

# Pentecost and the Coming of the Holy Spirit

## Part 5--Speaking in Tongues

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After the disciples were baptized in the Holy Spirit “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Ac. 2:4). When the apostles are filled with the Holy Spirit they become the Spirit’s mouthpiece by speaking in tongues (i.e., spoken foreign languages) to a large assembly of foreign Jews. Because the gift of tongues is greatly misunderstood in our day (primarily by Charismatics) it is important that we carefully define the biblical phenomenon of tongues. What are the biblical tongues? Should we expect to see the gift of tongues practiced in the present day? Should believers seek the gift of tongues? These and other questions will be answered as we study tongues in Scripture. There are many areas to consider.

(1) The term *tongues* (in Greek *glossa*, plural *glossais*) when used of human speech always refers to the speaking of actual human languages.<sup>1</sup> In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) the word *glossa* occurs thirty times and always refers to real human languages.<sup>2</sup> In the book of Acts where we are introduced to the supernatural phenomenon of tongues speaking, Luke emphasizes the fact that the apostles were speaking real, known, human languages. “And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, ‘Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?’” (Acts 2:5-8). That the disciples were speaking real human languages is evident in the following observations.

(1) The tongues were immediately understood by the hearers from several different Roman provinces and lands without any need for interpretation. This fact can only mean that the apostles were speaking real, normal languages. Remember the miracle or sign was in the speaking; *not* in the hearing. The hearers at this point were not even believers. “What this speaking ‘with different tongues’ means is stated in v. 6: ‘everyone heard them speaking in his own language;’ and in v. 11: ‘we are hearing them telling with our own tongue the great things of God.’ The disciples spoke in foreign languages that were hitherto unknown to them, in the very languages of the natives of the foreign lands who were presently assembled before them.”<sup>3</sup> As if to emphasize that the disciples were speaking real languages and not gibberish, Luke even lists the peoples which heard their native tongues: “Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:9-11).

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<sup>1</sup> When not referring to spoken languages the term can refer to the bodily organ called the tongue; an ethnic group separated by language; or a descriptive term indicating a shape (e.g., “tongues as of fire,” Ac. 2:3).

<sup>2</sup> See John F. MacArthur, Jr. *The Charismatics: A Doctrinal Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 159.

<sup>3</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1961), 61.

(2) In Acts 2, *glossais* is used by Luke interchangeably with *dialektos* which the eminent lexicographer J. H. Thayer defines as “the tongue or language peculiar to any people.”<sup>4</sup> Obviously, if Luke uses tongues (*glossais*) and languages (*dialektos*) in a parallel or synonymous manner, tongues speaking cannot refer to gibberish. “The equation of ‘tongue’ and *dialektos* in verse 8 shows that speech in different languages is meant.”<sup>5</sup> The languages are listed in verses 9 and 11.

When we encounter tongues speaking again in Acts chapter 10 we are told by Luke that the Gentiles had the same experience as the Jewish believers in chapter 2. In the historical account, Peter says that the Gentiles “received the Holy Spirit just as we have” (v. 47). He tells the Jerusalem church that “the Holy Spirit fell on them [the Gentiles], as on us at the beginning” (Ac. 11:15). Again, the apostle says that God gave the Gentiles “the same gift as he did unto us” (v. 17). Peter is careful to point out (first to his Jewish companions at Cornelius’ house, then at the first church council) that the Gentiles and Jewish experience was the same. “This likeness of experience extends not only to the fact of receiving the Spirit but to the nature of tongue-speaking in foreign languages.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, there is not a shred of evidence within the book of Acts that tongues-speaking is anything but *real foreign languages*.

The fact that tongues in the book of Acts *always* refers to real human languages is not considered significant or even accepted by all professing Christians. For example, most Charismatics will argue that there are three different kinds of tongues in the New Testament. There are tongues that occur as the initial evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. There are the special tongues for edification in public worship as well as “heavenly tongues” or the tongues used for private prayer. Because there are different types of tongues (we are told) then sometimes tongues could be a real foreign language while at other times it might be a heavenly ecstatic language unknown on earth. While this view is popular, we will see that every use of tongues in the New Testament is a real human language.

