

# The Holy Spirit

His Person and Work

# The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit and the Gift of Tongues

# Questions

- *What is the gift of tongues?*
- *Are tongues the same in 1 Corinthians as in Acts?*
- *What are the rules for tongues in 1 Corinthians?*
- *What conclusions can we draw from the book of 1 Corinthians?*

# Review from Acts

1. There is no pattern of speaking in tongues established in Acts for the early church.
2. There are no instances in which people are instructed to speak in tongues in Acts.
3. There is a consistency in known languages being the evidence of tongues speaking.
4. The pattern in Acts is the presence of Jews and apostles, the salvation of people, and the speaking of known languages.

# What was the gift of tongues?

It should be said at the outset that the Greek word *glossa*, translated “tongue,” is not used only to mean the physical tongue in a person’s mouth, but also to mean “language.” In the New Testament passages where speaking in tongues is discussed, the meaning “languages” is certainly in view. It is unfortunate, therefore, that English translations have continued to use the phrase “speaking in tongues,” which is an expression not otherwise used in ordinary English and which gives the impression of a strange experience, something completely foreign to ordinary human life. But if English translations were to use the expression “speaking in languages,” it would not seem nearly as strange, and would give the reader a sense much closer to what first century Greek speaking readers would have heard in the phrase when they read it in Acts or 1 Corinthians. (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1069).

# Early Church Fathers

- **Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329-390):** “They spoke with foreign tongues, and not those of their native land; and the wonder was great, a language spoken by those who had not learned it. And the sign is to them that believe not, and not to them that believe, that it may be an accusation of the unbelievers.
- **John Chrysostom (c. 344-407), commenting on 1 Cor. 14:1-2:** “And as in the time of building the tower [of Babel] the one tongue was divided into many; so then the many tongues frequently met in one man, and the same person used to discourse both in the Persian, and the Roman, and the Indian, and many other tongues, the Spirit sounding within him: and the gift was called the gift of tongues because he could all at once speak divers languages.”
- **Augustine (354-430):** “In the earliest times, ‘the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spoke with tongues,’ which they had not learned, ‘as the Spirit gave them utterance.’ These were signs adapted to the time. For it was necessary for there to be that sign of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, to show that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth.”

# Late Church History

- **John Calvin:** “There was a difference between the knowledge of tongues, and the interpretation of them, for those who were endowed with the former [i.e. the gift of tongues] were, in many cases, not acquainted with the language of the nation with which they had to deal. The interpreters rendered foreign tongues into the native language. These endowments they did not at that time acquire by labor or study, but were put in possession of them by a wonderful revelation of the Spirit.”
- We could add the names of the Puritans, and the names of theologians like Jonathan Edwards, Charles Hodge, Charles Spurgeon, and B.B. Warfield among many others.

# Early Pentecostalism

- Charles Parham cited in the Topeka State Journal, January 7, 1901: “The Lord will give us the power of speech to talk to the people of the various nations without having to study them in schools.”
- Charles Parham cited in the Kansas City Times, January 27, 1901: “A part of our labor will be to teach the church the uselessness of spending years of time preparing missionaries for work in foreign lands when all they have to do is ask God for power.”
- Charles Parham cited in the Hawaiian Gazette, May 31, 1901: “There is no doubt that at this time they will have conferred on them the ‘gift of tongues,’ if they are worthy and seek it in faith, believing they will thus be made able to talk to the people whom they choose to work among in their own language, which will, of course, be an inestimable advantage. The students of Bethel College do not need to study in the old way to learn the languages. They have them conferred on them miraculously . . . [being] able to converse with Spaniards, Italians, Bohemians, Hungarians, Germans, and French in their own language. I have no doubt various dialects of the people of India and even the language of the savages of Africa will be received during our meeting in the same way. I expect this gathering to be the greatest since the days of Pentecost.”



# Early Pentecostalism

- Sadly, the idea of xenoglossalalic tongues [i.e. foreign languages] would later prove an embarrassing failure as Pentecostal workers went off to mission fields with their gift of tongues and found their hearers did not understand them. (Jack Hayford, *The Charismatic Century*, 42).
- S. C. Todd of the Bible Missionary Society investigated eighteen Pentecostals who went to Japan, China, and India “expecting to preach to the natives in those countries in their own tongue,” and found that by their own admission “in no single instance have [they] been able to do so.” As these and other missionaries returned in disappointment and failure, Pentecostals were compelled to rethink their original view of speaking in tongues. (Robert M. Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 90-91)

# Is Tongues the Same in 1 Corinthians?

- **Acts** - The miraculous tongues in Acts were directly related to the working of the Holy Spirit (2:4, 18; 10:44-46; 19:6). In fact, tongue-speaking is evidence of having received the “gift” of the Holy Spirit (10:45).
- **1 Corinthians** - As in Acts, the gift of tongues in 1 Corinthians was directly related to the working of the Holy Spirit (12:1, 7, 11, etc.). Similarly, the gift of tongues is an evidence (or “manifestation”) of having received the Holy Spirit (12:7).

