

Speaking in Tongues

Is Modern Day Tongues Real or False?

I've had people contact me with this question previously, and I remember one older man in his 60's that his parents had told him that if he didn't speak in tongues that he was not a Christian. Therefore, he went through life as a sinner because he was not able to speak in tongues. However, he began to wonder if he was lost forever. It was obviously the Holy Spirit was working in him and drawing him to begin searching for the truth. There are many others facing the exact same problem and I wanted to help bring some thoughts from scripture and Old Testament fathers, so that you can determine for yourself the truth of the matter.

There is an Evangelical third generation preacher that has been preaching over 40 years and is very well known, by the name of John MacArthur, who has written several books on the subject. I will give you some of his comments here in this outline, but I would recommend that you obtain his books and read all he has today. One is "Speaking in Tongues", the other "Charismatic Chaos".

I will also give you comments of some of the "commentaries" such as Matthew Henry's and others as to what they have to say. Also, from some early church fathers who lived in those times or shortly afterwards.

We will start with this. In John MacArthur's book "Charismatic Chaos", John writes:

1 Corinthians 13:8 "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" (NASB). Paul made an interesting, almost startling, statement: "Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if these are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away." In the expression "love never fails," the Greek word translated "fails" means "to decay" or "to be abolished." Paul was not saying that love is invincible or that it cannot be rejected. He was saying that love is eternal, that it will be applicable forever and will never be passé.

Tongues however, "will cease." The Greek verb used in 1 Corinthians 13:8, Paul means "to cease permanently." It implies that when tongues ceased, they would never start up again.

All of those supposed manifestations of tongues were identified with groups that were heretical, fanatical, or otherwise unorthodox. The judgment of biblically orthodox believers who were their contemporaries was that all those groups were aberrations. Surely, that should also be the assessment of any Christian who is concerned with truth. Thus, we conclude that from the end of the apostolic era to the beginning of the twentieth century there were no genuine occurrences of the New Testament gift of tongues. They had ceased, as the Holy Spirit said they would (1 Cor. 13:8).

New Testament scholar Thomas R. Edgar makes this observation: Since these gifts and signs did cease, the burden of proof is entirely on the charismatics to prove their validity. Too long

Christians have assumed that the noncharismatic must produce incontestable biblical evidence that the miraculous sign gifts did cease. However, noncharismatics have no burden to prove this, since it has already been proved by history. It is an irrefutable fact admitted by many Pentecostals. Therefore, the charismatics must prove biblically that the sign gifts will start up again during the Church Age and that today's phenomena are this reoccurrence. In other words, they must prove that their experience is the reoccurrence of gifts that have not occurred for almost 1,900 years.

In John's second book "Charismatic Chaos", we see some of the following:

The third gift mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:8 is the gift of tongues, or languages. Throughout these studies I will use those terms synonymously so that you will understand that even though tongues is the word that is being used today, the literal meaning of the Greek term glossa is "languages." We will see in our study of 1 Corinthians 14 that tongues always refers to a known language. Briefly then, the definition of the gift of tongues is "the ability to speak a foreign language that had not been learned by the speaker". Its purpose, as we will see, was as a sign of God's judgment to unbelieving Jews.

Verse 8 clearly states that these three prominent gifts – prophecy, knowledge, and tongues – are going to come to an end. The question is when.

John goes on to say that it's interesting that 1 Corinthians is the only epistle where the gift of tongues appears. Paul wrote at least twelve other epistles and never even mentioned it, and James, John and Jude never mentioned it. The gift of tongues disappeared. Even though it has always been the mystical dream throughout history that God would give a private revelation of Himself to each individual, it hasn't happened. God gave His Word and then authenticated it. What we now have is "the faith which was once [for all] delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3b). Revelation has ended. Tongues as a revelatory, edifying, sign gift has ceased to have any function.

John went on to say about some of the post-apostolic Fathers were the church leaders who lived immediately after the apostolic age. If you study their writings, you'll discover something significant – they don't discuss the gift of tongues. Cleon Rogers, a scholar, and missionary wrote, "it is significant that the gift of tongues is nowhere alluded to, hinted at, or even found in any writing of the Post-Apostolic Fathers". ("The Gift of Tongues in the Post Apostolic Church"; Bibliotheca Sacra, 122:134).

