 28:18-20 this detail is not mentioned.

What Jesus Christ was saying here is: "... they shall speak with new LANGUAGES". Christ was speaking about "KNOWN LANGUAGES", which were spoken by the nations of this world. This was needed in

order to take the gospel "into all the world" and to preach it "to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Without preaching in "new languages" they would not have been able to reach other nations.

The next reference to speaking in tongues is in Acts 10:46.

FOR THEY HEARD THEM SPEAK WITH TONGUES, AND MAGNIFY GOD. Then answered Peter, (Acts 10:46)

What happened here was as follows: the Apostle Peter and a number of other Jewish Christians had gone down to Caesarea to the Roman Cornelius and his extended family. Peter and all of the Jews had a racial bias against non-Jews. At that point they did not yet understand that God would also call people from all nations into His Church. But Cornelius was already repentant and therefore God wanted to make clear beyond any doubt that He would also give His Holy Spirit to people of other races when they came to repentance.

Since Peter would have been reluctant, because of his racial bias, to baptize a non-Jew, THEREFORE God simply gave His Holy Spirit to Cornelius before baptism ... to settle the question once and for all that God was indeed going to call people of other nations into His Church. Giving the Holy Spirit first made it impossible for Peter to refuse baptism, which Peter understood (Acts 10:47).

However, the receiving of the Holy Spirit is not something that is normally physically discernible. THEREFORE, in order to make this quite clear to Peter and to all the other Jews present, God gave these non-Jews the ability to "speak with tongues".

What happened here?

That should be fairly easy to understand. What would have been the most convincing way for God to show these Jews that He was calling these Romans into His Church? God simply gave Cornelius and the other Romans involved in this event the supernatural ability to speak fluent Hebrew! Whatever Peter and the other Jews knew about Cornelius, one thing they knew was that this Roman couldn't speak Hebrew ... and certainly not with the correct accent! Therefore, when all these Romans suddenly started speaking fluent Hebrew and quoting from the Old Testament Scriptures, this was irrefutable proof that God was in full control here.

There was no "interpreting" of any kind needed here. ALL of the Jews in Peter's party ... "HEARD THEM ... MAGNIFY GOD"! All of the Jews present understood every word that these Romans were saying when they "spoke with tongues". It was unmistakable.

The only other isolated reference to speaking in tongues is found in Acts 19:6.

And when Paul had laid [his] hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; AND THEY SPAKE WITH TONGUES, AND PROPHESED. (Acts 19:6)

Here Paul had come to Ephesus where he met some people who had been baptized by John the Baptist. Racially these people were Jews who had been in Palestine at some time during John the Baptist's ministry. About 12 men were involved in this incident (Acts 19:7). Upon enquiry Paul found out that these people, although very sincere, didn't even know that there is such a thing as "the Holy Spirit" (Acts 19: 2), and therefore they obviously had not received God's Spirit. So Paul explained to them the function of John's baptism, that it was only preparatory to the message Jesus Christ brought. Once they understood this, these people were immediately baptized again, this time on the authority of Jesus Christ

(Acts 19:5).

Now this event was about 20 years after they had originally been baptized by John. For the past 20 years of their lives these people had been sincerely trying to live as John had taught them. But they had never possessed God's Spirit. NOW they were baptized again. To encourage these people themselves, and to make very clear to them that this was different from what had happened to them 20 years earlier, God gave these people the supernatural ability to speak a different language. Very likely this was also Hebrew. Keep in mind that by the time of the New Testament Hebrew as a spoken language had been replaced by Aramaic. Many Jews no longer spoke Hebrew; they spoke primarily Greek and Aramaic. That would also very likely have been the case with these Jews who lived in Ephesus, a Greek-speaking area.

Whether it was Hebrew or whether it was some other language in which these 12 men started to speak, they started to "prophesy" (Acts 19:6). This does not mean that they started making prophetic predictions. What it means is that they gave something like "inspired sermons", correctly quoting Scriptures (probably in the original Hebrew language in which they had been written) and soundly putting the Scriptures together, in such a way that Paul and his group were left in no doubt that God was indeed working with these men. Also, these men themselves could understand that this was different from what had happened to them 20 years before.

Right, that now leaves us with exactly two sections of Scripture to examine.

ACTS CHAPTER 2 gives a clear description of exactly what happened on the Day of Pentecost in 30 or 31 A.D.. This section makes quite clear exactly what is involved in "speaking in tongues", or "speaking in a language other than the one we normally speak".

IN 1 CORINTHIANS the Apostle Paul is addressing MANY problems which existed in that particular congregation. One of those problems was that the Corinthians really desired to "speak in tongues". This is something many people there really WANTED to do very badly. And therefore in chapter 14 Paul specifically CORRECTS the Corinthians about this subject.

So now let's first look at Acts chapter 2.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST IN ACTS CHAPTER 2

On the annual Holy Days there would be Jews from all over the Roman Empire in Jerusalem. For many it would have been the once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to Jerusalem and to the Temple of God there.

When the Day of Pentecost came around, the 120 disciples (Acts 1:15), who were the result of Christ's earthly ministry, were all gathered together. It was still only around 9:00 a.m. in the morning, the third hour of the day (Acts 2:15).

Suddenly God gave His Holy Spirit to all 120 people in this group. God drew attention to this event by announcing this giving of the Holy Spirit through a mighty rushing wind (Acts 2:2). Then God gave a VISIBLE manifestation in the form of a fire-like divided tongue which sat upon the head of every individual who received the Holy Spirit on this occasion. That was an unmistakable sign to the people involved. Those who received God's Spirit this way KNEW that they had received God's Spirit and they also KNEW everyone else who received God's Spirit at the same time. How long these fire-like divided tongues remained visible is not mentioned. However, it didn't last all that long. They didn't walk around for the rest of the day with this flame sitting on the top of their heads.

