

# *“Tongues, They Shall Cease”*

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## **I. Nature of Tongues**

A. Definition: the supernatural ability to speak in a human language not previously known to the speaker (i.e., *xenoglossia*).

### B. Terms

1. γλῶσσα (*glossa*): a Greek word occurring 50x in the NT and translated “tongue[s].”
2. διάλεκτος (*dialect*: tongue [5x], language [1x]): refers to a regional/social sub-group of a major language.
3. “Glossolalists”: those who believe and practice speaking in tongues today.
4. “Cessationists”: those who believe that tongue speaking ceased by the end of the first century.

### C. Movements

1. The Pentecostal denomination embraces charismatic behavior; hence Pentecostals and Charismatics believe in and practice “speaking in tongues.”
2. Dispensationalists interpret the Bible precisely and with stewardship distinctions, believing tongue speaking ceased by the end of the first century.

## **II. Biblical References**

### A. Mk. 16:15-20

1. The CT omits or questions the last 9 verses of Mark’s Gospel.
2. Christ commissioned the immediate audience to preach the Gospel and baptize converts, and confirmation signs would follow. The signs include these five, four of which occurred in Acts:
  - a. demon exorcism (Acts 16:18)
  - b. new tongue speaking (Acts 2:3)
  - c. serpent handling (Acts 28:3-6)
  - d. deadly drinking (-)

e. healing ministry (Acts 3:6-10)

3. These signs came as a “unit” and their purpose was to confirm or authenticate the preached word which ultimately was written down and became the inspired words NT Canon. One could not arbitrarily pick which authenticating sign he wanted and exclude the others.

B. Acts 2:1-4

1. Apparently the 120 spoke in tongues as they were baptized by Christ in the Holy Ghost (v. 4). Spirit Baptism was a temporary phenomenon accompanied by tongues, which when it ceased tongues ceased (cf. Acts 8:15-17; 11:15-16; 19:5-7; Eph. 4:5).

2. They spoke in 16 dialects (cf. vv. 9-11) that they did not necessarily know and the various national groups heard (v. 8) in their own language the wonderful works of God (v. 11).

3. This was a sign to the Jews that Christ’s promise to build up His assembly (Mt. 16:18) did indeed happen, as He authenticated His church as the new institution for the Jews (no longer the temple), corroborating His promised word with signs.

C. I Cor. 13:8-13

1. Although love never fails, three first century phenomenon would fail: prophecy (fore-telling only), tongues (Paul’s use of the future, middle *παύσονται* suggests that tongues would cease by themselves; i.e., “die out”), and knowledge (special revelatory knowledge of mysteries).

2. The terminator of tongues would be the process ending with the “perfect” (*τέλειος*).

a. The perfect **is not the rapture**, because that is an event, not a process.

b. The perfect **is not the eternal new heavens** because that will be an event.

3. The perfect is that which will be the culmination of full revelation replacing partial revelation (child to adult; mirror darkly to clearly; partial knowledge to full knowledge)—the completion of the NT Canon!

### III. History of Tongues

A. Paganism: the heathen diviners, mantis, Indian fakirs, Greek oracles (Delphi), Gnostic utterances in “magical papyri,” spiritistic mediums, Muslim dervishes, Native American witch doctors, etc., all practiced “tongues” before, during, and after the first Christian century.

B. Post First Century: 4<sup>th</sup> century Eastern Church father Chrysostom stated tongues ceased by his time because it was an obscure and ancient practice. Augustine stated it was for the Apostolic age.

C. Medieval Age: some examples come from the RCC and the Quakers and later the Shakers claimed tongues.

D. 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The modern tongues movement began in 1901 with the Azusa Street revival influencing the Assemblies of God and the Pentecostal Church of God through the Baptism of the Holy Ghost revival.

#### **IV. Abuses of Modern Tongues Movement**

A. Violation of Paul's instructions (I Cor. 14:27-29, 34)

1. Only 2 or 3 may speak.
2. The speakers must speak in order or course.
3. There must be an interpreter in the service, otherwise silence.
4. Others must judge the message based on previous revelation.
5. Women must remain silent and not speak (in tongues) in the public service.

B. Prayer tongues (I Cor. 14:4)

1. Paul seems to discourage or diminish prayer tongues for self-edification. Self-edification and therefore self-aggrandizement is forbidden, but only body-edification is allowed in the assembly
2. The purpose of tongues was for a sign to the unbeliever (vv. 22-23)

C. Explanations for the phenomenon include mental health issues, demonism, spiritual carnality, and self-induced behavior.

**Conclusion:** There is no biblical speaking in tongues today because Spirit Baptism ceased as did the accompanying tongues experience as predicted in the Bible.