

Tongues - Some Preliminary Investigations

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Statement of Purpose

The issue of tongues is one which is quite broad in scope. From lexicographical studies one must proceed to exegesis, theology, church history, philosophy of religion, psychology and so cio-psychology. What was once a fairly small and somewhat localized occurrence has now crossed nearly all cultures and denominations and is a phenomenon which must be faced by the entire Christian church.

In approaching the phenomenon of tongues, many specific questions deserve attention. Some of these are: (1) Do the scriptures teach that tongues are a continuing gift to the *kehilah* or did authentic tongues cease after the early Christian centuries? (2) How do we explain the varied tongues phenomenon in the present charismatic movement? (3) Are there various uses or purposes for tongues in the modern *kehilah*? (4) Is the gift of tongues evidence of the presence and special blessing of the Ruach? (5) How does the interpretation of the tongue enter into its proper use? (6) How do we distinguish authentic from counterfeit tongues? Obviously, this list could go on.

But in this line of questions, there is one which is crux, to which the answer will cast a guiding light upon many of the other questions. This crux question, simply put, is: Are tongues as recorded and evidenced in the scripture the speaking of foreign languages unknown to the speaker, or are they “ecstatic utterances,” that is, non-linguistic, undefinable syllables linked together in random fashion? To this crux question we now turn our attention.

A proper answer will necessarily be based on data from: (1) an investigation of the meaning of *γλωσσα* in the Apostolic Scriptures and related literature, (2) the understanding of relevant texts in the Scriptures (particularly Acts 2, I Cor. 14), (3) the investigation of the history of tongues in the *kehilah* and in non-Christian religions and (4) an investigation of the theological implications of the conclusions reached by these lexical, exegetical and historical studies. Sections one and two above will comprise the first monograph and sections three and four, a second monograph, if HaShem is willing.

Abbreviations

A/G, A&G	Greek-English Lexicon of the NT, Arndt & Gingrich
Blass	A Greek Grammar of the NT, Blass-DeBrunner
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
DNTT	Dictionary of NT Theology, Colin Brown, ed.
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary, Gaebelien, ed.
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JRS	Journal of Religious Studies
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
ICC	The International Critical Commentary
Kehilah	Hebrew term meaning "congregation," used in place of "church"
L&S	Greek Lexicon, Liddell and Scott
LXX	Septuagint (Rahlfes UBS edition)
M/N, M&N	Vocabulary of the Greek NT, Moulton and Milligan
Moulton-Turner	Grammer of NT Greek, 4 vols, Moulton-Turner-Nigel
MT	Masoretic Text (Biblica Hebraica Stuggartensia)
NCBC	New Century Bible Comm., Clements, Black, eds.
NICNT	New International Comm. on the NT, Bruce, ed.
NTS	New Testament Studies
Tanach	Old Testament
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the NT, Kittle, ed.
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the OT, Botterwick, Ringren, eds.
WTJ	Westminster Theological Journal
Qumran texts:	
IQH	Thanksgiving Hymn
CD	Rule of the Community

Chapter One

Tongues: Known Languages or Ecstatic Utterances? *A Lexicographical Study of Γλωσσα In the Apostolic Writings*

In the Apostolic Scriptures

The Greek word itself is found 50 times in the Apostolic Writings¹ 25 of which have reference to “speaking in tongues.” The remaining 25 relate to the physical organ of the tongue. Of the 25 instances germane to our study, 20 are found in I Corinthians, 15 of which are in chapter fourteen. The remaining five are found in Mark and Acts.² A general lexicon entry gives the following meanings: (1) tongue (of the physical organ) [also used figuratively of fire, שֵׁהַן נִשְׁהַן in the Hebrew idiom]; (2) language; also equivalent with φυλη, λαος, εθνος, in certain contexts, (3) as a technical term for the speech of people under a religious influence.³

Behm⁴ notes as well that γλωσσα can refer to “an expression which in speech or manner is strange and obscure and needs explanation.” This could be an archaic expression or something of a poetic nature. We likewise use the word “foreign” in the English language to denote that which is obscure. Behm finds this use primarily in the Greek philosophers and writers.

Syntactically, the Apostolic usages are most often found as the noun γλωσσα (with or without the preposition εν) together with the verb λαλειν (18x). Most of these are in I Corinthians.⁵ The passages in Acts and Mark use the same combination. Five times, and only in 1 Co. 14, the noun occurs in the singular unmodified. The noun also occurs 9 times in the plural without modifiers; 7 times in 1 Co. 14 and 2 times in Acts. Twice in 1 Co. 14, twice in Acts and in the Mark passage the plural stands with modifiers. Six times γλωσσα stands with other verbs or nouns [1 Co 12(2x), 13, 14(3x)].⁶

There are other possible expressions in the Apostolic Scriptures which deal with the speaking in tongues.⁷ These include:

λαλει αλλα θεω (“speaks but to God”)	1 Co. 14:2
ψαλω τω πνευματι (“sing [a Psalm] with the spirit”)	1 Co. 14:15
ευλογησ εν πνευματι (“bless in the spirit”)	1 Co. 14:16
επι τη ση ευχαριστια (“at your giving thanks”)	1 Co. 14:16
ευχαπιστεισ (“you are giving thanks”)	1 Co. 14:17
εν χειλιεσιν ετερων λαλησω (“in another tongue I will speak”)	1 Co. 14:21

1 David Holly, *A Complete Categorized Greek-English New Testament Vocabulary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 5.

2 The breakdown is as follows: 1 Co. 12:10(2x), 28, 30; 13:1, 8; 14:2, 4, 5(2x), 6, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27, 39. Mark 16:17; Acts 2:4, 11; 10:46; 19:6.

3 A/G, ad loc., p. 161.

4 *TDNT*, Vol. 1, p. 720.

5 Roy A. Harrisville, “Speaking in Tongues: A Lexicographical Study,” *CBQ*, 38:1(Jan., 1976), p. 36 calculates 19, including 1 Co. 14:21, but the Lxx quote uses ετερογλωσσοις.

6 See Chart 1, Appendix 1.

7 Taken from Harrisville, *Ibid.*

εαυτω...λαλειτω και τω θεω (“to himself...let him speak and to God”) 1 Co. 14:28
τη δια διαλεκτω (“in his own language”) Acts 2:6

The survey of the above data would indicate that the verbiage connected with the Apostolic phenomenon of tongues speaking is primarily Pauline. Discussions as to the origin of γλωσσα + λαλειν as a technical term are varied. Some feel Paul coined the phrase as the technical term to label the first century phenomenon while others see the Pauline usage as ellipsis for the more original ετεραις γλωσσαί λαλειν of Acts.⁸

In summary we may say that the Apostolic terminology is predominantly Pauline and that he favors the plural γλωσσαίς with the verb λαλειν.

In the LXX (γλωσσα/γλωττα)

In the LXX the term γλωσσα is found together with λαλειν 7 times, 4 times in the singular unmodified and three times in the singular with modifiers.⁹ There are numerous times when γλωσσα is used which do not bear on the present study. Harrisville¹⁰ lists twenty occurrences of γλωσσα which do enter into the present study. Most of these instances have γλωσσα in the singular without modifiers. Examples include: Ezek. 36:3, Ps. 118[119]:172 and Ps. 11[12]:4 (cf. Ac. 2:4; 10:46). Several passages seem to be variations on the same theme of Isaiah 28:11 (which Paul quotes in 1 Co. 14).¹¹ Other passages use γλωσσα together with αγαλλιαω (“to rejoice”) and μελετω (“to exercise” or “practice”). A general survey of the Lxx passages reveals the following: (1) no passage attests to a practice of “ecstatic utterances” while in a religious trance and (2) the language employed by Paul as a technical term is not founded on Lxx usage.¹²

In Non-Ecclesiastical Greek

Harrisville's survey of extant sources shows that the Apostolic term γλωσσα + λαλειν did not gain a technical status in the non-ecclesiastical Greek. Nils Engelsen¹³ concludes that the term γλωσσα + λαλειν does not occur outside of the Apostolic Scriptures because “inarticulate or unintelligible speech is looked upon only as a feature of ecstatic speech.” Harrisville finds one exception to this in a reconstructed line from the Oxyrhynchus fragment but this is not very certain.¹⁴

8 Harrisville, *Ibid.*, 37-8.

9 For singular: Job 33:2; Ps. 36[37]:30; 38[39]:4[3]; Jer. 9:4[5]. For plural: Ps. 108[109]:2; Is. 19:18; 28:11.

10 *Op. cit.*, 39.