Clement of Rome (A.D. 88-97), wrote a letter to the Corinthians in A.D. 95 discussing their spiritual problems. He didn't mention tongues, because apparently the gift had ceased. The gift of tongues then, wasn't an issue by A.D. 95.

Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165), was a great church Father who traveled throughout the churches and wrote many things defending Christianity, but he never mentioned tongues. He made lists of spiritual gifts that did not include the gift of tongues.

Origen (A.D. 185-253), was a widely read scholar without equal in the minds of some. In all the volumes he wrote, there is no mention of tongues.

Augustine (A.D. 354-430), made the following comment on Acts 2:4; “In the earliest times, ‘the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spake with tongues’”. These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit. That thing was done for a betokening, and it passed away” (“Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John.” The Nicene and Post-Nicene fathers, vol. 7, Philip Schaff, ed., [New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1888].

The first-time tongues became part of mainline Christianity since the apostolic age was in 1901 at Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas. Agnes Ozman received what she called “the baptism of the Holy Spirit” accompanied by ecstatic utterances. The practice became part of the holiness movement of the church in America. In 1906, ecstatic utterances came to Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California. Out of these two events in 1901 and 1906 grew the mainline Pentecostal denominations that many of our brothers and sisters in Christ are a part of today. Unlike many of their predecessors, Pentecostals believe the Word of God and preach it. But this particular movement within mainline Christianity didn’t begin until the start of the last century.

And then you have the charismatic movement. In 1960 in Van Nuys, California, the modern charismatic movement (characterized by tongues outside of Pentecostal denominations), began in an Episcopalian church. It soon spread across mainline denominations of all kinds.

For the most part speaking in tongues is not a supernatural or miraculous experience. It is simply something that a person learns how to do. I believe that this is the most common explanation for what is happening today. People are learning how to speak in tongues. One of the reasons I say that is the amazing similarity in the terms that I have heard used by tongues speakers all over the country. They all speak the same thing in the same way. In fact, I’ve heard the same things spoken so many times, that I could repeat those words and “speak in tongues” myself, claims John MacArthur. The claim however, that is constantly made by charismatics is that every Christian is supposed to receive his own private prayer language.

The involvement of tongues in paganism – The ecstasy of the Greco-Roman world.

At the time of the Corinthians church, the Greco-Roman world had a multitude of gods. In their worship of these gods, it was common for a person to go into ecstasy, which literally means “to go out of oneself.” They would go into an unconscious state where all kinds of psychic phenomena would occur. They believed that when they were in an ecstatic trance, they actually left their bodies, ascended into space, connected up to whatever deity they were worshiping, and would begin to commune with that deity.

Once they began to commune with that deity, they would begin to speak the language of the gods. This was common practice in their culture. In fact, the term (used in 1 Corinthians), to refer to speaking in tongues (glossais lalein), was not invented by Bible writers. It was a term used commonly in the Greco-Roman culture to speak of the pagan language of the gods that

occurred while the speaker was in an ecstatic trance. This language of the gods was always gibberish.

You may be interested in seeing what happens during some of these church meetings so here are 3 videos you may find interesting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVSLc0cqlZM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMWD5mWxMSo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mBKzQN8RS4>

Whenever God does something, Satan tries to counterfeit it. To cloud the true revelatory work of the Holy Spirit in the early church, Satan put up a smoke screen that consisted of phony revelations, phony visions, and phony tongues. That's why the apostle John said that when someone comes along and begins telling you they speak for God, you'd better "test the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1). It's easy to fall prey to the phony. And because the Corinthians had decided to marry the spirit of the age, they became victims.

Remember, Satan is called "the god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4), and "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2b). Satan not only wants to be like God (Isa. 14:12-14), he appears "transformed into an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). He wants to counterfeit reality and trick the church into accepting that which is phony.

Most everything up to here is in those two books (plus much, much more).

Those 3 videos listed above were put there by a very well-known pastor of the name of John MacArthur who has been preaching for some 50 plus years. I have personally listened to a few thousands of his sermons which he puts online every day, Monday through Friday. I would highly recommend that everyone go to <https://www.gty.org/broadcasts/radio>, and then listen to a couple of his daily sermons. You will be amazed to say the least. And you'll learn things you didn't think was possible. He is an outstanding preacher.