Let us first examine the tongues used for edification in public worship. In 1 Corinthians Paul discusses the use of tongues in public worship because at Corinth believers had been abusing this gift. They were speaking in tongues at the same time (14:23) and were speaking in tongues without having the tongues interpreted (14:13-17). When Paul discusses the need for tongues to be interpreted (14:26, 28; cf. 12:10) he uses a Greek word that refers to the translation of a foreign language. When this word (*hermencuo*) is not used to describe the exposition of Scripture, it simply means “to translate what has been spoken or written in a foreign language into the vernacular.”<sup>7</sup> When the word is used of the exposition of Scripture (e.g., Lk. 24:27) it is translated *expound*. When the word *hermencuo* is used with regard to tongues it is translated *interpret*. An interpreter is someone who translates a foreign language into a language understandable to the present audience. That Paul is referring to real human languages and not some form of ecstatic babbling is also proven by the context. Note the apostle’s analogy between tongues and real human languages. “There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me” (1 Cor. 14:10). “We...see that what Paul describes here refers to foreign languages. The speaker uses his ‘voice’ when he is speaking the language that is incomprehensible to Paul. The term

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Lafayette, IN: APYA, 1979, 81), 139.

<sup>5</sup> Ernest Haechen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), 168.

<sup>6</sup> Robert G. Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), 61.

<sup>7</sup> J. H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 250.

‘barbarian’ [foreigner, NKJV] settles the point regarding the ‘voice’ that is used in speaking a foreign language and thus also in the analogous case when a member of the church similarly uses his voice in speaking with tongues (foreign human languages).”<sup>8</sup> The only reason that tongues must be interpreted (i.e., translated) is so the people in the public worship service can understand what is being spoken and thus be edified by it.

That the tongues spoken of in 1 Corinthians 14 are real human languages is also supported by the apostle’s teaching in verses 21 to 22: “In the law it is written: ‘With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,’ says the Lord. Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers...” Here, tongues are compared to a real, foreign language. Paul quotes a section of Isaiah (28:11) which refers to the coming of the Assyrians against Judah (cf. 2 Kings 17-18). The strange tongues (i.e., the foreign language) of the Assyrians were a sign to the backslidden nation of impending judgment. Grammatically the tongues (i.e., a real human language) of verse 21 must be the same kind as the tongues mentioned in verse 22. “If Paul considered speaking in tongues to be an unknown utterance [i.e., ecstatic babbling or gibberish], he would not have used the same word twice in these two verses, especially since the meaning of *glossa* was clearly established in the first usage.”<sup>9</sup> “[O]ne thing is unmistakably clear. These verses conclusively show that ‘tongues’ are not gibberish, but natural foreign languages.”<sup>10</sup>

But what about private prayer tongues? Is there not biblical proof that believers could speak in an unknown tongue to God for private edification? No. The common Charismatic viewpoint is read into Scripture. As we examine the three passages (Rom. 8:26, 1 Cor. 13:1; 14:2-4) commonly used as proof texts for a special private heavenly prayer language, we will see that the charismatic view has absolutely no scriptural basis.

One passage used as a proof text actually has nothing to do with tongues: “The Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings *which cannot be uttered*” (Rom. 8:26). Unutterable or unuttered groanings obviously cannot refer to tongues. Since the Spirit’s intercession cannot be articulated (i.e., spoken or uttered) the groanings must take place in the heart of the believers as they ascend to the throne of grace.

Another proof text is 1 Corinthians 13:1: “If I speak with the tongues of men and angels.” Charismatics teach that Paul is identifying two separate forms of tongues. Pentecostal scholar Robert E. Tourville writes, “In 1 Corinthians 13:1 Paul states the possibility of speaking in tongues of men (foreign languages) and of angels.”<sup>11</sup> Actually the context and the Greek grammar (*ean* with the subjunctive) make it very clear that the apostle is not instructing Christians about the importance of two separate kinds of tongues, but rather is speaking hypothetically to make a point. He does *not* instruct the church to pray in the tongue of angels. Rather, Paul is saying no matter how great your spiritual gift is (i.e., even if you could speak the language of angels), you need love. Although angels may indeed have their own separate language, the apostle’s concern here is the necessity of Christian love. The Corinthians were obsessed with special spiritual gifts and were exercising these gifts in a selfish, self-centered, unloving manner. Paul corrects this by contrasting love with a superlative (i.e., a gift even beyond what the apostle is capable of) exaggeration. Lenski writes, “The unreality of Paul’s supposition lies in the general assumption as such. Paul did have this gift to a high degree, 14:18,

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<sup>8</sup> C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of I and II Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 588.