11 Ps. 80[81]:6[5] - γλωσσαν, ην ουκ εγνω, ηκουσεν; Zeph. 3:9 - τοτε μετασπεψω επι λαους γλωσσαν; Jer. 5:15 - ουκ ακουση της φωνης της γλωσσης.

12 See Haarbeck, *DNTT*, vol. iii, 107-8 for a brief survey of Lxx usage. Note also Harrisville, *op. cit.*, 40.

13 Nils Engelsen. “Glossolalia and Other Forms of Inspired Speech According to 1 Co. 12-14” (Univ. Microfilms, 1970), quoted from Harrisville, *Op. Cit.*, 43.

14 Harrisville, 43.

In Qumran

As in the Lxx, the Qumran society appears to have been preoccupied with the Isaiah 28:11 passage and its interpretation. This verse and its interpretation is referred to in the Thanksgiving Hymn¹⁵ as well as the Rule of the Community.¹⁶ The most significant variation with the MT (and with Paul in 1 Co. 14) is the change of subject: from “God” in the MT to “lying prophets” in 1QH 2:18 and 4:16. The LXX follows the Qumran reading as well. The Qumran Isaiah scroll, however, renders the passage in full agreement with the extant MT. The question which presents itself for our study is whether or not it is possible that לשון אחרת (“other language”) had gained a kind of technical status in the Qumran society, a convenient term to describe a present or anticipated phenomenon? Tongues phenomenon did occur at this time in main-line Judaism.¹⁷

In the *Testament of Job* the three daughters of Job speak in other tongues while in an ecstatic state.¹⁸ The language employed is very interesting. One daughter speaks “angelic language” (διδασκαλῶν) while another speaks “in the language of the Cherubim.” The section closes with “And each blessed and glorified in her special language.”¹⁹

There is not sufficient data to be dogmatic, but it seems very likely that the Apostles of Yeshua (and particularly Paul) had at their disposal a set catalog of terms to describe phenomenon of speech which was out of the ordinary. Exactly how Paul uses this set vocabulary remains to be seen.

In the Post-Christian Era

The use of this set, technical phrase to identify the phenomenon of tongues did not cease with the passing of the Apostles. The church fathers afford us with many reference to “speaking in tongues,” most of which refer to Acts or 1 Corinthians. One of the most telling is the passage of Chrysostom where he remarks about 1 Co. 12:1-6. He writes “the passage is most obscure. Ignorance and absence of the events taking place then but not occurring now makes for the obscurity.”²⁰

Summary

- (1) The Greek term itself most often refers either to the physical organ or language, i.e., the product of the tongue.
- (2) It is used of the ecstatic utterances of some in a religious state, though the combination γλωσσα + λαλεῖν is biblical and finds no parallel in the secular literature.
- (3) Both Qumran and the Lxx seem to give special attention to Is. 28:11 as bearing significantly on the issue of tongues.

15 1QH 4:16.

16 CD 1:14; 4:19-20 and 5:11-12.

17 See the comments of Behm, *TDOT*, Vol. 1, p. 723 and Stuart D. Currie, “Speaking in Tongues: Early Evidence Outside the New Testament Bearing on “γλωσσαίς λαλεῖν” *Interpretation*, 19(1965), 274-94.

18 This work has undergone “christianization,” see comments of Behm, *Op. cit.*, 723.

19 Taken from Harrisville, 49.

20 From the Homilies of Chrysostom, xxix., p. 257. Taken from Alford, *The Greek Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), 2:575.

- (4) The technical terminology $\gamma\lambda\omega\sigma\sigma\alpha + \lambda\alpha\lambda\epsilon\iota\nu$ is likely a term available to the Apostles as somewhat fixed by usage, but Paul probably was instrumental in setting it ultimately as the technical term for the tongues phenomenon found among early Messianic congregations.
- (5) While a lexicographical study is not sufficient in and of itself, on its own weight it would strongly suggest that $\gamma\lambda\omega\sigma\sigma\alpha + \lambda\alpha\lambda\epsilon\iota\nu$ in the Apostolic Scriptures refers to something different than the ecstatic utterances of the pagan cults. The terminology would favor a speaking in foreign languages.

Chapter Two

Exegetical Study of Γλωσσα In the Book of Acts

The subject of “tongues” is spoken of in the Apostolic Scriptures in several places. Besides the verse in Mark 16,²¹ only Acts and 1 Corinthians 12-14 contain major passages for our study. The goal of exegesis in these two passages will be (1) to determine the nature of γλωσσα in each and to ascertain if similar phenomenon was in view in both cases; (2) to note the apparent purpose of the tongues phenomenon. This will aid in understanding its intended and proper use.

The first occurrence of tongues in the New Testament is found in Acts 2 with the disciples celebrating the feast of Shavuot in Jerusalem. The parallels with the Tanach are interesting and significant. The Rabbinic teaching that the Torah was given fifty days after the exodus may have good historical foundation.²² It is likewise agreed upon that the giving of the Spirit coincided with the feast of Shavuot, and was also fifty days after the Yeshua’s death. Thus, a primary aspect of the Torah was to point to Messiah (Romans 10:4; Gal. 3:24) and to establish the covenant which HaShem had made with Israel. The Ruach was given in His new and expanded work of enabling Israel to carry the message of Messiah and His Torah to the nations. Yeshua, our Pesach Lamb, rose from the dead as the first-fruits, of which Shavuot celebrates the full harvest. The Ruach does not make His first “appearance” at the Shavuot of Acts 2, but “comes” to empower Israel in a new, expanded way for the purpose of harvesting the nations, a point often missed by many in discussing this pivotal passage.²³ The Ruach manifested Himself with wind,²⁴ fire,²⁵ and speaking in tongues (λαλεις ετεραις γλωσσαις). Most agree that the phenomenon consisted first in sound and sight associated with wind and fire. The use of ωσπερ and ωσει would suggest that Luke is describing to the best of his ability the phenomenon which took place—spiritual phenomenon which could best be described in temporal terms.²⁶ Verses 4 through 13 give us the description of the Apostles speaking in tongues. Luke makes it clear that the ability to speak in this manner is of the Ruach, since being filled with the Ruach is linked

21 The condition of the text in the longer ending of Mark makes the verse suspect at best. If the verse reflects early thinking on the subject, it would appear to be mixed with various beliefs of the mystery cults as well. Eusebius mentions the writings of Papias which give account of one Justus who, though he drank a deadly poison, was unaffected (Euseb., III, 39. [p. 126 in the Baker Book House Edition]). The safeguard by miracles against the harm of normal occurrences seems out of line with the teaching of Messiah, especially to designate such miracles as “signs” (σημειον). See the comments of Gould. *The Gospel of St. Mark* in the ICC, (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1896), 303.

22 See my “The Feast of Shavuot: Some Chronological Suggestions,” available at www.torahresource.com.

23 See the comments of Kellog, *Leviticus* (Minn.: Klock & Klock, 1978), 460-61 (reprint of 1899 edition pub. by A.C. Armstrong and Son).

24 Wind is often a symbol of the Ruach, cf. Ezek. 37:9f; Jn. 3:8ff; of the Divine presence, cf. 2 Sam. 5:24; Ps. 104:3,4; 1 Ki. 19:11 and often signifies “power” or “divine activity.”

25 For fire, cf. Ex. 3:2; 19:18; Nu. 9:16; 14:14; 16:35; Deut. 4:24; 5:24; Ps. 97:3; Is. 66:15; Matt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16.