Understand this!

The VISIBLE manifestation of the giving of the Holy Spirit was intended as a witness to the 120 disciples themselves! They were left in no doubt that Jesus Christ had fulfilled His promise to send the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). But this visible manifestation was NOT intended as a witness for people at large! To them the visible giving of the Holy Spirit had no particular meaning or significance ... seeing these "flames" on the heads of people would have been meaningless to them.

To the people at large the real witness was THE INSPIRED SPEAKING of these men. It is what Peter and the other Apostles SAID that was a witness to them, as well as THE WAY it was said.

So the 120 disciples received God's Spirit.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, AND BEGAN TO SPEAK WITH OTHER TONGUES, AS THE SPIRIT GAVE THEM UTTERANCE. (Acts 2:4)

This was a fulfillment of Mark 16:17, which we looked at earlier.

What happened here is that they began to speak in OTHER KNOWN LANGUAGES WHICH THEY HAD NOT KNOWN BEFORE! Suddenly they could speak different foreign languages.

Notice this account very carefully.

There were Jews from all over the Roman Empire, and even from areas outside of Rome's influence, in Jerusalem for this particular Holy Day.

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem JEWS, devout men, OUT OF EVERY NATION UNDER HEAVEN. (Acts 2:5)

They were ALL Jews! But they lived in many different countries. This means that THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE was the local language of the area in which they lived. In addition to this, many would have also spoken Greek, and possibly even Aramaic. For most of these people the language they were most proficient in and comfortable with was the local language of the area where they lived ... this was the language they spoke every day of their lives.

So when these 120 disciples started to all speak in foreign languages, a large crowd gathered very quickly. And because the people in this crowd were fluent in many other languages, they very quickly realized that these men here were speaking in well over a dozen different languages.

Notice verse 6:

Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, BECAUSE THAT EVERY MAN HEARD THEM SPEAK IN HIS OWN LANGUAGE. (Acts 2:6)

This statement is further elaborated upon in the next few verses. But let's be sure we clearly understand what we are being told here.

VERSE 6 TELLS US THAT THERE WAS A MIRACLE IN THE HEARING!

Here we have the very first example ever in the New Testament of "speaking in tongues" ... and

EVERYBODY present CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD EVERY WORD that was said, because he heard it in his own native language. Earlier I already mentioned that the word translated as "language" in this verse is the Greek word "dialektos".

THIS IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND!

Here were a group of men "speaking in tongues" (Greek glossa) (verse 4) and the people around them heard them speak in "KNOWN LANGUAGES" (Greek dialektos) (verse 6)!

THIS IS THE VERY FIRST EXPLANATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT REGARDING WHAT THE SPEAKING IN TONGUES IS ALL ABOUT ... AND IT MAKES CLEAR THAT "SPEAKING IN TONGUES" AMOUNTS TO SPEAKING IN DIALECTS, KNOWN LANGUAGES, "DIALEKTOS"!

The next few verses elaborate on the statement in verse 6. The people could see that the apostles were all Galileans, whose accent was normally easily recognizable.

And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not ALL THESE WHICH SPEAK Galilaeans? (Acts 2:7)

The next verse again is a clear explanation of what is involved in "speaking in tongues".

And HOW HEAR WE EVERY MAN IN OUR OWN TONGUE, WHEREIN WE WERE BORN? (Acts 2:8)

Here the Greek word translated as "tongue" is again "dialektos". This shows us clearly that the King James translators viewed the two words "tongue" and "language" as totally interchangeable ... in Acts 2:6 they translated "dialektos" as "LANGUAGE" and two verses later they translated the same word as "TONGUE". But the Greek word itself clearly refers to known spoken languages.

The next few verses list some of the languages in which people heard the Apostle Peter and the other apostles speaking. These known languages included (see Acts 2:9-11):

- the Parthian language;
- the language of the Medes;
- the Elamite language;
- the language of Mesopotamia;
- the language of Judea;
- the language of Cappadocia;
- the language of Pontus;
- the language of the province of Asia;
- the language of Phrygia;

- the language of Pamphylia;
- the Egyptian language'
- the language of Libya;
- the language of Cyrene;
- Latin, the language of Rome;
- the language of Crete;
- the Arabian language.

Verse 11 sums this list up as follows:

Cretes and Arabians, WE DO HEAR THEM SPEAK IN OUR TONGUES THE WONDERFUL
WORKS OF GOD. (Acts 2:11)

Very clearly this was a miracle in the hearing as well as in the speaking. This section also brings out THE PURPOSE for this gift of speaking in tongues. That purpose is to help people understand the truth of God in their own native languages. The purpose is to facilitate understanding!

THERE IS NOTHING IN THIS ACCOUNT IN ACTS 2 THAT JUSTIFIES ANY FORM OF
SPEAKING GIBBERISH!

Let's summarize this experience that took place on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2.

- 1) The Apostle Peter spoke in a known language. We have his words recorded for us here in Acts 2:14-36.
- 2) EVERYONE understood every word Peter said ... but people from different geographic areas (where different languages were spoken) SIMULTANEOUSLY heard Peter speaking in their own native languages.
- 3) These people, in turn, were able to ask Peter an intelligent question (Acts 2:37), to which Peter then gave an answer (Acts 2:38-39). Again, everyone present would have heard Peter's reply in their own native language ... they didn't all just say: "hey, what has happened? Why have you now switched over to speaking Greek or Aramaic?" For the people to suddenly all have only heard Peter speak in Aramaic (or in Greek) would have been an anti-climax; as if the first part had been nothing more than "a show" to entertain people.
- 4) It is VERY CLEAR from this section that "speaking in GLOSSA (i.e. tongues)" amounts to "speaking in DIALEKTOS (a known language or dialect)". That is evident from comparing verse 4, which uses the word "glossa" with verses 6 and 8, which use the word "dialektos".
- 5) At no stage in Acts chapter 2 is it implied that the speaking in tongues involved uttering sounds that some in the audience could not understand as clearly known words from clearly known languages. Everyone understood and there was no need for any "interpreters".