<sup>9</sup> Gromacki, 64.

<sup>10</sup> Gordon H. Clark, *First Corinthians* (Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1991), 240.

<sup>11</sup> Robert E. Tourville, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New Wilmington, PA: House of Bonn Giovanni, 1983), 33-34.

but he could speak only in some foreign human languages and not by any means in all of them and not at all in the language of the angels. What he here supposes is the ability to use any and every language including that of heaven. He extends the gift to its utmost height, beyond what it ever was or could be. ‘Yet if I have not love,’ even this supreme gift would be all in vain as far as God’s purpose in the bestowal is concerned.’<sup>12</sup>

Further, what if Christians could speak in the language of angels? Would it resemble the nonsensical gibberish practiced in Charismatic churches? No, it would not. All languages have a very discernable grammatical structure. Linguists have the ability to examine any language (even languages with which they are not unfamiliar) and determine patterns: noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectives, adverbs, etc. Thus, if people were really speaking in the tongues of angels, it could be determined if a real (although heavenly) language were being spoken.

The best proof text for private prayer tongues is 1 Corinthians 14:1-5: “Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.”

The first thing that needs to be noted regarding this passage is that, regardless of one’s interpretation of “edifies himself” (v.4), the tongues spoken of through chapter 14 are definite real foreign languages. This point was established by the Greek word for interpret (*hermeneuo*) which means “to translate a foreign language into the vernacular,” the analogy between tongues and real foreign languages in verses 10 to 11 and the comparison of tongues to the real foreign language of the Assyrians in verses 21 to 22. Further, if Paul was switching from heavenly-private tongues in verses 4 and 5 to real foreign language-public tongues in verses 6 and following, we could expect some sort of transition indicating such a change. There is nothing within chapter 14 that indicates that the apostle believed in two different (heavenly-private, earthly-public) kinds of tongues.<sup>13</sup> And, as noted, the “tongues of angels” (13:1) was purely hypothetical. This fact is important because: (a) It proves that all tongues in the New Testament are the same as the tongues in Acts (i.e., real foreign languages); and, (b) if one believes or teaches that 1 Corinthians 14:2-4 justifies the private use of tongues in devotions, then there is an objective test to determine if a professing Christian is speaking gibberish (i.e., syllabic unstructured nonsense) or a real foreign language: the private tongue-speaking could be tape-recorded and submitted to any competent linguist for verification.

Does this passage really teach the private use of tongues? No. Paul is discussing edification in the assembly during public worship. He argues that he prefers prophecy over tongues because of its superior capability for the edification of the church. When he says, “He who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but God, for no one understands him,” he is not telling the Corinthians that they should be praying in tongues to God in private; he is emphasizing that without an interpreter, no one in the assembly understands except God. “It is

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<sup>12</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *I and II Corinthians*, 546.

<sup>13</sup> What, then, does Paul mean when he says, “I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all” (1 Cor. 14:18)? Does it mean that Paul prayed in tongues in private more than anyone else? No. Paul spoke in tongues more than anyone else because he was constantly preaching the gospel in new areas with different languages and dialects. Thus, Paul, like the apostles in Acts 2, needed the gift of tongues as a *sign to unbelievers* (cf. 1 Cor. 14:22). If Paul had to learn a new language and/or dialect every time he went to a different province or country, the progress of the gospel would have been greatly delayed.

equally clear that *audeis akouse* [lit. no one hears], does not mean that tongues were inaudible, or that no one listened to them, but that no one found them intelligible. One might as well have heard nothing.”<sup>14</sup> Likewise when Paul discusses praying and singing with the Spirit (both of which are primarily directed to God), he makes it clear that it must be interpreted, since it takes place in public worship: “Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say ‘Amen’ at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say” (1 Cor. 14:16)? It is simply bad exegesis to take a passage where Paul is correcting an abuse in the public worship service and turn it into an excursus on private devotional prayer. Such a thought was not at all in the apostle’s mind.