26 See the comments of Knowling, “Acts of the Apostles” in *EGT*, 2:58. Gloag, [*The Acts of the Apostles* (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1870)] also comments that the use of ως would rule out all of the attempts to explain the occurrence by some natural rather than supernatural means. Longnecker, *Acts of the Apostles* in *EBC*, 9:270 notes that later Jewish tradition held that a great sound, changing to fire and recognized by all as a speaking from the Divine, occurred at Sinai during the giving of the Torah; cf. b.*Shabbat* 88b.

here with speaking in tongues. In other words, the “speaking in tongues” phenomenon assured them that the Messiah’s promise to send the Ruach to empower them had been fulfilled. He was to come with special power to enable the completion of the mission of Messiah. It was for this ministry of the Ruach that they were to wait before venturing out into world-wide evangelism.²⁷

The matter which must capture our attention here, however, is the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. Were these known languages or ecstatic utterances? Apart from the meaning of γλωσσα + λαλειν already discussed, the context and verbiage substantiate the claim that these were known languages spoken through supernatural ability.²⁸

Several things in the context of Acts 2 support this interpretation. First is the use of γλωσσα. Second is the use of αποθεγγομαι in verse 4: “... and they began to speak in tongues as the Ruach HaKodesh gave them utterance.” αποθεγγομαι is regularly used of speech in rhetoric, etc. and not of ecstatic utterance.²⁹

Thirdly, the corresponding phrase in verse eleven, ακουομεν λαλουντων αυτων ταις ημετεραις γλωσσαις, (“we hear them in our own tongues speaking ...”) is very decisive. Luke would be very misleading in using this language if in fact the miracle was in hearing and not in speaking.³⁰

Fourthly, the use of διαλεκτος (dialect, language) is parallel in the context to γλωσσα and φωνη³¹ throughout this passage.³² The parallel use of these terms strongly supports the view that

27 To postulate at this point (as some Pentecostals do) that on the analogy of Acts 2 all believers must, subsequent to salvation, be "filled with the Spirit" and evidence this by tongues speaking is to miss the import and context of this passage, not to mention the unified voice of Scripture on the baptism in or by the Ruach (1 Cor. 12:13ff). To further differentiate between baptized “in” or “by” shows the lack of grammatical and syntactical understanding which undergirds this movement. See the profitable comments of Watson Mills. *A Theological/Exegetical Approach to Glossalalia* (New York: Univ. Press of America, 1985), 120ff; Anthony Hoekema, *Holy Spirit Baptism* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1972), 50-54; Brunner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1970), 260-67; Joseph Dillow, *Speaking in Tongues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Books, 1975), 57-66; F.F. Bruce, *I & II Corinthians* in *NCBC*, 117.

28 The notion that 2:5-11 was added later into the narrative is ill-founded. This theory is summarized in Foakes-Jackson and Lake. *The Beginnings of Christianity: The Acts of the Apostles*, 5 vols. (Macmillan and Co., 1920-33), 5:118-120; see also Watson, *A Theological/Exegetical Approach*, Op. cit., 65-6.

29 See A/G ad loc. where the word is found in the case of some “inspired speakers.” M/M give instances of priests giving an oracle; L&S give the meaning “to speak one’s opinion plainly” and note that in Plutarch the sense is to “utter an apophthegm” (=something clearly spoken, a terse saying; a pithy or sententious maxim, Oxford Eng. Dict.).

30 See the comments of R. H. Gundry, "'Ecstatic Utterances' (N.E.B.)?," *JTS*, N.S. Vol. XVII, No. 2 (Oct., 1966), 304-5.

31 The use of φωνη in Ac. 2:6 is interesting. It is very probable that it refers to the sound of the tongue speaking and not necessarily to the sound like a rushing wind. It must be considered significant that the Lxx uses both φωνη and γλωσσα in the Gen. 11 account of the tower of Babel. What is more, the verb ακουω is connected with φωνη in verse 7 in the phrase “come, let us go down and confuse their speech (γλωσσα) in order that they might not hear (ακουω) the speech (φωνη) of their neighbor.” This must also bear significantly on Paul’s use of φωνη in 1 Co. 14:7-10. All lexicons acknowledge the meaning “language” for the word φωνη as one possibility and list Gen. 11:1,7 and 1 Co. 14:10f in this category.

32 διαλεκτος is used in 2:6, 8 in the parallel phrase to v. 11, “each heard in his own language. διαλεκτος is found only in Acts in the Apostolic Scriptures (Ac 1:15; 2:6, 8; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14). The Lxx has the word at Esther 9:26 (no MT equivalent in this text) in explanation of the name Purim, that it is so called “in their (Jewish) language.” Lxx also has it at Dan. 1:4 (Heb רִשְׁוֹן) speaking of the Chaldean language. L&S give the following classical senses: I (1) discourse, conversation, (2) common discourse (3) style; II (1) speech, language, (2) language of

these tongues were known languages. To argue that γλωσσα is “ecstatic utterance” of indistinguishable sounds is to make nonsense of the passage if διαλεκτος is given its usual meaning. Some have felt the phrase in verse five (ἦσαν δε εἰς ἱερουσαλημ κατοικουντες ιουδαιοι, ανδρες ευλαβεις απο παντος εθνους των υπο του ουρανον) “there were in Jerusalem Jews living, devout men from every nation under heaven” demands a miracle of hearing rather than speaking, since the eleven disciples could never have spoken in enough languages for all in attendance to hear in their own tongue. Moreover, those who would argue on these grounds also point out that Luke's list appears to be incomplete. Watson concludes this is a major weakness in the text itself and would strongly suggest a corruption.

There are other indications that suggest that the canonical record of the Pentecost event has been edited and/or conflated. The catalog of nations does not include 'every nation under heaven' —the Greek homelands, Macedonia and Arabia are conspicuously missing. Nor is it likely that Jews living in those various places would know ancient local dialects, since Aramaic or Greek was the common language of the people in all those places named. Certainly the Jews would term such local dialects as did survive 'our own tongues.' Moreover, the gift of foreign language would have been useless since Peter preaches a sermon in Aramaic, and everyone understands him.³³

In response to Watson, it is clear that his presuppositions, namely (1) that the text is corrupt or redacted and (2) that the tongues were not foreign languages dictate his conclusions. The phrase “every nation under heaven” is understood by the limitation of the former phrase, “Jews...from every nation under heaven.” Every country to which the Jews had been driven was represented in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. These were people who had been born out of the country (κατοικουντες), having most likely returned from the land of their dispersion.³⁴

The phrase απο παντος εθνους των υπο της ουρανον (“from every nation under heaven”) must also be considered in its literary and contextual sense. It is most likely hyperbole and there is good evidence that the phrase itself was a common hyperbolic expression.³⁵ Luke uses it to make it clear that the message given by those speaking in tongues was a message to the whole nation of Jewery, wherever they might have been dispersed.³⁶

The allegation of Watson that those returning from the diaspora would not consider the foreign language of their dispersion as “their own tongue” is likewise ill-founded. The statement is not theological but historical and sociological on their part. Moreover, bi-linguality or better must have been very common so that even though they heard the message originally in the language of the land of their birth, they most likely also had command of Aramaic which Peter probably spoke when he delivered his sermon. Thus all understood Peter's message, while the

a specific country, esp. a dialect of a specific district; III (1) a way of speaking, enunciation.

33 Watson, *Theo/Exeg. Approach to Glossolalia*, Op. cit., 65.

34 Longnecker, Op. cit., 272.

35 It is found in the Lxx (Deut. 2:25), in Plato and other classic writers (see Knowling, *EGC*, 2:73). Eusebius quotes Agrippa as saying “there is not a nation in the world which does not contain some of us (Jews)” (quoted from Lumby, p. 16).

36 For a catalog of the nations mentioned in Ac. 2:9-11 see Lumby, p. 17; Bruce, *New Testament History* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1972), 135-151. In Weinstock, “The Geographical Catalogue in Acts 2:9-11” *JRS* 38(1948), 43ff., it is suggested that Luke lists nations in 2:9-11 which correspond to an early listing of nations in accordance with the zodiac table, thus signifying every nation = every nation represented by the 12 signs. See Bruce, *Ibid.*, 135, n. 2.

Palestinian Jews did not understand the previous “tongues speaking.”³⁷

For Watson to further argue that the subsequent occurrences of tongues in Acts 10:46 proves that the Pentecost experience is conflated with confusion simply does not follow. The text of 10:46 makes it clear that what happened there was like what happened at Shavuot (καθως και ημεις). What kind of reasoning is it to assume that because the Acts 10:46 passage does not specifically indicate different languages were spoken, this throws confusion upon the Acts 2 context? A simple acceptance of the text forces us to the position that what happened at the house of Cornelius was the same as what took place on the day of Shavuot.³⁸

In summary of the Acts 2 passage, we may list the following:

1. The Spirit gave the disciples the ability to speak in languages foreign to them and beyond their natural ability to use at the present moment.
2. God providentially had Jews at the scene who could attest to this fact, Jews who represented the entire nation, though dispersed.
3. The Galilean Jews were confounded since they could not understand the foreign languages being spoken and attempted to find a natural reason for the circumstances (“full of new wine”).
4. Peter gives the explanation to substantiate the spiritual nature of the phenomenon and to dispel the slanderous attack of the Palestinian Jews.