This summarizes the "Pentecost experience". Any experience today which claims to be of the same type as what happened back then in Acts chapter 2 must be evaluated by these same criteria.

This brings us to 1 Corinthians.

SOME BACKGROUND TO 1 CORINTHIANS

In this letter the Apostle Paul corrects the Corinthians for many problems. In fact, the main purpose for this letter was to correct WRONG IDEAS AND WRONG PRACTICES which the people in Corinth held to or practised.

Specifically:

- they had divisions over which ministers to follow (chpts. 1-4)
- they condoned an adulterous relationship (chpt. 5)
- they were taking one another to court (chpt. 6)
- they had questions about sex, divorce and remarriage (chpt. 7)
- the things sacrificed to idols (chpts. 8-10)
- suitable hair-lengths for men and women (11:1-16)
- some kept the Passover incorrectly (11:17-34)
- they desired impressive spiritual gifts (chpts. 12-13)
- some MISUSED the matter of speaking in tongues (chpt. 14)
- some rejected the idea of the resurrection (chpt. 15).

So, apart from the closing comments in chapter 16, the entire letter is devoted to correcting and explaining these ten subjects.

It is helpful to understand that in chapter 14 the Apostle Paul is addressing a specific problem which existed in Corinth. THE WAY Paul explains this subject reveals to us the problem that existed. Furthermore, we should be able to see that Paul's discussion of spiritual "gifts" in general in chapters 12-13 was intended by Paul to lay the groundwork for what he was going to explain in chapter 14 about speaking in tongues.

THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT

The Spirit of God is invisible. When someone receives God's Spirit there is NOTHING we can physically discern, which proves that the person has indeed received God's Spirit. There is no physical evidence of any kind.

There is really only one way we can know that someone has God's Spirit. And that way is that we can look at THE EFFECTS which God's Spirit will have in the person's life. We can't see the Holy Spirit itself, but we can see THE FRUITS which it will produce. At times the Holy Spirit will also impart certain POWERS AND ABILITIES to those who possess the Holy Spirit.

We know that the Holy Spirit is a spirit of power, of love and of a sound, balanced mind (see 2 Timothy 1:7). THE FRUITS which God's Spirit will produce are listed in Galatians 5:22-23; THE POWERS which God's Spirit sometimes imparts are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.

We would like to have the assurance that we do indeed have the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus Christ plainly said that the way we are to glorify God the Father is by producing MUCH FRUIT (see John 15:8), but from our point of view so often we would like to see the evidence of POWER! "Power" is much more impressive than "fruits". But obvious "power" is only bestowed on some people some of the time, whereas godly "fruits" should be present all the time.

Since the Corinthians were especially concerned with the impressive manifestation of "speaking in a foreign language", Paul introduced this subject by listing ALL of the ways in which the presence of God's Spirit can become obvious. This is found in chapter 12. There Paul wrote:

But THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SPIRIT is given to every man to profit withal. (1 Corinthians 12:7)

The word here translated as "manifestation" is "phanerosis". It is used only twice in the New Testament. It is derived from the verb "phaino", which literally means "to bring out into the light".

The only other place where the noun "phanerosis" is used is in 2 Corinthians 4:2.

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but BY MANIFESTATION OF THE TRUTH commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (2 Corinthians 4:2)

This should make clear that this word "manifestation" means: to bring out into the open, to make known, to bring out into the light where it can be clearly seen, etc..

So in 1 Corinthians 12:7 Paul is saying that there are different ways in which the presence of God's Spirit is clearly brought out into the open for all to see. He then proceeds to list 9 different ways in which the presence of God's Spirit is brought out into the open. These 9 different ways are enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. They are:

- spiritual wisdom;
- spiritual knowledge;
- godly faith;
- the gift of healing;
- the working of miracles;
- prophecy (including inspired preaching);
- discerning of spirits;
- speaking different languages;

- the interpretation of different languages.

It is precisely because the Corinthians were so eager to speak in tongues, that Paul listed the speaking and interpreting of tongues right at the end of this list. This is already Paul's first step in putting the matter of speaking in foreign languages into its correct perspective.

After some discussion, Paul then talks about some kind of a structure that God has established. Paul uses the words "first", "second" and "third" ... and again shows that "speaking in tongues" ranks right at the bottom in order of importance before God. This is covered in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30.

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. [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? (1 Corinthians 12:28-30)

Unlike the fruits of the Spirit of Galatians chapter 5, which every Christian must produce in his or her life, these positions or functions within the Church (apostles, prophets, teachers), as well as the supernatural gifts (miracles, healings, speaking with foreign languages, etc.), are NOT for all; they are selective as God chooses to bestow these things. And they are not required for salvation, but the fruits of the Spirit ARE required for salvation.

Keep in mind that Paul is talking about "the manifestation of" (i.e. bringing out into the open the evidence of) the Holy Spirit. And so while these 9 different things Paul listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 can indeed reveal the presence of God's Spirit, Paul now tells us: BUT THERE IS EVEN A BETTER WAY TO BE ABSOLUTELY SURE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD'S SPIRIT! As he said in verse 31:

... and yet shew I unto you A MORE EXCELLENT WAY. (1 Corinthians 12:31)

A more excellent way for what? A MORE EXCELLENT WAY FOR DISCERNING THE PRESENCE OF GOD'S SPIRIT!