But, then, what does Paul mean when he says, “He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself”? Can one at least deduce from this statement that private tongues are useful for sanctification? No. There are a number of reasons why such a view must be rejected. First, the whole thrust of the chapter is to condemn uninterpreted tongues as useless. The context indicates that the apostle is describing someone who speaks in tongues in church (i.e. public worship) without an interpreter. Throughout this chapter, Paul argues again and again for the need to *interpret* tongues; otherwise, the church is not edified: “Since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel. Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret” (1 Cor. 14:12-13). Since the whole thrust of chapter 14 is the edification of the body, it is probable that “edifies himself” is meant to be taken in a negative-pejorative sense. Speaking in tongues without an interpreter merely calls attention to oneself and does not benefit the body. People who speak in tongues without an interpreter are showing off.

Second, if one takes the common Charismatic interpretation he violates the overall broad context of scripture. The Pentecostal view is that believers can be edified by speech that is not understood; that a believer can be sanctified by a non-cognitive, mystical experience. The problem with this view is that Paul explicitly says that understanding is necessary if Christians are to be edified (14:5, 9, 12-17). If an individual could be edified without understanding, then so could a group of believers. Obviously, the apostle would not contradict himself within the same chapter. Further, there is nothing in Scripture which indicates that God’s people can be edified mystically *apart* from understanding divine revelation. Jesus said, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (Jn. 17:17; cf. 1 Pet. 1:22; 2:2; Ps. 119:9 ff., etc.). One should not adopt an interpretation which contradicts the overall teaching of Scripture.

One could argue that the person who spoke in tongues was edified because God gave him the understanding. In other words the Spirit enabled the speaker to translate his own message. The problem with this view is twofold: (1) If God gave the individual tongue-speaker the understanding of the tongues message, then why would that person not share that crucial information with the congregation? (2) If the tongue-speaker has the supernatural ability to translate his own tongues then why doesn’t Paul simply instruct tongue-speakers to tell the congregation the translation instead of giving a dissertation on the superiority of prophecy? In fact Paul says in verse 5 that if the tongues speaker did interpret the foreign language, prophecy would not be superior. The gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues are two separate gifts. There is no example in Scripture of a person speaking in tongues and then translating the

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<sup>14</sup> Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978), 306.

message for the benefit of the congregation. One thing is very clear—Paul is not teaching that Christians should use uninterpreted tongues in public *or private* to be edified.<sup>15</sup>

Why is it so important to establish from Scripture that tongues-speaking always refers to real foreign languages and not gibberish? It is significant because it gives one an objective method to determine if modern tongues-speaking is genuine, or manmade nonsense. If the Charismatic movement is truly a work of God, then anyone should be able to verify it simply by recording people speaking in tongues and having it analyzed by linguists, to see what language was being spoken. If tongues are merely the gibberish one encounters in Charismatic churches and not real languages, then tongues are not a sign to unbelievers, as Paul clearly asserts. A sign is a publicly verifiable miracle. “Speaking in foreign languages which were not learned would certainly constitute a divine miracle; however, speaking in gibberish or in unknown sounds could easily be done by either a Christian or an unsaved person.”<sup>16</sup> Every instance in the twentieth century where Charismatic tongues-speaking was taped and analyzed by linguists revealed that modern “tongues” were not real languages but gibberish. Modern tongues-speaking doesn’t even resemble any language structurally. “The conclusion of the linguists indicates that modern glossolalia is composed of unknown sounds with no distinguishing vocabulary and grammatical features, simulated foreign features, and a total absence of language characteristics. The essential character of this new movement is therefore at variance with the biblical phenomenon of speaking in known languages.”<sup>17</sup> Thus we conclude that modern tongues-speaking contradicts the clear testimony of Scripture, as well as objective empirical findings. Here is a challenge to

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<sup>15</sup> Another passage which disproves the idea that tongues can be gibberish or unstructured babbling is 1 Corinthians 12:10: “to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.” Gromacki writes, “Paul designated the gift of tongues as *gene glossen*, translated as “kinds of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:28). This term *genos* refers to family, offspring, race, nation, kind, sort, and class in New Testament usage. It always designates items which are related to each other. There are many “kinds” of fish (Mt. 13:47) but they are all fish. There are several “kinds” of demons in the world (Mt. 17:21), but they are still demons. There are many “kinds” of voices (1 Cor. 14:10), but they are all voices. From this it can be concluded that there are many “kinds” of languages, but they are all languages. There are several families of languages in the world—Semitic, Slavic, Latin, etc. These are all related, in that they have a definite vocabulary and grammatical construction. Paul could not have possibly combined known, foreign languages with unknown, ecstatic utterances under the same classification. They simply are not related to each other.” (*The Modern Tongues Movement*, 62). Thus, if there were two completely different tongue types—known languages on the one hand, and ecstatic, babbling, private-prayer language on the other hand, as many Charismatics assert—then the Holy Spirit who cannot lie would *not* have used the word *genos* to describe tongues in 1 Corinthians chapter twelve. Further, Hodge adds, “If the meaning of the phrase is thus historically and philologically determined for Acts and Mark, it must also be determined for the Epistle to the Corinthians” (*I & II Corinthians*, 248). In other words once the term “tongues” is carefully defined in the book of Acts, one should not expect Paul to radically redefine the term or add an additional meaning. If the apostle did add an additional radically different meaning in 1 Corinthians as Charismatics assert, then there should be evidence for such a change. As we have seen, the use of *glosseis* in 1 Corinthians is totally consistent with the usage in Acts.