37 The comments of Meyer on this issue are quite lengthy and good, see his commentary, pp. 45-52.

38 Ibid., p. 49. The phrase in Ac. 11:16, "and I remembered the word of the Lord how He used to say..." of Peter in his recounting of the Cornelius event may be significant. It appears that the tongues phenomenon was not commonplace. The time span between Shavuot and Cornelius is at least 7 years, more likely 10 years. If every conversion were marked by tongues, why was it that Peter especially remembered “the words of Messiah” regarding the outpouring of the Ruach on Cornelius and his household? The language appears to indicate that the event was special and not common and thus evoked particular pondering on the part of Peter. (I am indebted to my father for pointing out this particular text.)

Chapter Three

The Purpose of Tongues In Acts 2

The purpose of tongues in Acts 2 may be collectively discussed under two main heads: (1) To mark the giving of the Ruach as promised by Jochanan the Baptizer and Messiah for the realization of Messiah's world-wide evangelistic commission, and (2) to mark the beginning of the "times of the Gentiles" and thus of God's judgment against the nation of Israel according to the prophets of the Tanach and the words of Messiah in Matthew 21:43. The Ruach was given, then, to bring to fruition the "New Covenant" promised by Jeremiah. The flow of the narrative in Acts makes it clearly Luke's purpose to show the Shavuot following Yeshua's resurrection as the realization of Messiah's promise that the Ruach would come to aid in the fulfillment of His commands. One is struck with this from the outset of the narrative. The disciples were (1) to wait before going to evangelize the nations, (2) to wait specifically in Jerusalem and (3) wait *until* the Spirit was given to them in such a way as they would be empowered to accomplish the task given to them by their Master (Acts 1:3-8). The fact that they were devoting themselves to prayer (1:14) would likewise indicate their anticipation of this promised event. The only thing coming between the promise, command, and ascension of Yeshua and the coming of the Ruach is the choosing of Matthias to replace Judas. Luke certainly intends the reader to gather the significance of the Shavuot event in light of Yeshua's command to evangelize the nations.

The feast of Shavuot would likewise point to this purpose.³⁹ God is not capricious. Tongues must have a significant story to tell us as to the purpose of the Ruach's coming in this way. The most obvious interpretation fits well with Yeshua's command upon the disciples to evangelize the world (Matt. 28:19, 20; Ac. 1:8). That He enabled them to speak in different languages was enormously symbolic of the realized New Covenant which would bring to fruition the promise made to the fathers that "in your seed all the nations of earth will be blessed."⁴⁰ And Shavuot, celebrating the harvest, is likewise replete with symbolism as the followers of Yeshua are now endowed to reap the harvest of mankind for God's glory.

The central theme of Peter's message would likewise emphasize this purpose. His quoting of the prophet Joel confirms the following: (1) God would give His Ruach to all mankind in the end times, no longer reserving His work only for Israel, (2) this giving of the Ruach would be marked by the prophetic, revelational activity of the Ruach and (3) all who would call upon God would receive His salvation, regardless of race or nationality. Peter clearly connects the prophecy of Joel to the events of the moment (Ac. 2:16).⁴¹

It can be seen that his position reinforces the biblical doctrine of the promise. Indeed, Pentecost becomes the focal point for the realization of that promise for Gentiles whose entrance into the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant is assured by the earnest of the Holy Spirit.⁴²

39 See p. 10, note 22 above.

40 Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Gal. 3:8; Ac. 3:25. The realization of this promise is the very heart of the New Covenant. See the profitable comments in Willis Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 195ff.

41 On Peter's use of Joel in Ac. 2, the author has written a monograph of a technical nature dealing with the language, syntax, etc. of both the Hebrew and Greek texts, to be made available at www.torahresource.com.

42 Richard Patterson, "Joel's Day of the Lord and Pentecost," unpublished monograph in class notes, p. 14, n.d. See

The tongues also functioned as a sign of God's judgment against the nation of Israel and the beginning point for “the times of the Gentiles.” This may not seem to be so apparent from the context of Acts 2, but an understanding of the quote from Joel 2 will show this to be the case.

The full message of Peter is certainly in the form of a judgment, since the very One they crucified is responsible for the outpouring of the Ruach Who was presently manifesting Himself (Ac. 2:22-36). Indeed, the fact that Peter went to the Joel passage should alert us to the theme of divine judgment. While the section quoted gives promise of God's blessing, the overall structure of the passage would stress that God's judgment for disobedience is certain. In Joel, the locust plague of the present (1:1-14) is used as an illustration of the coming Assyrians (1:15-2:27), who likewise are a picture of the final day of God's judgment (2:28ff). While covenant blessing is assured for all who call upon the name of the Lord, the wrath of God is revealed upon all who disregard His commands and fly in the face of His ultimate sovereignty. Peter does not feel obliged to leave out a direct reference to judgment (2:19-20) when he quotes the prophet and one wonders how this is to be interpreted in the events of Shavuot if it is not indicative of the judgment prophesied upon unbelieving Israel.

The use of Isaiah 28:11 by the Apostle Paul in 1 Co. 14 also indicates this purpose of tongues. In verse 21 Paul introduces a quote from Isaiah 28⁴³ in order to substantiate the truth that tongues, as far as being a sign, are for the unbelievers not the believers (v. 22).

The context of the Is. 28:11 is instructive. Isaiah prophesies a time when God will speak to disbelieving and wayward Israel “through stammering lips and a foreign tongue” (NASB) with the result that (v. 13) they will “stumble backward, be broken and taken captive” (NASB). The same poetic pair (stammering lips//foreign tongue) is found in 33:19 of Isaiah. Interestingly, Paul retains the third masculine singular idea of the MT though he changes the verb to first singular. Still, in the Apostle's quote God is the spokesman, following Isaiah. Curiously, the Lxx and some of the Qumran texts (though not 1QIsa) change to the third plural, making the wicked priests and prophets the subject (as the Lxx) or the Kittim (Qumran). The NASB translation “stammering tongue” is technically possible but the context certainly favors the more common “to mock” (1 Ki. 19:21; Ezek. 23:32). The use of “lip” שפה would render the phrase “with mocking speech,” for שפה may also mean “manner of speaking,” “speech” or simply “language” as in Genesis 11:1. The NIV has “foreign lips.” Most germane to our study, however, is the fact that the Hebrew לעג could not imply “ecstatic speech” —it is a term used often in contexts of “derision” or “mocking”⁴⁴ and is certainly the contextual meaning here. Isaiah, in his prophecy, was simply applying a previous prophecy found in Deut 28:49, where God promises the invasion of foreigners whose language would be unknown.

Apparently Paul understood this. He uses the Isaiah passage as indicating the way in which foreign tongues may be used mockingly and as a taunt against Israel, as a sign that the covenant curses, not the blessings, are coming from the hand of God. He therefore attaches the label

also Patterson, Richard. “Joel” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, (Ed., Gaebelin), 7:257-8.

43 Note also Deut 28:49; Jer 5:15. The quote from Isaiah 28:11 in 1Co 14 is neither strictly from the MT nor the Lxx:

44 לעג is parallel to שחק “to laugh” in the following: Jer. 20:7; Prov. 1:26; 17:5; Ps. 2:4; 59:2; Chron. 30:10. In Is. 37:22 the parallel verbaige is בזה//ראש הניעה. Note also Is. 33:19 where the context is unintelligible speech of foreigners or enemies. Ps. 22:8[7] is likewise speaking of mocking. Perhaps יפטריו בשפה should be “spit with the lips” on the analogy of פטר = “Let out water” (from a canal) cf. Prov. 17:14. As in Is. 37:22, Neh. 2:19 has בזה parallel to לעג.

σημειον (sign) to the phenomenon as indicative of the fulfilling of the prophet's words. In the immediate context of Is. 28:11, the prophet has illustrated the relationship of Israel to God as that of an infant to an adult. God must likewise speak in a juvenile style to Israel who is talking with the speech of an infant. In fact, the judgment of God will come from foreigners whose language will be as indistinguishable to them as an adult's speech is to an infant.⁴⁵

Likewise, in 1 Co. 14:20, Paul admonishes the Corinthians not to think like children, but to have mature reasoning. He is following the argument of the prophet he is about to quote!⁴⁶ He understands that the fifteenth (Moses), the eighth (Isaiah) and the sixth (Jeremiah) century prophets collectively show God's continuing respect for the covenant He established with Israel. Their disobedience will bring the covenant curses. What is more, Paul appears to follow closely the structure of the Acts 2 account, in that tongues function as a sign but do not communicate in and of themselves. They point to the prophetic curse precisely by putting the unbeliever into a state of confusion (v. 23). Unbelievers entering the assembly while all speak in tongues will think the church is mad, the exact reaction of "the unbelievers" at Shavuot. Yet, if prophecy is given, as Peter explaining the significance of the tongues at Shavuot, the communication of the truth in understandable language will bring repentance. The parallels are inescapable.