I have the following scripture plus the commentaries on each of the 3 verses (on 1 Cor. 13:8-10 in the KJV):

1 Corinthians 13:8-10

- 8. "Charity never faileth: but whether [there be] prophecies, they shall fail; whether [there be] tongues, they shall cease; whether [there be] knowledge, it shall vanish away."**
- 9. "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part."**
- 10. "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."**

These verses refer to love's lastingness or permanence as a divine quality. Love outlasts all failures. Paul strengthens his point on the permanence of love by comparing it to the spiritual gifts which the Corinthians so highly prized: prophecy, knowledge, and languages, all of which will have an end. There may be a distinction made on how prophecy and knowledge come to an end, and how the gift of languages does. This is indicated by the Greek verb form used. In the case of prophecy and knowledge, they are both said to "be abolished" (in both cases the verb indicates that something will put an end to those two functions).

(Verses 9-10), indicate that what will abolish knowledge and prophecy is; "that which is perfect." When that occurs, those gifts will be rendered inoperative. The "perfect", is not the completion of Scripture since there is still the operation of those two gifts and will be in the future kingdom. The Scriptures do not allow us to see "face to face" or have perfect knowledge as God does (in verse 12).

The "perfect" is not the rapture of the church or the second coming of Christ, since the kingdom to follow these events will have an abundance of preachers and teachers. The perfect must be the eternal state, when we in glory see God face to face and have full knowledge in the eternal new heavens and new earth. Just as a child grows to full understanding, believers will come to perfect knowledge and no such gifts will be necessary.

On the other hand, Paul uses a different word for the end of the gift of languages, thus indicating it will "cease" by itself, as it did at the end of the apostolic age. It will not end by the coming of the "perfect," for it will already have ceased. The uniqueness of the gift of languages and its interpretations was, as all sign gifts, to authenticate the message and messengers of the gospel before the New Testament was completed.

"Tongues" were also not a sign to believers, but unbelievers, especially those unbelieving Jews. Tongues also cease because there was no need to verify the true messages from God once the Scripture was given. It became the standard by which all are to be deemed true. "Tongues", was a means of edification in a way far inferior to preaching and teaching.

In fact (chapter 14), was designed to show the Corinthians, so preoccupied with tongues, that it was an inferior means of communication, an inferior means of praise, and an inferior means of evangelism. Prophecy was and is, far superior. That tongues have ceased should be clear from their absence from any other books in the New Testament except Acts. Tongues ceased to be an issue of record or practice in the early church, as the Scripture was being written. That tongues have ceased should be clear also from its absence through church history since the first century, appearing only sporadically and then only in questionable groups.

Here is what 1 Cor. 14:22 says and that and the commentary I have on www.bible-studys.org:

1 Corinthians 14:22 "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying [serveth] not for them that believe not, but for them which believe."

Those who do not believe are looking for signs and wonders. Those who believe are basing what they believe on the Word of God. Peter, John, and the other apostles did not have to hear someone speak in other tongues to cause them to believe. The Holy Spirit given to them on the day of Pentecost was not given to them as a sign that God was real. The tongues were to show them that they had been empowered by the Holy Ghost to minister. They believed, because of the Word of God, and not because of the sign.

Explaining further, he says explicitly that all tongues are for the sake of unbelievers. In other words, that gift has no purpose in the church when everyone present is a believer.

In the completely opposite way, the gift of prophesying benefits only believers, who are able, by their new natures and the indwelling Holy Spirit, to understand spiritual truth.

In Acts 2:4 commentary. And began to speak with other tongues; besides, and different from that in which they were born and brought up, and usually spake; they spake different languages, one spoke one language, and another, another; and the same person spoke with various tongues, sometimes one language, and sometimes another. These are the new tongues, Christ told them they should speak with (Mark 16:17), such as they had never heard, learned, nor known before: as the Spirit gave them utterance. They did not utter anything of themselves, and what came into their minds, things of little or no importance; nor in a confused and disorderly manner; but they were wise and weighty sentences they delivered, as the word signifies. Even the wonderful works of God, Acts 2:11 the great doctrines of the Gospel; and though in different languages, yet in a very orderly and distinct manner, so as to be heard and understood by the people.

On www.biblehub.com you will find free commentaries such as Matthew Henry that explains scriptures (be careful and verify what is being said on commentaries as they are not infallible as the bible is. you will find the commentaries (for 1 Cor. 13:8). I will give you some of those here for you (you'll also see some references to chapter 14).

