

Does the Gift of Tongues Still Exist Today?

Part 1: A Scriptural and Theological Examination

The title of the essay to be presented will begin by exploring the gift of tongues. One of the most common and important questions Christians ask is: **Does the gift of tongues still happen today?** To answer that, we need to establish a few essential principles.

I. Experience Cannot Decide the Matter—Scripture Must

This issue must be resolved through careful **exegesis** (interpreting Scripture), not personal **experience**. Many sincere believers claim to speak in tongues. For a family member or close friends who regularly prayed in tongues, for them, this is deeply personal, and when someone says the gift of tongues has ceased, it may feel like a personal attack—suggesting they're deceived or not truly speaking in tongues.

But regardless of how sincere or emotional these experiences are, **truth must be determined by Scripture**. Experience is not the standard—**God's Word is**.

II. We Must Understand What the Gift of Tongues Actually Is

Before we can know whether tongues continue today, we must

first **understand what the Bible means by “tongues.”** Only **two books** of the Bible even mention the gift: **Acts** and **1 Corinthians** (chapters 12–14). That’s where our focus will be.

III. The Biblical Definition of Tongues

The Greek word for “tongues” is **glōssa**, which simply means **languages**—specifically **human languages**, according to tools like the Blue Letter Bible.

In the book of Acts, tongues appear as the ability to speak **words from God** in a **human language previously unknown to the speaker**. When interpreted, this form of tongues is functionally the same as **prophecy**—a key point we’ll return to.

IV. The Theological Implications

According to theologians like **Ed Clowney** and **Sinclair Ferguson**, if tongues are interpreted and truly from God, they represent **divine revelation**—just like prophecy. That would make them **infallible and authoritative**, on the same level as Scripture.

Clowney writes that *“if a speaker doesn’t know the meaning of the tongue being spoken, and another interprets it accurately, then the message originates from **the Spirit**, not from the speaker’s own thoughts”*. In other words, **God is speaking through the person**. This is not merely praying in another language—this is **divine revelation**.

So, if interpreted tongues are divine revelation, and prophecy has ceased (as previously argued), then **tongues must have ceased as well**. The church no longer needs spontaneous infallible messages from heaven, because **Scripture is complete**.

V. Biblical Examples

Acts 2 (Pentecost) provides the clearest example. The disciples were filled with the Spirit and began speaking in other **known languages**. People from all over the known world heard them speak **in their own native tongues**. This wasn't meaningless syllables or private prayer—it was real languages communicating the **mighty works of God**.

Later in the chapter, Peter explains this by quoting **Joel**—not about tongues, but about **prophecy**. This is important. Peter is saying that the speaking in tongues fulfills Joel's prophecy that God would pour out His Spirit and people would **prophecy**. This reinforces the idea that tongues are a form of **prophecy in another language**.

VI. Paul's Teaching in 1 Corinthians

In 1 Corinthians 14:5, Paul says he wishes everyone spoke in tongues, but even more that they would prophecy. **Prophecy is greater than tongues—unless** tongues are interpreted. When interpreted, tongues build up the church in the same way prophecy does. This shows that interpreted tongues and prophecy are **functionally equivalent**.

Paul even says the one who speaks in a tongue **may not understand what they're saying** (1 Cor. 14:13–14). Their **mind is unfruitful**—meaning the message doesn't originate in them, but rather from the Spirit. The speaker must pray to interpret what they've said. Again, this shows that **God is the one speaking**, not the person.

VII. The Critical Conclusion

If tongues are spontaneous, Spirit-given, divine messages—spoken in unknown languages and interpreted as prophecy—then they must be **infallible**. And if they are infallible, **they cannot still be happening today**, because that

would mean we are receiving new divine revelation beyond the completed Word of God. That would undermine the **sufficiency and authority of Scripture**.

Even respected continuationists like **Wayne Grudem, John Piper, and D.A. Carson** agree that if tongues are divine revelation equal to Scripture, then they **cannot** continue after the close of the canon.

Part 2: The Evidence from Acts and the Case for Cessationism

In Part 1, we examined the biblical definition of tongues and argued that they were human languages inspired by the Holy Spirit—akin to prophecy. Now, in Part 2, we turn to the **book of Acts** to explore how tongues functioned as **visible evidence** of the Holy Spirit's arrival and what that means for us today.

I. The Gift of Tongues as Evidence of the Spirit

In **Acts 8**, we read that the apostles laid hands on the new Samaritan believers and **they received the Holy Spirit**. Although the text doesn't explicitly mention tongues, Simon the magician saw something *visible* and *powerful*—so compelling that he offered money to buy that same power. Most scholars agree: the visible evidence was likely **speaking in tongues**, just as it was in Acts 2.