<sup>16</sup> Gromacki, 65.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 67. Gordon Clark writes, “Some of the modern Pentecostals, after a person has spoken gibberish, have an interpreter “translate” the message for the congregation. *The Modern Tongues Movement* by Robert G. Gromacki (Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co.) has the following footnote on page 114: ‘Walvoord tells us of a young seminarian who memorized one of the Psalms in Hebrew. At a tongues meeting, he stood to his feet and pretended to speak in tongues as he recited the Psalm. After he had finished, the interpreter woefully failed to translate what had been spoken.’”

The present writer has a friend, a seminary professor, who did the same thing in Greek. Then, an interpreter arose and translated, but his translation was the veriest Pentecostalist propaganda and had no verbal correspondence to the New Testament words quoted.

How a person who claims to be filled with the *Holy Spirit* can indulge in such chicanery would make an interesting psychological research problem” (Gordon H. Clark, *First Corinthians*, 227-228).

any Pentecostal or Charismatic: tape your church service and have the “tongues” that are spoken analyzed objectively.

There are a number of other indicators that reveal modern tongues to be a fraud. Charismatics are taught how to speak with “tongues.” They are told things such as, “Now pray audibly but don’t speak English.” Or, “Start to speak syllables—just let it flow.” Many Charismatics learn how to speak in “tongues” (gibberish) by imitating others in their church or at a conference. Do we encounter anyone in the New Testament being *taught* how to pray in tongues? No, the exact opposite is the case. Those who speak in tongues in the book of Acts, for example, never ask what to do, and are never told to do or say anything. In the biblical accounts people speak in tongues spontaneously. In Acts 2:4, 10:46 and 19:6, those who spoke in tongues did so with no prompting or preparation. In fact, in each case, those who spoke in tongues, prior to the moment they spoke in tongues, did not know such a thing as tongues even existed! Thus, not only is modern tongue-speaking gibberish nonsense compared with the real foreign languages spoken in the New Testament, but also the way in which Charismatics “receive” tongues is completely different than that in the biblical record. Further, as we carefully noted earlier, the special revelatory gifts of tongues and prophecy ceased with the close of the canon and the death of the apostles.

If modern “tongues” (i.e., gibberish) are completely different than tongues in Scripture (which were real, foreign languages), what happened to real, biblical tongues? The bible teaches that tongues and the other supernatural sign gifts ceased:

Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be *done away*; if there are tongues, they will *cease*; if there is knowledge, it will be *done away*. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known (1 Cor. 13:8-12 NASB).

Paul contrasts the revelatory gifts of prophecy, special knowledge and tongues, which by nature are piecemeal and incomplete, with the complete canon of Scripture (which was completed with the 27 books of the N.T.).

That which was to supercede the partial and do away with it was something designated “perfect.” “But when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.” It is difficult to miss the antithetic parallel between the “partial” thing and the “perfect” (“complete, mature, full”) thing. Since the “partial” speaks of prophecy and other modes of revelational insight (v. 8), then it would seem that the “perfect,” would supplant these, represents the perfect and final New Testament Scripture (Jas. 1:21). This is due to the fact that modes of revelation are being purposely contrasted. Thus, it makes the man of God adequately equipped to all the tasks before him (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In other words, there is a coming time when will occur the *completion* of the revelatory process of God.<sup>18</sup>

The primary objection used against this passage by Charismatics has to do with the phrase “face to face.” They argue that this expression refers to seeing Christ “face to face” at the second coming; thus, the supernatural gifts are to continue until the second coming. This