First, **Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary**. Shall fail ... vanish away. The same Greek verb is used for both; and that different from the Greek verb for "faileth." Translate, "Shall be done away with," that is, shall be dispensed with at the Lord's coming, being superseded by their more perfect heavenly analogues; for instance, knowledge by intuition. Of "tongues," which are still more temporary, the verb is "shall cease." A primary fulfilment of Paul's statement took place when the Church attained its maturity; then "tongues" entirely "ceased," and "prophesying's" and "knowledge," so far as they were supernatural gifts of the Spirit, were superseded as no longer required when the ordinary preaching of the word, and the Scriptures of the New Testament collected together, had become established institutions.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible. But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; by which are meant, either the predictions of future events, not that they shall fail in their accomplishment, but they shall be no more, because they will all be accomplished. Or else the gifts of explaining the prophecies of the Old Testament, and of preaching the doctrines of the Gospel, will be no more, because there will be no need of them in a state of perfection. Whether there be tongues they shall cease; not but that, in the resurrection, that member of the body, the tongue, will be restored as the rest, and be everlastingly employed in celebrating the perfections of God. In

singing the hallelujahs of the Lamb, and in joining with angels and other saints in songs of praise to the eternal Three. But the gift of speaking with different tongues will cease, indeed it has already. Nor will there be any use for such an extraordinary gift in the other world; when probably, and as it is thought by some, there will be but one language, and that the Hebrew language. As the whole earth was of one language and speech before the confusion at Babel:

In Acts 2:4 commentary. And began to speak with other tongues; besides, and different from that in which they were born and brought up, and usually spake. They spake different languages, one spoke one language, and another, another. And the same person spoke with various tongues, sometimes one language, and sometimes another. These are the new tongues, Christ told them they should speak with (Mark 16:17). Such as they had never heard, learned, nor known before: as the Spirit gave them utterance. They did not utter anything of themselves, and what came into their minds, things of little or no importance, nor in a confused and disorderly manner. But they were wise and weighty sentences they delivered, as the word signifies. Even the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11). The great doctrines of the Gospel; and though in different languages, yet in a very orderly and distinct manner, so as to be heard and understood by the people.

(re: 1 Cor. 14:22) Wherefore tongues are for a sign. Of wrath and punishment inflicted on a rebellious and unbelieving people, and not of grace and kindness, as prophesying, or speaking to them by the prophets was. And so, this is an inference from what is said in the preceding verse, and shows, that there was no reason why believers should be so very desirous of them. But if these words refer to all that is said before on this subject, the word “sign” may be taken for a miracle. And so, a new argument is formed against an over fondness for divers’ tongues, and the use of them in public worship, showing the preferableness of prophecy to them. For speaking with different tongues was used in a miraculous way, not to them that believe; who have no need of miracles to raise their attention to what is said, and that it may gain credit with them, or to confirm their faith in it: but to them that believe not.

Mark 16:17 “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;”

Barnes’ Notes on the Bible. 1 Corinthians 14:2 “For he that speaks in an unknown tongue speaks not to men, but to God: for no man understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.” This verse is designed to show that the faculty of speaking intelligibly, and to the edification of the church, is of more value than the power of speaking a foreign language. The reason is, that however valuable may be the endowment in itself, and however important the truth which he may utter, yet it is as if he spoke to God only. No one could understand him.

Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. [For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue] The word unknown is not in the original. The word translated tongue signifies a human language (in 1 Corinthians 13:1. compare Revelation 13:7; Revelation 14:6; Revelation 17:15).

1 Corinthians 14:4-6 – Prophecy and Tongues: “The one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but the one who prophesies edifies the church.” “I wish that all of you could speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.” “Now, brothers, if I come to

you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching”?

Tongues: The power of speaking foreign languages.

Glossolalia: the phenomenon of (apparently), speaking in an unknown language, especially in religious worship. It is practiced especially by Pentecostal and charismatic Christians.

Matthew Poole's Commentary. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, etc. That is, an eminent product of Divine providence for the confirmation of the truth of the doctrine of the gospel. Signifying that the doctrine which was so delivered in every nation's language, must be from heaven, from whence the first ministers must have their power so to speak. Yet, doubtless, they were not only for a sign, being also a means, by which the knowledge of the gospel was conveyed unto those who could not have understood what the apostles and first ministers of the gospel said, had they not spoken to them in the language of the hearers. When he saith, prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, the meaning is, not only for them that believe not; for prophesying is certainly of use to them that believe not, for their conversion, as well as for them that believe, for their edification.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible.