And then Paul proceeds to thoroughly explain godly love, the first of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The point Paul is making is this:

The Fruits of the Holy Spirit are a far more convincing evidence for the presence (the manifestation) of the Holy Spirit than any number of spiritual gifts or prestigious positions within the Church. The presence of real godly love (Greek agape) is THE ULTIMATE PROOF for the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Having made this point, Paul then again shows the relatively lesser importance by far of speaking in foreign languages. And so he proceeds to explain that without the foundation of godly love the gift of speaking in foreign languages is without any real value:

Though I speak with THE TONGUES OF MEN AND OF ANGELS, and have not charity, I am become [as] sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. (1 Corinthians 13:1)

Different languages will only exist for a limited time. There is a time yet future when God will give all people one pure language (see Zephaniah 3:9), and all the other languages will cease to exist.

Charity never faileth: but whether [there be] prophecies, they shall fail; WHETHER [THERE BE] TONGUES, THEY SHALL CEASE; whether [there be] knowledge, it shall vanish away. (1 Corinthians 13:8)

Right, we have now examined every single reference to "speaking in tongues" apart from those in 1 Corinthians 14. So now let's examine this chapter in detail.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 14

As with the rest of this letter, Paul is here addressing something that some people in Corinth were doing wrong! This means that they were NOT using the gift of languages for the same purpose for which it was used in Acts chapter 2. There it had been used to communicate with people in more than 15 different known languages. Here in Corinth there was SOME KIND OF MISUSE of this gift ... and that is what Paul addresses, the misuse of speaking in foreign languages.

Paul's purpose statement for this whole chapter is found in verse 26, where he wrote:

How is it then, brethren? WHEN YE COME TOGETHER, EVERY ONE OF YOU hath A PSALM, hath A DOCTRINE, hath A TONGUE, hath A REVELATION, hath AN INTERPRETATION. Let all things be done unto edifying. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

THIS VERSE SPELLS OUT THE PROBLEM PAUL WAS ADDRESSING HERE!

There was confusion! People were motivated by vanity and a desire to appear to be knowledgeable and important. They were motivated by a desire to exalt the self, to appear very spiritual!

So notice: speaking in a foreign language was not the only problem that existed in this congregation. There were also many other problems. Now ask yourself this question:

Is there any indication here that Paul felt that those who had "a revelation" and those who had a new "doctrine" to explain were necessarily inspired by God?

No, that is not implied at all! IF Paul felt that all of the people he addresses in this verse were indeed INSPIRED BY GOD, all at the same time, THEN Paul would most assuredly not have attempted to place any restrictions on these people. Can we understand this?

What we see in Paul's way of handling all these different things people were doing in the name of "godly inspiration" is that Paul felt that AMONGST THEM ALL there may very well have been SOME who were inspired by God ... but the rest were probably just doing these things on their own efforts, without any kind of inspiration from God. THAT IS WHY PAUL IMPOSES CLEAR RESTRICTIONS on people doing all of these things! The various statements Paul makes throughout this chapter make quite clear that Paul himself didn't believe all these things were done through the influence of the Holy Spirit.

This is important to understand!

Now when we look at the gift of speaking in tongues for a moment: there is really no difference between someone who has been given by God the gift to speak a foreign language without first having to have learned that language over a period of a number of years ... and someone else who grew up speaking that language as his mother tongue. The difference between those two individuals is not in how they speak; the difference is in how they acquired THE ABILITY to speak that particular language. The one

person learned it in the process of growing up and the other person was given that ability supernaturally without any effort on his own part.

Recall that at the tower of Babel God gave EVERY HUMAN BEING ALIVE the ability to "speak in tongues" ... at one minute they all spoke the same language, and in the next minute everyone on Earth spoke a different language from the one he had spoken a minute earlier (unless God chose to let one particular group retain the original language ... certainly a possibility). See Genesis 11:7. It seems that at that time about 70 DIFFERENT "TONGUES" came into existence, to accommodate the 70 nations of Genesis 10:32, from which all of our thousands of different languages and dialects today have sprung.

But the point I would like to make plain is this:

ANYONE who has learned a foreign language, which the people amongst whom he lives do not understand, is in a position to IMITATE the biblical gift of tongues!

In Acts chapter 2 we saw that there were Jews in Jerusalem who came from at least 15 different linguistic backgrounds. Corinth was a prominent and prosperous harbour city, with a constant stream of foreign visitors ... sailors, pilgrims, merchants, slaves, artisans, etc.. No doubt there were as many different languages spoken in the streets of Corinth as in the streets of Jerusalem. Therefore it is highly likely that a number of the people in the Church at Corinth could speak at least ONE other language which many other people were not familiar with.

Now supposing that some of the people in the Church there had indeed been given the gift of speaking in a foreign language. For example, what if some of the 12 men in Acts 19:6-7 had by this time moved to Corinth? They would have had that gift. As far as the ability to speak is concerned, such men with the GIFT of tongues would not have differed in any way from those who had learned over a number of years to speak a foreign language. For example, supposing that a Jew who had diligently studied Hebrew for many years came into the Church at Corinth. His ability to speak Hebrew would have been identical to the man who was given the ability to speak Hebrew as a specific gift from God.

And so quite a number of people, in their desire to appear important in the Church, could have claimed that they had the gift of tongues, since they could speak foreign languages which hardly anyone else around them understood. This could easily create envy in other people, who were just as carnal, and who wanted to appear just as important as those who claimed to speak in tongues. Some of these people might have fervently focused on this desire to also receive this gift, to the point of "praying down the spirit" ... when people do this today they create immense problems of chaos and confusion, clear signs of the influence of Satan.