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<sup>18</sup> Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *The Charismatic Gift of Prophecy: A Reformed Response to Wayne Grudem* (Memphis: Footstool, 1989), 54.

interpretation, however, must be rejected for the following reasons. (1) Our Lord told the apostles that they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to complete His teaching mission. The Spirit would “guide them into all truth” (Jn. 16:13) and “bring all things to remembrance” (Jn. 14:26). It doesn’t make a lot of sense to argue that we must wait for the second coming when our redemption is complete to receive the finality of revelation regarding Jesus’ work. (2) In the passage under discussion there is an antithetic parallel between the “partial” (i.e., various modes of revelation) and the “perfect.” Given the fact that Paul has set up a parallel or contrast between the piecemeal revelations and the perfect revelation, it makes sense to interpret the perfect as the completed canon of Scripture (the finished N.T.). Paul is looking forward to the completion of the revelatory process of God. (3) It is an historical fact that all modes of special revelation did cease with the death of the apostles and the completion of the New Testament. Believers living in the present (A.D. 2004) have exactly the same number of New Testament books as Christians living in A.D. 67 had (or if one takes a late date for the book of Revelation—A.D. 96). Indeed, the perfect did come and it is still with us. Since we have a completed canon, and since the Bible is all we need for salvation, life and godliness, what purpose would modern tongues and prophecy serve? (4) The parallel that Paul sets up in verse 12 is not between being able to see Jesus and not being able to look at the Lord, but rather between looking at a mirror darkly (*en ainigmati*), that is a mirror of inferior quality (Only people of wealth could afford mirrors of fine quality in the ancient world. Mirrors of inferior quality could make the face look distorted.), and looking directly at a person’s face (“Face to face” is an adverbial phrase without an object. Therefore, Paul is not making a point about any particular face.). Paul is simply contrasting that which is incomplete and therefore “dim” or unclear with that which is complete and clear. This interpretation is confirmed by Paul’s own explanation in the second half of verse 12 where the “dim mirror” is set in parallel with “know in part” and “face to face” is set in parallel with “know fully.” Further, if the decisive factor in receiving a full revelation of Jesus’ redemption was meeting Him in person, then our Lord would not have said to the apostles: “It is your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you” (Jn. 16:7).

There are a number of other problems associated with the Charismatic practice of speaking in “tongues.”

(1) Most Charismatics teach that *everyone* who is baptized with the Spirit should speak in tongues.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the leaders in such churches often go to great length to teach people how to speak in tongues. Such a view, however, clearly contradicts the Bible. Paul asks, “Do all speak with tongues?” (1 Cor. 12:30). The construction of this rhetorical question demands a *no* answer. When the apostle lists the spiritual gifts in the same chapter he makes it clear that not all believers have the same spiritual gift saying “to another different kinds of tongues” (v. 10). Paul assumes that *only some* believers had the gift of tongues. Further, he says, “I wish you all spoke with tongues” (1 Cor. 14:5). This statement alone proves that everyone in the Corinthians church did *not* speak with tongues. If the apostle held to the common Charismatic teaching on tongues as the *universal* initiation sign of Spirit-baptism, would he not have lectured the Corinthians on how to receive Spirit-baptism, so that everyone could speak in tongues?

(2) Paul tells the Corinthian church that no one is to speak in tongues without proper interpretation (14:28), because without an interpretation the church will not receive any

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<sup>19</sup> This is the official position of the Assemblies of God, for example: “The baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance” (*Constitution of the General Council of the Assemblies of God* [Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1983], V:8).

edification (14:4-5). Yet in Charismatic churches it is very common for a number of people to spout forth gibberish with no interpretation at all.

(3) Further, the apostle instructs the church to allow only two or three people at the most to speak in tongues and these individuals must take turns to preserve church order (14:27, 30). Yet, in most Charismatic churches numerous people (i.e., many more than 2 or 3) speak gibberish at the same time. Also, the biblical requirement of speaking in turn is not observed.

(4) The Charismatic obsession with tongues is unwarranted given the fact that it is the gift ranked dead last in the apostle's enumeration (12:28). Why not seek and desire the best gifts (1 Cor. 12:31)? Could it be that speaking nonsensical gibberish is very easy, while making accurate detailed predictions about the future or healing compound fractures is very hard? Could it be that the Charismatic movement is fueled by self-deception and counterfeit miracles?

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