# Is Tongues the Same in 1 Corinthians?

- **Acts** - Along those lines, in Acts 11:15-17, Peter implies that the tongue-speaking of Acts 10 was the same as that of Acts 2, even noting that Cornelius and his household had received the same gift as the apostles on the Day of Pentecost. This indicates that the tongues of the Apostles (in Acts 2) was not limited just to the Apostles, but was also experienced (at least) by both Cornelius's household (Acts 10) and the disciples of Apollos (Acts 19).
- **1 Corinthians** - Paul, as an Apostle, possessed the gift of tongues (14:18). Yet he recognized that there were those in the Corinthian church who also possessed the gift.

# Is Tongues the Same in 1 Corinthians?

- **Acts** - The miraculous ability, as it is described in Acts 2, is the supernatural ability to speak in other tongues (meaning foreign languages) (2:4, 9-11).
- **1 Corinthians** - As in Acts, the gift of tongues is described as a speaking gift (12:30; 14:2, 5). The fact that it can be interpreted/translated (12:10; 14:5, 13) indicates that it consisted of an authentic foreign language, similar to the tongues of Acts 2. (Paul's direct association of tongue-speaking with foreign languages in 14:10-11 and also his reference to Isaiah 28:11-12 strengthens this claim.)

# Is Tongues the Same in 1 Corinthians?

- The primary word for tongues in Acts is “glossa” (2:4, 11; 10:46; 19:6), although it is also described with the word “dialekto” on two occasions (2:6, 8).
- **1 Corinthians** -As in Acts, the primary word for tongues in 1 Corinthians 12-14 is “glossa” (12:10, 28; 13:1, 8; 14:2, 4, 5, 9, 13, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27, 39), though Paul also uses the term “phoneo” twice (in 14:10-11).

# Is Tongues the Same in 1 Corinthians?

- **Acts** - It was a sign for unbelieving Jews (2:5, 12, 14, 19).
- **1 Corinthians** - As in Acts, the gift of tongues was a sign for unbelieving Jews (14:21-22; cf. Is. 28:11). Note that the gift is even called a “sign” in 14:22 (the word “sign” is from the same Greek word as “sign” in Acts 2:22). Thus, the Corinthian use of tongues was a sign just as the Apostles use of tongues was a sign.

# Is Tongues the Same in 1 Corinthians?

- **Acts** - It is closely connected with prophecy (2:16-18; 19:6) and with other signs that the Apostles were performing (2:43)
- **1 Corinthians** - As in Acts, the gift of tongues is closely connected with prophecy (all throughout 12-14).

# Is Tongues the Same in 1 Corinthians?

- **Acts** - Some of the unbelieving Jews at Pentecost accused the apostles of being drunk when they heard them speaking in other tongues (languages which those Jews did not understand).
- **1 Corinthians** - Similar to Acts, Paul says that unbelievers will accuse the Corinthians of being mad [not unlike “drunk”] if their tongues go uninterpreted (14:23), and are therefore not understood by the hearer.



# Is Tongues the Same in 1 Corinthians?

- Added to this is the fact that Luke (the author of Acts) was a close associate of Paul (the writer of 1 Corinthians). Moreover, the book of Acts was written after the epistle to the 1 Corinthians. It is unlikely, then, that Luke would have used the exact same terminology as Paul if he understood there to be an essential difference between the two (especially since such could lead to even greater confusion about the gifts — a confusion which plagued the Corinthian church).

# The Rules of 1 Corinthians 14

1. Tongues are not prohibited in the church, but they are secondary to gifts that edify (vs. 1-5).
2. Tongues without interpretation that builds the church is meaningless (vs. 6-12).
3. Five intelligent words is preferred over 10,000 uninterpreted words (vs. 13-19).
4. Tongues are a sign to unbelievers (Jews in particular) (vs. 21-22).

# The Rules of 1 Corinthians 14

5. Since edification is the purpose of church gatherings, then an interpreter is required for all tongues speaking (vs. 27-28.)
6. Only a limited number of individuals, one at a time, may speak in tongues at a service (vs. 27, 29, 33).
7. Women may not speak in tongues in the church (vs. 34-35).
8. All should be done in decent order (vs. 40).

# Conclusions

1. The gift of tongues is the gift of speaking a foreign language previously unknown to the speaker.
2. Church history recognized that tongues were a foreign language.
3. The gift of tongues is identical between Acts and 1 Corinthians.
4. The gift of tongues had rules for congregational use.
5. Failure to follow the rules resulted in excommunication (vs. 37-38).