And that is precisely what we see the Apostle Paul addressing in this chapter ... conditions of chaos and confusion.

So now notice how Paul addressed these problems of people wanting to impress others with their ability to "speak in tongues".

PAUL'S CLEAR STATEMENTS IN THIS CHAPTER

1) The Apostle Paul did NOT use the word "gifts" in this chapter. Where the word "gifts" appears in the text of the KJV (i.e. verses 1 and 12) it is in italics, to indicate that there is no word for "gifts" in the Greek text.

2) The Apostle Paul also did NOT use the word "unknown" in this chapter. Where this word "unknown" appears 6 times (verses 2, 4, 13, 14, 19, 27) in the text of the KJV it is also in italics, since it is not

contained in the Greek text.

3) The word Paul DID use quite often in this chapter is the word "language" (Greek is glossa). The word "glossa" is used 15 times and the compound word "heteroglossos" ("other languages") is used one time. In the KJV this Greek word is translated as "tongue".

4) Paul does NOT say that THE LANGUAGES, in which the people who were causing problems in Corinth were speaking, were necessarily "GIFTS FROM GOD" ... though that possibility does exist. However, I don't think it is right for us to ASSUME that in this chapter we are necessarily dealing with "THE MISUSE OF A SPIRITUAL GIFT". It is highly likely that at least SOME of those who CLAIMED to have the gift of speaking another language had simply learned this other language at some stage in their past ... while others again may have "prayed down" some counterfeit "gift of tongues". Those who had the ability to speak a rare foreign language simply USED that ability to make themselves look important.

5) Paul said very plainly that he himself could speak in more different languages than any of the people in Corinth.

I thank my God, I SPEAK WITH TONGUES MORE THAN YE ALL: (1 Corinthians 14:18)

In modern English this would be: "I thank my God, I can speak in more languages than any of you."

Now while Paul no doubt had been given a gift of speaking several foreign languages (so he could function as the apostle to the non-Israelites), he had ALSO learned several different languages in the process of growing up. The languages he had LEARNED would have included Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew (as a Pharisee). Very likely he had also learned the local language of the area of Tarsus, where he grew up. Since he had inherited a Roman citizenship by birth, perhaps he had even learned some Latin, though that may be debatable?!

But the point to notice is this:

In his statement in verse 18 Paul does not in any way differentiate between the languages he himself had actually LEARNED, and those which God enabled him to speak supernaturally, as a spiritual gift. THEY ARE ALL LUMPED TOGETHER!

6) There is no such thing as "an UNKNOWN language"! Somebody MUST know it ... otherwise it cannot be a language! It is this word "unknown", which is NOT contained in the Greek text at all, that people have exploited in order TO JUSTIFY what they call "speaking in tongues"; when they utter sounds which are TOTALLY UNKNOWN to anyone in the immediate audience ... though they could very possibly be words from some extinct language from the central Amazon basin or from outer Mongolia or from any other of the thousands of languages that have existed in the course of the past nearly 6000 years. IF we are going to provide an additional clarifying word in these 6 verses (verses 2,4,13,14,19,27), THEN what we should say is ... "in a FOREIGN language", rather than to say ... "in an UNKNOWN language".

The context of this chapter makes quite clear that Paul had "foreign" languages in mind (those spoken in diverse parts of the Roman Empire, etc.), rather than "unknown" languages.

7) Apparently some women in the Corinthian Church were involved in this "speaking in tongues". Whatever they were doing, Paul was confident that it was NOT as a result of godly inspiration or a spiritual gift from God ... because he very clearly instructed that these women were NOT to speak in tongues at Church!

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. (1 Corinthians 14:34)

In the next verse Paul stated it even more strongly when he said:

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. (1 Corinthians 14:35)

8) Whatever the people in Corinth were doing in this matter of speaking in tongues, it created a certain amount of CONFUSION, which was another clear sign that this was not done under inspiration from God. Therefore Paul said very plainly:

FOR GOD IS NOT [THE AUTHOR] OF CONFUSION, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. (1 Corinthians 14:33)

At the conclusion of this whole section about speaking in foreign languages Paul made this same point again, when he said:

LET ALL THINGS BE DONE DECENTLY AND IN ORDER. (1 Corinthians 14:40)

This statement implies that this is not the way the Corinthians were handling this at all ... they had chaos and confusion, with every one wanting to appear important (1 Corinthians 14:26).

The word here translated as "decently" is "euschemonos", an adverb which is used only three times in the whole New Testament. In both of the other places where this word is used (Romans 13:13 and 1 Thessalonians 4:12) it is translated as "honestly" in the KJV. This word literally means "A GOOD (Greek 'eu') EXTERNAL FORM (Greek 'schema')". And that is precisely what "honest" is ... it is a good external appearance which is a true and correct reflection of what is inside.

So even here in Paul's closing comment in verse 40 we have a hint that not everything that was going on in Corinth was really "HONEST"!

9) Apparently some of the people in Corinth who spoke in tongues were not in control of their own minds when they were doing this speaking. It seems they were "taken over" by some power which controlled them while they were "speaking in tongues". Therefore Paul made the clear statement that God's true servants must always be in control over their own minds.

AND THE SPIRITS OF THE PROPHETS ARE SUBJECT TO THE PROPHETS. (1 Corinthians 14:32)

It seems that Paul was here warning against some who were not in control of their own minds.

10) The "tongues" Paul had in mind were all languages that people could "LEARN". Those who were not familiar with a particular language that was being spoken are identified as "UNLEARNED".