It is apparent then, that Paul's use of Is. 28:11 in his instruction on tongues verifies the fact that tongues are a sign of covenant curse against Israel specifically and against unbelievers in general, that is, against all who are not "heirs according to promise" (Gal 3:29).

Simply put, when God speaks to man in a language he cannot understand, rather than being a blessing, this is a curse. In the context of 1Co 14 then, which finds its setting in the gathered body of Messiah, tongues must be interpreted or else they signal the curse of God upon those who hear and do not understand.⁴⁷ A similar thing occurs in the parables of Messiah. They were designed to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah (Is. 6:9) in judgment against unbelieving Israel (cf. Matt. 13:14-15).

In summary we may thus state the following: (1) tongues in Acts 2 were in fact known languages. Anything other than known languages does not fit either the vocabulary used nor the intended purpose; (2) this purpose is two-fold: (a) to mark the establishment of the New Covenant and the fulfillment of the promise that "all nations would be blessed." Thus the multiple tongues gave notice that the gospel would now go worldwide and (b) to mark the beginning of the era known as "the times of the gentiles" and the putting of unbelieving, national Israel under the judging hand of God. He was speaking again, but not to them; He was revealing His Word, but not in their language.

45 The *לִצְוֹ צוֹ לִצְוֹ קוֹ לִקּוֹ קוֹ לִקּוֹ* of Isaiah 28:10, 13 is used by the prophet to mimic toddler "speech" or babbling. The point is obvious: if Israel continues to act as a "toddler" (spiritually speaking), she will reap the rewards of her immaturity.

46 See O. Palmer Robertson, "Tongues: Sign of Covenant Curse and Blessing," *WTJ* 38(1975), 45.

47 The following have significant statements on this line of interpretation: William Orr, James Walther, *1 Corinthians* in the *Anchor Bible Commentary* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1979), 309; Charles Endicott, *1 Corinthians* (Minn.: James Family, reprint of 1887), 273; Charles Hodge, *Comm. on 1 Cor.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1972), 293-6; Robertson & Plummer, *1 Cor* in the *ICC* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), 316-17; Sweet, J.D.M., "A Sign for Unbelievers: Paul's Attitude to Glossolalia," *NTS*, 13(April, 1967), 240-57.

Chapter Four

Tongues in 1 Corinthians 12 - 14

In the 12th chapter of 1 Corinthians tongues are encountered in the listing of spiritual gifts. The opening verses are curious. Wanting the Corinthians to be aware of spiritual gifts, Paul indicates such knowledge will guard them from being led astray as they were while unconverted. According to verse three this kind of “being led astray” must have resulted in an improper or inappropriate use of speech. Apparently, some were actually cursing Messiah while in an ecstatic state.⁴⁸ Lightfoot⁴⁹ indicates there were Jewish magicians and exorcists at this time who boasted an endowment of the Ruach for their work but who likewise called Messiah *anathema*. It may be that Paul simply reminds the reader that there are other spiritual forces beside those of the Ruach HaKodesh.⁵⁰

Verses four through six form an interesting, positive introduction to Paul's instruction regarding spiritual gifts. The reader is immediately confronted by three words used to describe these spiritual gifts. These are *χαρισματοι*, “gifts” (v. 4), *διακονιοι*, “ministries,” (v. 5), and *ενεργηματοι*, “effects,” v. 6. Each is preceded by the adjective *διαιρεσεως*, “varieties.” It is apparent that Paul, in desiring to see the godhead at work in the spiritual gifts, has given a very literary, parallel structure to this opening section in three complementing lines. The parallels are obvious and maybe seen this way:

varieties of gifts	—————	same Spirit
varieties of ministries	—————	same Lord
varieties of effects	—————	same God

Structurally, the three designations “gifts,” “ministries,” and “effects” are parallel and not three distinct categories of “spirituals” (*πνευματικοι*). They describe *πνευματικοι* (v.1)⁵¹ showing their various aspects and functions. Emphasis is also put upon the common source of the spiritual endowments. Thus, while the following context will be discussing gifts, the ministries and effects of these gifts as seen in the body will vary. The same gift may have differing ministries at different times and may effect the members of the body in varying ways.

The seventh verse then employs the Greek *φανερωσις του πνευματος*, (“manifestation of the Spirit”) as a descriptive phrase describing the actual use of the spiritual gift. But what is intended by the phrase? Is the genitive to be taken objectively⁵² or subjectively?⁵³ It may be that Paul had both in mind.⁵⁴ On the analogy of 2 Cor. 4:2, *φανερωσει της αληθειας* (“manifestation

48 See Robert Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement* (New Jersey: Pres. & Reformed Pub. Co., 1974), 61.

49 John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the N.T. from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 4:252-3.

50 F.F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthians in NCBC*, 117.

51 Many take this as a neuter, denoting the general topic Paul wishes to discuss. Cf. Meyer, ad loc., 275; Grosheide, *NICNT*, 239; Robertson/Plummer, *ICC*, 259; Calvin, 369; Hodge, 239. Some take it as masculine plural, meaning “spiritual persons,” cf. Bruce, *NCBC*, 1167.

52 As Meyer, 279; Robertson/Plummer, 264.

53 As Hodge, 243; Calvin, 400.

54 Grosheide, *NICNT*, 284.

of the truth”), one is inclined to take it as objective, meaning then that “to each is given gifts of a spiritual nature which make known the presence and power of the Ruach.” Either, however, comes to nearly the same point.

What does appear clear in the context is that the phrase “manifestations of the Ruach” is simply another way of referring to “spiritual gifts” as they are properly used. This is supported in verse nine by the necessary appellation “gifts of healings.” Paul could not have written “For to one was given ... healings,” since this would have appeared as though what one received was healing for himself. In order to eliminate this obvious ambiguity, Paul refers to the spiritual endowment or ministry of healing as “gifts of healings.” This indicates he is speaking of spiritual gifts throughout this list.

Contained within this list of spiritual gifts is “kinds of tongues” (ετερω γενη γλωσσων, v.10) and the corresponding “interpretation of tongues” (ερμηνεια γλωσσων, v. 10). Paul mentions tongues again in verse 30 in his summary of this section and chapter. Here, it is clear that tongues, like all other gifts, are distributed according to the will of God (v. 11). Individuals thus gifted are sovereignly placed within the body for the common good (vv. 18, 28). Paul explicitly states that tongues are not for all (v. 30).

In chapter thirteen, Paul continues his treatise: *agape* love is the motivating factor in the realm of spiritual gifts. Tongues are singled out as perhaps most indicative of the spiritual gifts expressed in Corinth. Even tongues without love is useless.

Some have seen in this opening verse a case for tongues as ecstatic utterances, based upon the phrase “tongues of angels” (γλωσσαις...των αγγελων). The reasoning follows that the participant, when seized by the “Ruach,” speaks a heavenly language which Paul here calls “tongues of angels,” in contrast to “tongues of men.”

This position is tenuous at best for the following reasons.⁵⁵ First, Paul is listing unreal situations. The class of the conditional sentence is not decisive⁵⁶ but the context is. It is obviously an unreal condition, since Paul is not boasting to have “known all mysteries and all knowledge” nor to have had “all faith” nor to have “given all his possessions to the poor.” He likewise had not undergone martyrdom at the burning stake. All of these are hypothetical in the flow of his polemic and not something experienced by the Apostle. It is therefore hypothetical, not actual, when Paul writes “if I speak...with tongues of angels.”

Secondly, even if one allows the existence of an angelic language from this verse, there is no evidence that such a language is something of an entirely different nature than languages in general. Every instance of communication by angelic beings reported in Scripture is intelligible as normal language. Furthermore, Jewish tradition holds that the heavenly language (לשון הקודש) is Hebrew. That the angels speak this heavenly language is evidenced by the fact that they administered the giving of the Torah, which was in Hebrew.⁵⁷

Paul begins and concludes this chapter with the same three categories, tongues, prophecy and

55 See the excellent comments of Robert Gundry, “‘Ecstatic Utterance’ (N.E.B.)?,” *JTS*, N.S., XVII, Pt. 2 (Oct., 1966), 301-2.

56 On εαν + subjunctive, see Blass, § 371, p. 188; Zewrick, *Biblical Greek* (Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Bibli-ci, 1963), 111, § 326; Moulton/Turner, 3:113ff. Generally, εαν + subjunctive is a simple condition governed by the context. It often is hypothetical, especially in a logical polemic.