They shall speak with new tongues: or languages, not such as were new made, and had never been heard and known before. But foreign languages, such as they had never learned, or were able to speak, or understood before. And this not only did the apostles on the day of Pentecost, but even common believers at other times (Acts 2:4 Acts 10:45).

Benson Commentary (see Acts 2:4). And began to speak with other tongues. To speak languages of which they had before been entirely ignorant. For this miracle was not in the ears of the hearers, as some have unaccountably supposed, but in the mouths of the speakers. The meaning is not that one was enabled to speak one language, and another another, as it was with the several families that were dispersed from Babel; but everyone was enabled to speak different languages as he should have occasion to use them. And we may suppose that they not only understood what they themselves said, but understood one another too, which the builders at Babel did not (Genesis 11:7). They did not speak now and then a word of another tongue, or stammer out some broken sentences, but spoke each language which they spoke as readily, properly, and elegantly, as if it had been their mother tongue. For whatever was produced by miracle was the best of the kind. They spake not from any previous thought, but as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. They began to speak with other tongues. Spoken of as new tongues (Mark 16:17). It means languages which they had not known before, and from the history it would appear that some of the company spoke in one and some in another language. For the crowd of foreigners, when they come together, all find somebody among the speakers whom they are able to understand.

Pulpit Commentary. Other tongues (1 Corinthians 14:21; Isaiah 28:11); the same as the “new tongues” of Mark 16:17. Paul speaks of them as “the tongues of men and of angels” (1 Corinthians 13:1), and as “kinds of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:10). His habitual phrase is “speaking in [or with] a tongue [or tongues]” (1 Corinthians 14:2, 4-6), etc. What these tongues were on this occasion we are explicitly informed in verses 6, 8, and 11. They were the tongues of the various nationalities present at the feast, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Egyptians, Phrygians, Arabians, etc. This is so clearly and so distinctly stated that it is astonishing that anyone should deny it who accepts Luke’s account as historical. The only room for doubt is whether the speakers spoke in these different languages, or the hearers heard in them though the speakers spoke in only one tongue. But not to mention that this is far more difficult to imagine, and transfers the miracle from those who had the Holy Spirit to those who had it not, it is against the plain language of the text, which tells us that “they began to speak with other tongues,” and that “every man heard them speaking in his own language.” “Speaking,” said they, “in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” There may, indeed, have been something ecstatic besides in these utterances, but there is no reference to such made either by Luke or by the audience whose words he reports. The narrative before us does not hint at any after use of the gift of tongues for missionary purposes. In Acts 10:46; Acts 11:15-17; Acts 19:6, as well as in the passages above referred to in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the speaking with tongues is always spoken of. Often in connection with prophecy, simply as a gift and a manifestation (1 Corinthians 12:7), of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Barnes’ Notes on the Bible. Began to speak with other tongues. In other languages than their native tongue. The languages which they spoke are specified (in Acts 2:1-11; note look at verses 7, 8 and 11 carefully).

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.” “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.” “And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.” “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance”. “And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven”. “Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language”. “And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?” “And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?” “Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,” “Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,” “Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God”.

Geneva Study Bible. He calls them other tongues which were not the same as the apostles commonly used, and Mark calls them new tongues. By this we understand that the apostles were not speaking one language and then another by chance at random, or as eccentric men used to do, but that they kept in mind the languages of their hearers: and to be short, that they only spoke as the Holy Spirit directed them to speak.

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Mark 16:17 “Shall speak with new tongues”. Shall speak other languages than their native language. This was remarkably fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4-11). It existed also, in other places (see 1 Corinthians 12:10).

Also, on Mark 16:17: “they shall speak with new tongues:” or languages, not such as were new made, and had never been heard and known before. But foreign languages, such as they had never learned, or were able to speak, or understood before. And this not only did the apostles on the day of Pentecost, but even common believers at other times (Acts 2:4 Acts 10:45).

One last thought about the Pentecostals, and that is they do teach the Gospel of Jesus so there are many good people/Christians among them. I put this information together to those who are/were told that to be a Christian, one must speak in tongues. This, as you can see is not true. We are all given gifts (by God), and not one person has the exact same gifts as someone else. We should be the same as the Bereans (in Acts 17:11). “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”