If therefore THE WHOLE CHURCH be come together into one place, AND ALL SPEAK WITH

TONGUES, and THERE COME IN [THOSE THAT ARE] UNLEARNED, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? (1 Corinthians 14:23)

The word here translated as "unlearned" is also used in verse 16, where it appears in the phrase "he that occupies the room of the UNLEARNED". The word used here is "idiotes" and it is defined in Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament as follows:

"the word properly refers to a private person, but the noun has many other meanings also, each one of which is understood from its antithesis, as e.g. A COMMON SOLDIER as opposed to a military officer; A WRITER OF PROSE as opposed to a poet; AN UNLEARNED ILLITERATE MAN as opposed to the learned and educated."

So when this word is used, the key is always to LOOK AT ITS ANTITHESIS to understand the meaning that is attached to this word in that particular context. The three times this word is used in this chapter (1 Corinthians 14:16, 23 and 24) show that "unlearned" correctly conveys the meaning Paul had in mind.

With these points in mind, let's go through this whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 14, to make sure we don't overlook any relevant information.

A VERSE-BY-VERSE EXAMINATION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 14

1 Corinthians 14:1 : Make the development of love, the first of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, a top priority in your life. After that, desire to be used to give inspired preaching (i.e. to prophesy).

COMMENT: It is quite obvious that many of the Corinthians really WANTED to speak in Church. It seems many of them saw their means of achieving this goal by claiming to "speak in a foreign language". So what the Apostle Paul now does in this chapter is NOT to say: "look, none of you are qualified to speak in Church; therefore be content to just be listeners". No, instead Paul actually holds out HOPE to these Corinthians that there really was a way in which they could achieve their desire to speak in Church. That way is "to prophesy" ... to give INSPIRED PREACHING!

The reason why Paul chose this approach should be readily apparent. When someone speaks in a foreign language (be it based on a language one could speak as a gift or be it based on having learned that foreign language at one stage, or even be it that the speaker was totally faking the whole thing), THEN the centre of attraction is the act of speaking "in tongues" itself. Whether what is actually said is of any value or not is almost incidental to the whole "happening".

By contrast, when someone tries to give inspired preaching, THEN what people evaluate is THE CONTENT of what is presented. It is THE MEANING of what is actually said that becomes the focus. And when someone presents way-out, unbalanced ideas which could only be designated as "nonsense", then this becomes apparent VERY QUICKLY! And the people with sound spiritual judgment will very quickly REJECT such nonsense!

Now the chances are that everyone in the Church at Corinth understood Greek, even if Greek was only a second language for some of the people there. Certainly, if there were any people at all in that congregation who could NOT speak and understand Greek, it would only have been a very tiny minority. The chances are that ALL of the members there were able to understand Paul's letter when it was read out to them. Therefore there really was NO NEED for anyone in Corinth to "speak in tongues". And therefore it should be quite clear that God was NOT the inspiration behind the large number of people who desired to speak in foreign languages (verse 26 again).

So Paul now looks at and compares BOTH forms of speaking in Church ... speaking in a foreign language and speaking in the language every one in the congregation understood.

1 Corinthians 14:2 : Those who speak in a foreign language are not understood by the audience. So EVEN IF the message was inspired, nobody would benefit from it.

1 Corinthians 14:3 : Those who speak in the common language are clearly understood and WHAT THEY SAY can benefit the hearers.

1 Corinthians 14:4 : With those who speak in a foreign language the focus is on the self as the centre of attraction; but with those who preach in the common language, the focus is on the message they present, which can then edify the audience.

1 Corinthians 14:5 : Paul is not against the true expression of speaking in a foreign language; it is just that inspired preaching in the common language is SO MUCH MORE VALUABLE! The only time there is any value to using the gift of speaking a foreign language in a preaching situation is EITHER when that "foreign language" is actually the common language for the audience, OR when there is someone available who can provide a sentence-by-sentence TRANSLATION of what the speaker is saying. In this latter situation IT IS ASSUMED that the speaker himself is not fluent in the "common language" of his audience!

Regarding the word "INTERPRET" which is used here:

The Greek word is the verb "diemeneuo", which is defined in Thayer's Lexicon as follows:

1. to unfold the meaning of what is said, explain, expound;
2. to translate into one's native language.

This verb is used only six times in the N.T.. The first of these two meanings is exemplified in Luke 24:27:

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, HE EXPOUNDED UNTO THEM IN ALL THE SCRIPTURES THE THINGS CONCERNING HIMSELF. (Luke 24:27)

The second of these two meanings of this verb is exemplified in Acts 9:36 ...

Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named TABITHA, which BY INTERPRETATION IS CALLED DORCAS: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. (Acts 9:36)

The point is that in Aramaic the name "Tabitha" means "a gazelle". And in Greek the name "Dorcias" also means "a gazelle". So here in Acts 9:36 this verb "diemeneuo" is used with the meaning of "to translate". No "interpretation" in the sense of "expounding and elaborating and elucidating" is needed. It is just a straight translation from one language into another language.

Paul uses this verb "diemeneuo" three times in this chapter (i.e. 1 Corinthians 14:5, 13 and 27). A careful examination of this whole chapter should make clear that Paul uses this word with the same meaning with which it is used in Acts 9:36 ... a straight translation from one language into another, without any "interpreting" and "elaborating" of unknown factors by the translators. After all, that is exactly what is needed when someone speaks under inspiration in a foreign language ... we need to have it

faithfully and accurately translated into our own language, so that we can think about the meaning of what has been said.

1 Corinthians 14:6 : Even if I DO speak in a foreign language, what I say must STILL be sound doctrinally. There must be a real message! Implied here is that this was NOT the case with some of those who "spoke in tongues" in Corinth. In the previous verse Paul has ALREADY shown the need for a translator to be available. Later he will emphasize this again.