57 In the Mishnah, see m.*Sotah* 7.1; 4.5 where לשון הקודש is put as distinct to all other languages and required for certain parts of specific ceremonies and prayer. On the angels as the mediators of the Torah, cf. Heb. 2:2; Ac. 7:38, 53; Gal. 3:19; Deut. 33:2[Lxx]. Also cp. Ps. 68:17[18].

knowledge. Whether or not these three characterized the Corinthian meeting is mere speculation. Whatever the case, the argument of the chapter is that while the need and existence of gifts will cease, love will always endure. This proves the superiority of love: its intrinsic eternity.

The fact that spiritual gifts will cease, and specifically tongues, has of course been a standard argument for the non-charismatic. And, more often than not, 1Co 13:8 is the text upon which this view rests. The primary point of interpretation is the *terminus ad quem* based upon the phrase “when the perfect comes . . .” (ΟΤΕ ΔΕ ΕΛΘΗ ΤΟ ΤΕΛΕΙΟΝ).

Interpretations of “the perfect” (*to teleion*) in verse eight may generally be listed in three categories. The first may be called the “Canon View”⁵⁸ and holds *το τελειον* to mean “complete,” a meaning well attested in the Greek and biblical literature. Since prophecy and knowledge are seen as the revelatory gifts necessary for the writing of Scripture, when the canon of Scripture is complete, the need for these gifts ceases, including the gift of tongues. This affords a convenient answer to present-day tongues: they all are spurious.

The problems with the Canon View are apparent. The most devastating is the simple fact that verse 12 speaks of conditions following the parousia. To somehow try to apply verse 12 to conditions of the believing community following the completion of the canon is very weak. Nor is a spiritualizing of verses 12 and 13 and applying them to the spiritual renewal in the individual believer sufficient. Further, this view takes an interesting approach to the canonization process and its impact on the believing community. Did not the books and writings themselves have authority on their own before collected into the canon? History has proven that the dividing mark between Protestant and Catholic theology is the answer to whether we have a collection of authoritative, sacred books or an authoritative collection of sacred books. This view of “the perfect” seems to attribute an authority to the books only after being collected, an authority which they did not previously possess intrinsically. The Vatican would certainly approve of this.

A second view may be called the Parousia View. In this interpretation *το τελειον* refers to the state of being which will exist after Messiah returns. During this time the believing community will live face to face with the Son as the Word of God and thus all partial knowledge and insight will be replaced with perfect knowledge and direct insight from Messiah.

While this view seems to fit quite well with the context, there are several problems. First, *το τελειον* is taken as qualitative (“perfect time”) while the context seems to demand a quantitative sense. The present failure in the Apostle's polemic is that knowledge and prophecy are only “in part” (*το εκ μερους*), which is definitely has a quantitative sense. Unless *το τελειον* is also seen as quantitative the expected antithesis in the context is lacking.

An additional weakness in the Parousia View is its failure to properly interpret verse 13.

Since the entire paragraph dwells upon the temporal superiority of love, v. 13 in bringing the paragraph to a climax would most naturally maintain this same emphasis. *νυν* (“now”) would have a temporal force in such a setting as this, and v. 13a would refer to the abiding character of faith, hope and love during the present and up to the parousia. This agrees with Paul's concept of faith and hope in two other epistles of this period. In 2 Co. 5:7, he notes that faith will be replaced by sight at the coming of Christ. Similarly Romans 8:24-25 expresses his concept of hope as ceasing at this same moment. Thus, because of love's never failing (v. 8a) at the beginning of the paragraph, it is “the greatest of these” at the end (v. 13b).

58 Gromacki, *Op. cit.*, takes this view with some slight modifying suggestions. Note the good critique in Mare, *EBC*, 269.

Yet, this most natural interpretation of v. 13 has often been avoided by assigning $\nu\nu\nu$ a logical rather than temporal force, a step that creates havoc in the verse.⁵⁹

The point is this: verses 11-12 illustrate a growing principle, a maturing in reasoning, knowledge and understanding. The goal of this growing process is reached at the parousia where love will, as always, be seen as the highest principle. Paul's argument contrasts the present maturity of the believing community with the maturity at Messiah's return. But he wishes also to focus on the time continuum between, the growing process, the maturing from childhood to manhood. The Parousia View does not adequately allow for this maturing principle in the Apostle's polemic.

A final view, which seems to best fit the passage, is really a reworking of the Parousia View. This view might be labelled the Body View. The Body View sees $\tau\omicron\ \tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$ as referring to the body of Messiah and is understood as meaning "mature," "complete."⁶⁰ This finds a good antithesis in $\tau\omicron\ \epsilon\kappa\ \mu\epsilon\rho\upsilon\varsigma$ defined in verse 11 as immature. Thus, $\tau\omicron\ \tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$ is taken as absolute in view of the maturity of the body at the parousia⁶¹ and as relative when considered temporally. The body is presently being perfected ($\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$) but will have full perfection when Messiah returns.

What are the ramifications of this view to our present study? Primarily, the passage simply does not support the view that tongues passed away in the early centuries of the Christian Church. The gifts are given for the maturing of the body (Eph. 4:7-16), gifts properly exercised when the body ministers to itself under the principle of *agape* love. However, even as certain things are more necessary in the adolescent years, things which are not needed as an adult, so the spiritual gifts will be properly utilized when the body's level of maturity is considered and recognized. The perfect maturity of the body will render the ministry of spiritual gifts useless, but love will remain eternally. "Knowledge and prophecy are useful as lamps in the darkness, but they will be useless when the eternal day has dawned."⁶² "When the goal is reached, then the helps in the race will be done away."⁶³

The Body View of $\tau\omicron\ \tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$ then, differs from the Parousia View only in that it takes the illustrations of the Apostle more absolutely. The maturing process within the gathered body is an integral part of the argument and must be considered for a proper use of gifts. That which is "in part," however, is growing toward completeness, a perfection fully realized at the second coming.

A final note regarding the cessation of the charismata and this passage: some feel that the verbs employed in 13:8 are significant and suggest a cessation of tongues particularly.⁶⁴ The fact that prophecy and knowledge are said to "cease" ($\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\rho\gamma\epsilon\omega$) while tongues will "die out on their own" ($\pi\alpha\upsilon\sigma\omicron\nu\tau\alpha\iota$) is said to substantiate that Paul expected the soon cessation of tongues,

59 Robert L. Thomas, "Tongues . . . Will Cease," *JETS*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Spring, 1974), 84.

60 A&G, "having obtained the end or purpose, complete, perfect."

61 On $\tau\omicron\ \tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$ as referring to the return of Messiah when all things will be brought to completion, cf. Jms. 5:11; Rev. 20:5, 7; 21:6; 22:13; 1 Co. 1:8; 15:24. Note also Eph. 4:13-16 and the use of $\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$ in the context of "maturity."

62 Robertson/Plummer, ICC, 297.

63 Calvin, 428.

64 See as representative Joseph Dillow, *Speaking In Tongues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1979), 112-14; Gromacki, Op. cit., 128-9.

though prophecy and knowledge would cease suddenly (at the coming of the “perfect,” either the completed canon or the parousia). Further, it is asserted that since tongues are not mentioned in verses nine and twelve, the cessation at the coming of the perfect applies only to prophecy and knowledge, tongues apparently having ceased already.

Once again this argumentation is tenuous at best. First of all, *παυω* occurs only one time in the active voice (1 Pet. 3:10) and this is a Lxx quote. In the Apostolic Scriptures, the verb regularly appears in the middle voice (15x). Blass-DeBrunner show that the later language often preferred the middle voice in certain verbs and lists *παυω* as such a verb.⁶⁵ Thus, to emphasize that tongues will “die out *on their own*” on the basis of the middle voice is to base an argument upon a grammatical point that is very weak at best.

Secondly, the absence of “tongues” in verse nine is best explained by the fact that Paul could easily say “we know in part and prophecy in part” but could not have said “we speak tongues in part.” The chiasmic arrangement in the structure would tend to include tongues nonetheless. Verse eight lists prophecy first and ends with knowledge. Verse nine begins with knowledge and concludes with prophecy. The structure would suggest that Paul intended the reader to understand tongues to be sandwiched between the two and thus also included, even though there was no proper way to say “we speak tongues in part.”