1 Corinthians 14:7-8 : Every word we say must convey some MEANING! Implied is that this was not the case with some who "spoke in tongues" in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 14:9 : Our goal should always be to speak words which are "EASY TO BE UNDERSTOOD". Obviously this is not what the people in Corinth were doing.

1 Corinthians 14:10 : Every word in every language has a meaning.

1 Corinthians 14:11 : If we cannot understand another person and that person cannot understand us, then it is useless for us to preach to that person.

1 Corinthians 14:12 : Focus on genuine service to other people, so you can edify others. Your focus on speaking in tongues is really just so much vanity!

1 Corinthians 14:13 : Therefore NEVER preach in a foreign language if you also speak the common language of the people in your audience. If you really don't speak their language (this would NOT have been the case with most of the "tongue-speakers" in Corinth!), THEN only speak if there is a translator available, to translate your message sentence-by-sentence.

1 Corinthians 14:14 : Without a translator available, speaking in a foreign language is a total waste of time!

1 Corinthians 14:15 : Therefore only pray and sing and preach in a language that your audience can understand ... directly or through a translator.

1 Corinthians 14:16 : The uneducated, those who have not LEARNED the language in which you would like to speak, will be totally clueless as to what you are saying. You are wasting their time!

Comment: This also applies to those religious services which are conducted in a language that no one in the audience speaks; e.g. a Catholic Mass in Latin for people who couldn't tell you the difference between Latin and Chinese.

1 Corinthians 14:17 : Speaking in a foreign language wastes everybody's time.

1 Corinthians 14:18 : Paul spoke more different languages fluently than anyone in Corinth. If anyone could have used this gift of speaking in other languages, Paul was THE prime example.

1 Corinthians 14:19 : Paul NEVER spoke in a Church service in a language which his audience did not understand! He NEVER did! Yet he had the gift of tongues more than anyone else in Corinth.

THIS SHOULD TELL US SOMETHING!

The ONLY valid reason for speaking in a foreign language is a desire to COMMUNICATE understanding! The very purpose why Paul did have the gift of speaking other languages was precisely

so that he always COULD speak in the local language of his audience ... NOT so that he could then speak only through a translator.

1 Corinthians 14:20 : All of you in Corinth who have misused this matter of "speaking in tongues" in Church services ... please UNDERSTAND the very purpose of this gift. It is to facilitate greater communication, not to make the speaker look important.

1 Corinthians 14:21 : People were no longer hearing God's message in Hebrew. Now (i.e. at Paul's time) it was being preached in GREEK. But it doesn't really make a difference as to which language God uses to reach people ... they will still (by and large) reject His message.

1 Corinthians 14:22 : THIS VERSE IS VITAL TO UNDERSTAND!

The gift of supernaturally speaking a foreign language is really only a witness and a sign and something that is impressive TO THE WORLD AT LARGE!

IT IS NOT, AND NEVER WAS INTENDED TO BE, A SIGN FOR THOSE IN THE CHURCH!

For those in the Church "inspired preaching in the common language" was to be the sign! Isn't that the way it was for US?? It was WHAT we heard (and read) that convicted us that we had come into contact with the true Church of God, right? It wasn't some impressive presentation in foreign languages that convinced us, was it?

We ourselves are a living examples of verse 22.

But understand something else: when Paul said that speaking in "tongues" was NOT to be a sign for true believers, Paul was in effect telling the Corinthians:

THEREFORE DON'T TRY TO SPEAK IN TONGUES IN THE CHURCH OF GOD!

That is Paul's own example ... he simply was not going to speak "ten thousand words in a foreign language" to any group of God's people (1 Corinthians 14:19 again).

1 Corinthians 14:23 : A description of what apparently was taking place in Corinth. These people who "spoke in tongues" made the services look like a lunatic asylum to any sane outsider.

OBVIOUSLY PAUL DID NOT WANT PEOPLE TO DO THIS TYPE OF SPEAKING!

1 Corinthians 14:24 : If all the speakers at services (later he explains that there should never be more than two or three speakers during one service) have SOUND MESSAGES, in words that are "easy to be understood", THEN outsiders will have a hard time trying to find fault with our presentation and our messages.

1 Corinthians 14:25 : That is the only way that we can be used to reach those people whom God is calling. The truth of God will convict them in their hearts.

1 Corinthians 14:26 : This was the problem in Corinth ... confusion as a result of vanity and a desire to exalt the self.

1 Corinthians 14:27 : IF there really are people present who only speak a foreign language, but who DO

have a genuine message for the brethren, then AT THE MOST let two or three speak at one meeting; and then only one after the other, and also only if a translator is available for each one of these speakers.

Implied is that in Corinth several of these "tongues-speakers" would speak simultaneously and they didn't seem to be concerned about whether anyone in the audience actually UNDERSTOOD what they were saying. They just wanted to show off their ability to "speak in tongues".

1 Corinthians 14:28 : NEVER let someone speak in a foreign language in Church if there is no one available to translate accurately.

1 Corinthians 14:29 : Never have more than two or, at the most, three different speakers at one service. The rest of the congregation should listen and, in a positive way, evaluate what is being said.

1 Corinthians 14:30 : If it became clear that someone in the audience was suddenly being given special understanding by God during the course of a sermon, then the speaker should just sit down and let this other person continue with the message.

WE DO NOT HAVE THIS CUSTOM TODAY!

The reason for this in Paul's time was as follows: no one in the congregation had his own personal copy of the Word of God right there in his own hands. People would quote from memory. A speaker did not have the opportunity to prepare his topic with a concordance; he had to rely on what understanding he had gained through his reading and studying. IF he got into a subject where he really didn't have all the biblical facts, someone else might be better informed and have a better understanding. With a right spirit and attitude this other person might ask to present what he understood about this subject.