Finally, the fact that Paul changes to *παυω* in between the double use of *καταργεω* with both prophecy and knowledge (v. 8) may in fact be idiomatic and stylistic. It may well be that Paul was influenced by the Lxx in this particular usage. The regular verb employed in the Lxx for the cessation of speech in general (*λεγω, λαλεω, γλωσσα*) is *παυω*.⁶⁶ Paul's tendency to semitic style and the influence of the Lxx⁶⁷ would prompt him to avoid using the same verb three times in the same verse or sentence. The substitution of *παυω* would simply be normal in the context of “speech.”

The fourteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is quite obviously the Apostle's most detailed instruction on the proper use of tongues. He gives specific instruction as to their purpose and use in the assembled body. What is more, he gives definite indication that the tongues being experienced in the Corinthian church resembled in every way the tongues which occurred at Shavuot, i.e., they were recognized as foreign languages. An overview of the chapter yields the following general statements: (1) In the realm of speaking gifts, those which afford basic, understandable communication are to be preferred; (2) this normal, communicative speech is generally labelled “prophecy;” (3) in the exercise of the gifts, order must prevail; (4) the exercise of gifts must be based on the *agape* principle (ch. 13), i.e., others-oriented, not self-oriented and (5) this will be accomplished when self-control and submission to one another is practiced.

In approaching our limited question of whether or not the tongues at Corinth were foreign languages, this chapter affords some specific data. First, the illustrations of musical instruments and foreign languages given in verses 7-11 would opt strongly for the “foreign language” interpretation. The musical instrument illustration is plain. A tune or melody is something recognizable by the listener only if it is played properly and in a structured pattern. If, however,

65 Blass-DeBrunner, 42, par. 78; Liddell & Scott likewise confirm that the middle and passive may have both a transitive and intransitive sense in the classical Attic.

66 *καταργεω* in the Lxx is found only in II Es. and not in the context of verbs of speaking. However, *παυω* is regularly found in such contexts and even once with *γλωσσα* (Ps. 33[34]:13). Cf. also Gen. 18:33; 27:30; Num. 16:31; Jud. 15:17; Judith 5:22; 14:9; Job 29:9; 1 Mac. 2:23; 3:23.

67 See Turner in Moulton/Turner, *Grammar* 4:88-89.

as in the case of a shofar (v. 8), the proper tones, notes and rhythm are not combined, the troops would never recognize the intended call to arms. This illustrates a recognizable structure inherent in a language. However, a foreign language, uninterpreted, has no meaning to the listener. It fails at the point of communication. Tongues spoken, but not translated (v. 13) render them useless.

Second, without any break in the logical polemic, Paul begins discussing the many languages in the world (v. 10ff), indicating he has had languages in mind all along. The fact that he uses φωνη in verses 10-12 when speaking of languages is interesting and important. Some would argue that he is distinguishing between ecstatic speech (γλωσσα) and foreign languages (φωνη), and that therefore his choice of words would actually support an “ecstatic utterance” interpretation of the passage. The converse is the case, however.

Paul is certainly referring to the variety of languages found throughout the world. This is substantiated when he uses αφωνον “without meaning” (NASB). αφωνον means “silent,” “dumb” or “incapable of speech,” “incapable of conveying meaning.”⁶⁸ Paul's use of the same word at 12:2 referring to idols which are “dumb” strengthens the idea that language (φωνη) in this verse is considered as the vehicle of communication. Furthermore, Paul's use of φωνη here must be compared to Genesis 11:1, since the variety of languages in the world harkens back to the tower of Babel. The Lxx usage, in paralleling φωνη with γλωσσα, gives great strength to the idea that Paul has in mind actual languages.⁶⁹ Likewise, Paul concludes that when someone speaks in tongues and there is no interpretation, the relationship of “foreigners” is set up. This use of barbarian (βαρβαρος) fits best with a foreign language being spoken. If ecstatic utterance was the common, expected result of the Ruach's moving upon an individual, one would be satisfied with the simple knowledge that the Ruach was present. He would not consider the person speaking in a tongue to be a foreigner. In fact, if ecstatic utterance was the expected norm, such an occurrence would draw all closer as each confessed the Ruach's presence. But Paul indicates that the person speaking in tongues appears as a foreigner. For this reason, a translation is needed so that the communicative properties of the language could be utilized. Paul's use of αφωνος enters in here too. As Meyer comments:

for were the language spoken to me (της φωνη) and so intelligible in itself, I could not in that case appear even as a barbarian to the speaker, because, in fact, what he spoke would be understood by no man. The barbarian speaks only a foreign language, not one altogether devoid of meaning for others.⁷⁰

It seems conclusive that verses 7-11 of this chapter favor viewing tongues as similar to what occurred at Shavuot, i.e., foreign languages.

A second factor in this passage and in the larger context as well is that Paul apparently presumes his readers know what is meant by γλωσσα. To reason that the Corinthian church was no longer cognizant of the Shavuot event is ill-founded. But if Paul meant to convey something by γλωσσα which was different—dramatically different than the tongues at Shavuot—he certainly does not indicate it. He uses what is apparently common verbiage, for Luke likewise chose γλωσσα to denote the phenomenon of tongues at Shavuot. Luke's acquaintance with Paul

68 A&G, ad loc.

69 See note 30 above.

70 Meyer, 1 Corinthians, 319.

and *visa versa* would suggest that both of them used *γλωσσαί* to denote a similar phenomenon.⁷¹

Third, the designation of *γλωσσαί* as a “sign” (*σημειον*) in 14:20-22 suggests that they were foreign languages. How would a duplicating of the mystery religions and their ecstatic utterances be a sign of the Ruach's work?⁷²

The effectiveness of glossolalia as an authentic sign (as well as its effectiveness in conveying a divine message—see 14:6-12, 16-18 and especially 23) depends on its difference from the ecstatic gobbledegook in Hellenistic religion.⁷³

The fact that only the initiated could “understand” the ecstatic utterances in the mystery religions added to the pride of exclusivity, something exactly opposite of the *agape* which Paul teaches is the very heart which motivates the true exercise of spiritual gifts.

Fourth, the use of Isaiah 28:11 in Paul's teaching on tongues opts strongly for their being foreign languages.⁷⁴ Ecstatic utterances would hardly support the use of this quote from the Tanach.⁷⁵ In order for the quote to derive any meaning from its original context, foreign languages must be strongly considered as the phenomenon which turned Paul's mind to Isaiah in the first place.

The scope and limitations of this monograph allow us to look at only a couple of other arguments. These are: (1) that the singular and plural uses of *γλωσσαί/γλωσσαί* are significant for a proper interpretation and (2) that there needs to be a sharp distinction between tongues for the individual believer as over against tongues in the corporate meeting. (Some feel these two are related).

In 1 Co. 14 *γλωσσαί* is found in the singular 8 times and in the plural 6 times.⁷⁶ It will be noticed that there seems to be no syntactical reason for the change in number. A singular subject may take either the singular *γλωσσαί* or plural *γλωσσαί*. Similarly, there is no set usage of verb + *γλωσσαί*. Generally, the verb is followed by the simple dative but in 14:19 *λαλειν* is followed by *εν* + *γλωσσαί* without any apparent distinction. MacArthur gives a description of the view which makes the singular/plural distinction important.

Some Pentecostals and Charismatics claim, “Yes, languages are mentioned in the second chapter of Acts, but after that it means something else.” But if we look at the mention of tongues in later chapters in Acts (10:46; 19:6), we'll find the very same word being used—*γλωσσαί*, languages. Throughout the Book of Acts the Greek term used for tongues is consistently the one that refers to

71 One would have to presume that Luke was familiar with the situation at Corinth, having been a travelling companion with the Apostle during his third missionary journey (52-56 C.E.) when the first epistle to the Corinthians was written. Most would date the writing of Acts after this, in 61, so that when Luke uses *γλωσσαί* in Acts, he could not have employed it in ignorance of the Apostle Paul's teaching to the Corinthians.

72 See John T. Bunn, “Glossolalia in Historical Perspective,” in Watson Mills, ed. *Speaking In Tongues: Let's Talk About It* (Texas: Word Books, 1973), 36-47.

73 Gundry, Op. cit., 303.

74 See comments above, p. 19f.

75 The article of J.D.M. Sweet, “A Sign For Unbelievers: Paul's Attitude to Glossolalia,” *NTS* 13(April, 1967):240-57 is a typical liberal attempt at biblical interpretation. Since the integrity of both the author and the epistle are questioned, one is not surprised to find that Is. 28 is “naughtily twisted against the Corinthians” by Paul in an anti-Jewish way, or that *πνευματικον* is in fact Paul's sarcastic jibe at the charismatic members of Corinth!