The previous verse set clear limits on this process ... it was not to degenerate into a type of discussion-cum-debate. At the most there could be three different speakers.

1 Corinthians 14:31 : If you so desire, you can all have the opportunity to give sermonettes. That is part of the training which is available in the Church. It was assumed that the elders, or ministers, would give the major messages. Paul had already discussed the role of the ministry earlier in this book (see chapter 3).

1 Corinthians 14:32 : Those of you who desire to speak in foreign languages please understand something: you NEVER give control over your own mind over to an outside power. WHAT you say and THE WAY you say it must always be something you yourself have control over. NEVER utter sounds, the meaning of which you yourself do not understand.

1 Corinthians 14:33 : Be sure that what YOU do does not produce CONFUSION, because that will clearly not be of God!

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 : Women are not to speak during Church services. Therefore women are not to speak "in tongues" during services either.

1 Corinthians 14:36 : If you don't agree with these instructions I have given in this chapter, who do you think you are? Has God given you some special revelation, which He has not also given to me, Paul?

1 Corinthians 14:37 : If anyone claims to understand the truth of God and the will of God, let him acknowledge that the instructions I have given you in this chapter are the commandments of God.

1 Corinthians 14:38 : Don't waste your time arguing with those who disagree with these instructions.

1 Corinthians 14:39 : So make the desire to serve and to edify other people a top priority in your life. And if there really IS someone who has the gift of speaking in a foreign language (e.g. a travelling Church member from another part of the empire), then let him speak according to the instructions I have given you here.

1 Corinthians 14:40 : But remember ... always conduct services in an honest and decent and orderly fashion. THAT is what God would have you do.

Well, now we have examined every reference there is in the New Testament to "speaking in tongues". We are now in a position to see the whole picture of exactly what is meant in the Bible by "speaking in tongues". So let's summarize all the facts.

PUTTING THE WHOLE PICTURE TOGETHER

- 1) In the New Testament there are only two sections of Scripture which discuss "speaking in tongues".
- 2) In Acts 2 we see that "speaking in tongues" involved speaking in over 15 different languages.
- 3) The use of the Greek word "dialektos" also proves that "speaking in glossa" involves speaking in known languages (or dialects).
- 4) The Greek word "glossa", translated as "tongues", very clearly means "KNOWN LANGUAGES".
- 5) The very purpose of the gift of speaking a foreign language is to eliminate the need for a translator. IF the use of speaking in a foreign language CREATES the need for someone to do the translating, THEN this actually contradicts the very purpose for WHY this gift was given in the first place!
- 6) There is nothing in the prime biblical example of "speaking in tongues" (i.e. in Acts 2) which in any way justifies the modern practice of speaking gibberish.
- 7) In 1 Corinthians 14 we do NOT have an example of "speaking in tongues". What we have in this chapter is Paul's dealings with either THE MISUSE of this gift, or with A COUNTERFEIT of this gift! A careful reading of this whole chapter shows that Paul actually CONDEMNED what many people in Corinth were trying to do.
- 8) Yet TODAY people are trying to emulate the very things which Paul condemned amongst the Corinthians.
- 9) Many of the things which Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians 14 are things we can readily identify in the modern practice of "speaking in tongues". And so the result today is the same as it was in the days of the Apostle Paul ... confusion!
- 10) Paul himself very clearly NEVER spoke in a language that was unknown to his audience. He used the gift of "tongues" to speak in the language common to the people of the area where he happened to be.

THE MODERN PRACTICE OF "SPEAKING IN TONGUES"

If the modern practice of "speaking in tongues" in some of the churches of this world is not something God has inspired, then what is it?

To understand the answer to this question, we only need to look at the correction Paul laid out in 1 Corinthians 14. It can all be summarized by saying that this practice created a condition of chaos and confusion, which sane people can only describe as "mad" (1 Corinthians 14:23), and which involved those who were "speaking in tongues" not being in full control of their own minds (1 Corinthians 14:32).

And that is precisely the case today!

Those who "speak in tongues" are not in control of their own minds. They have no control over the sounds and words they utter. This means that "an outside power" actually controls their minds when they are "speaking in tongues". Since Paul makes quite clear that such an "outside power" is not the Spirit of God, therefore the only other possibility is that such people are under the influence of demons when they "speak in tongues".

We should recognize that amongst "speakers in tongues" there are those who fake the whole thing. They want to appear important and so they fake the entire experience based on what they have seen other people do.

But as far as those who are influenced by demons are concerned, the demons take over control of the person's vocal chords. The demons get these people to utter words and sounds which the people themselves do not understand.

BUT THE DEMONS VERY CLEARLY UNDERSTAND WHAT THESE WORDS AND SOUNDS MEAN!

It should be quite clear that when demons influence people to say words the people themselves do not understand, then such speech is going to be nothing more than a stream of bitter and abusive blasphemies in some obscure language (the demons are familiar with every single human language and dialect that has ever existed). The whole episode (the things that go on while someone is "speaking in tongues" and the confusion that is created) make a mockery of the worship of the true God, and the meanings of the words and statements which are uttered will reinforce this fact.

So beware of the practice of "speaking in tongues". What is happening today has no resemblance to what happened in Acts chapter 2. And don't ever allow any outside force to take control of your mind, not even for a minute. YOU yourself are responsible before God for your mind and for what you think and say and do.

And always remember Matthew 12:36:

... That EVERY IDLE WORD THAT MEN SHALL SPEAK, THEY SHALL GIVE ACCOUNT THEREOF IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. (Matthew 12:36)

NEVER say something which you yourself do not understand!

Frank W. Nelte