76 See the chart, Appendix 2.

normal languages. It is interesting to note that γλωσσα always appears in the plural form throughout Acts, indicating a multiple of languages. Gibberish, however, could never appear in the plural form because there aren't multiple kinds of gibberish. There is no such word as "gibberishes" because gibberish is nonclassifiable into more than one.

We find the same thing in 1 Corinthians 14. When Paul used the singular in verses 2, 4, 13, 14, and 19, he was referring to the counterfeit pagan gibberish (unintelligible speech) that was being used by many of the Corinthian believers instead of the true gift of languages. Whenever Paul wanted to refer to the real gift of languages, he used the plural. The only exception is 1 Cor. 14:27, where Paul was no doubt referring to the real gift but mentioning a single man speaking a single language which demands a single form.⁷⁷

However, this notion that the singular γλωσσα is used by the Apostle of a spurious display of the gift while the plural denotes the proper use is not supported by the exegesis nor the context of this passage. Verse 13 (singular) appears in Paul's polemic to be the genuine gift. He only demands that interpretation accompany it. Likewise, in verse 26 the context is that of normalcy. Verse 27 assumes this, since when anyone speaks in a tongue (singular), he may do so within the limits of order (i.e., two or three and one at a time.) But the Apostle allows speaking in a tongue (singular). Verse 19 seems almost conclusive on this issue. For Paul to attribute "words" (λογου) to the singular use of γλωσσα definitely opts against his considering a singular tongue as "ecstatic utterance." It is recognized that units which could even represent "words" simply do not exist in the random syllables of ecstatic speech. To further postulate that the Apostle claims a spurious use of tongues at Corinth, which he denotes by the singular γλωσσα, but does not point out what makes it spurious and leaves to the reader to "read between the lines" in order to understand his message, is very weak. Paul is known for coming to the issue and speaking directly to the problems at hand. It is inconceivable that he would simply say nothing negative about such spurious goings on while all through his treatise he evidences his awareness of their existence. Given the premise of this interpretation, it is beyond thought that Paul would have admitted that someone actually gave valid thanks to God while using a selfish, false experience of a babbling tongue (cf. v. 17). All in all, it appears quite difficult to hold this interpretation with any real confidence. The exegetical data are simply not there.

Another interpretation is quite common within the charismatic circles. This view holds that tongues used in a private or individual way are to be clearly distinguished from tongues used in the corporate gathering of the church. Most charismatic teachers feel Paul is writing about this private usage in 1 Co. 14, teaching the Corinthians how confusion of the private with the corporate tongue leads to problems. Some feel Paul teaches that the private tongue is for the "prayer closet" only and has no place in the corporate meeting.⁷⁸ Others feel that the private tongue is fine in the corporate meeting when it is employed simply as a vehicle for personal prayer and praise. Such a use does not require interpretation. Only when a person addresses the gathering as a whole in a tongue must there be interpretation. It is quite apparent that what characterizes the charismatic meetings is this supposed "prayer-praise tongue."⁷⁹ Is this Paul's

77 John MacArthur, *The Charismatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1978), 159.

78 This would stress the phrase "but in the church . . ." (alla en ekkhlesia) of verse 19 as opposing an unspoken "at home."

79 See, for instance, John A Schep. *Baptism in the Spirit* (New Jersey: Logos International, 1972), 98-100; William MacDonald, "Glossolalia in the New Testament," *JETS*, 7(1964):59-68, though MacDonald admits there are no cogent exegetical grounds to demonstrate a distinction between private and corporate use of tongues. He sees this in the context, however; Gerhard Krodel, "Tongues: An Exegetical Examination," *Dialog*, 2:154-5.

teaching?

The larger context of the fourteenth chapter would not support a “private-corporate” duality. First, chapters 12 and 13 have stressed over and over again, that spiritual gifts are given for the edification of the body—not for self gain.⁸⁰ It is incongruous to the whole previous argument of the Apostle to presume that he now commends the use of tongues for personal edification.

Second, even if one concedes the private use of tongues as a means of self edification, in the gathered assembly one must constantly scrutinize one’s actions in light of the common good. This is precisely Paul’s polemic in 14:16-17. If there is a private blessing of God, one cannot judge this—but, if the ungifted man (ιδιωτος) is unable to join with the blessing by adding his own “amen,”⁸¹ it is inappropriate for use in the corporate meeting (vv. 17-19).

But what about the use of tongues for private worship outside of the corporate meeting? Again, the larger context does not support it. First, gifts are given “for the common good” (12:7). If tongues are for private use, it would have to be admitted that they stand alone as the only spiritual gift which is not “others-oriented.”

Second, the revealed purposes for tongues discussed above are not met by such a private use of tongues. They are neither evangelistic nor a sign to the unbelieving. One would have to admit, if a private use of tongues were argued, that it happens apart from the support of the Scripture.

What, then, does the Apostle mean in 14:2 when he says that one who speaks in a tongue “speaks to God” and in verse 4 “edifies himself?” Paul is not accusing the Corinthians of impropriety in their zeal to worship God. He is not questioning their desire to praise and worship. He is only teaching them that in the corporate body God is better praised when an *agape*-type love governs the use of gifts. Thus, when praising God in the gathered assembly, the ability of all to join with the one praising is very important. Apparently, this is one way in which the Corinthian church was failing in their worship. Each worshipped on his own, without thought of the others. Thus, to be caught up in one’s own worship might have personal, edifying effects, but ultimately this edification is short-circuited, since it is the body which must grow up together to the stature of Messiah (Eph. 4:13-16). Paul does not wish to question the motivations of the one speaking in a tongue and speaking to God alone. The motive appears proper. It is the method that is lacking. And, it is to this method the Apostle plainly addresses himself. His stress throughout is that tongues are good if interpretation accompanies. But prophecy is better since understanding is gained immediately and the whole body is edified without question.

We may thus conclude the following in regard to Paul’s teaching in 1 Co. 12-14: (1) Spiritual gifts, and therefore tongues, are for the common good; (2) Paul does not teach a cessation of tongues (13:8) in the early centuries of the Christian church. The manifestation of the Ruach in tongues, as with all the gifts, may vary according to the need of the body. The maturity of the body and the manifestation of the Ruach through gifts will correspond so that ultimately, at the parousia, spiritual gifts will no longer be needed; (3) the words employed as well as the syntax and exegesis of these passages support the interpretation that tongues in the Apostolic Scriptures as a whole were in fact known, foreign languages. The gift is manifested in that a believer is enabled to speak in a language entirely unknown to him or her.

⁸⁰ 12:7, 25, 26; 13:5; 14:5, 9, 26.

⁸¹ In rabbinic thought, often one is considered to have participated in the whole of a blessing or prayer by simply saying the “amen” at the end. This is particularly true for those who, for one reason or another, are unable to say the entire prayer or blessing. Cp. m.*Berachot* 8.8.

	singular w/ λαλειν	plural w/ λαλειν	singular w/ no modifiers	plural w/ no modifiers	plural w/ modifiers	no modifier diff verb
Mark		1X			1X	
Acts		4X		2X	2X	
1Co 12		1X		1X		2X
1Cor 13		1X			1X	1X
1Cor 14	5X	6X	7X	6X	1X	3X

Appendix 1

This chart lists the frequency of γλωσσα in the Apostolic Scriptures, distinguishing when the noun is singular or plural and when it is used with modifiers or not. The verbal complements are also noted as to whether γλωσσα is used with λαλειν or with other verbs.

Appendix 2

Singular and Plural of γλωσσα in 1 Corinthians 14

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
14:2	ο γαρ λαλων γλωσση	
14:4	ο λαλων γλωσση	
14:5		θελω δε παντας υμας λαλειν γλωσσαις η ο λαλων γλωσσαις
14:6		εαν ελθω προς υμας γλωσσαις λαλων
14:9	ουτως και υμεις δια της γλωσσης εαν μη ευσημον λογον δωτε, πως γνωσηθσεται το λαλουμενον	
14:13	ο λαλων γλωσση	
14:14	προσευχωμαι γλωσση	
14:18		παντων υμων μαλλον γλωσσιας λαλω
14:19	η μυριους λαγους εν γλωσση	
14:22		αι γλωσσαι εις σημειον
14:23		παντες λαλωσιν γλωσσιας
14:26	γλωσσαν εχει	
14:27	ειτε γλωσση ιτς λαλει	
14:39		και το λαλειν μη κωλυετε γλωσσαις

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