This follows a pattern:

- In **Acts 2**, Jews spoke in other **known human languages** when they received the Spirit.
- In **Acts 8**, Samaritans likely did the same, though it's

implied rather than directly stated.

II. Tongues at Cornelius' House (Acts 10–11)

In Acts 10, while Peter preaches to Cornelius and other Gentiles, **the Holy Spirit falls on them**, and the **visible evidence is again speaking in tongues**. Jewish believers with Peter are shocked because these Gentiles, without converting to Judaism, **receive the Holy Spirit**—and the proof is they're **speaking in tongues and praising God** (Acts 10:45–46).

Peter responds, saying they received the Spirit “**just as we have**” (v. 47)—a direct reference to **Pentecost** in Acts 2. Since the tongues at Pentecost were known human languages, **the same must be true here**. That connection is affirmed again in **Acts 11:17**, where Peter repeats: “*God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us.*”

This consistent pattern reinforces that tongues in Acts were not private, ecstatic experiences, but **public, miraculous signs**—recognizable **languages** proving that God was including Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles alike in His New Covenant.

III. Tongues in Ephesus (Acts 19)

The final mention of tongues in Acts comes in **Acts 19**, when Paul meets disciples in Ephesus who had only received John's baptism. Upon hearing the full gospel and receiving Christian baptism, Paul lays hands on them, and **they speak in tongues and prophecy** (v. 6).

Note again the pairing of **tongues and prophecy**. Tongues—God's words in a foreign language—and prophecy—God's words in a known language—are consistently linked. And just like in Acts 2 and 10, the tongues are **glōssa**, meaning human languages.

As Sinclair Ferguson summarizes, it's hard to avoid the

conclusion that **all tongues in Acts were the same kind—miraculous, Spirit-given, known human languages.**

IV. Two Key Arguments for the Cessation of Tongues

Now that we've established that tongues in Acts were known languages, we can present two strong arguments for why the **gift of tongues no longer operates today:**

Argument #1: Tongues in Acts and 1 Corinthians Are the Same Gift

If the tongues described in **1 Corinthians** are the **same kind of tongues** as those in Acts, then what most people claim today as “tongues” is not the biblical gift.

Why? Because:

- Linguists have analyzed modern charismatic speech for decades and found **no identifiable languages.**
- Recordings often show repetitive, syllabic patterns—sounds mimicking the speaker's **native language** without grammatical structure or linguistic coherence.
- No one today is verifiably speaking **fluent, unknown human languages** by the Spirit.

Yet, that's exactly what the New Testament describes. So if tongues in 1 Corinthians match Acts, **today's phenomenon doesn't match biblical tongues.**

Argument #2: Tongues Are a Form of Prophecy

If, as argued, interpreted tongues are **divine revelation**—Spirit-given words, not originating in the speaker—then they are equivalent to **prophecy**. And as we've shown earlier, **prophecy has ceased** with the closing of the biblical canon.

Therefore, if tongues = prophecy, and prophecy has ceased, then **tongues must have ceased** too.

V. Objection: Aren't 1 Corinthians Tongues Different from Acts?

Some scholars argue that the tongues in 1 Corinthians differ from Acts. Scholars like **Gordon Fee** and **Anthony Thiselton** suggest:

- Acts tongues = **human languages**
- 1 Corinthians tongues = **ecstatic or angelic speech**

Why? Because:

- Tongues in Acts were understood without interpreters.
- Tongues in Corinth required **interpretation**.
- Corinthian tongues seem **unintelligible**, implying spiritual or heavenly speech.

If this were true, then **ecstatic speech** might still happen today. But the burden of proof is on those who claim **two separate gifts**. And there's no direct evidence in 1 Corinthians that Paul was describing something completely different from Acts.

In fact:

- Paul uses the same word—**glōssa**—in both contexts.
- He argues that **interpreted tongues build up the church**, just like prophecy (1 Cor. 14:5).
- He treats uninterpreted tongues as **incomprehensible not because they're gibberish**, but because **no one present understands the language**.

Thus, the more natural conclusion is that Paul was addressing

the same gift, but in a **different setting**—a church using the gift wrongly (without interpreters).

Conclusion: The Biblical Case is Strong

To summarize:

- All references to tongues in Acts refer to **known human languages**.
- 1 Corinthians describes **the same gift**, only in a regulated church context.
- Interpreted tongues = prophecy, and if prophecy has ceased, so has tongues.
- Modern “tongues” do not match what Scripture describes.

Therefore, if we are to remain faithful to Scripture—and not base doctrine on experience—we **must conclude that the true gift of tongues has ceased**.

Part 3: Tongues in 1 Corinthians – Still Human Language, Not Ecstatic Speech

As we continue exploring whether the gift of tongues is active today, one key objection often arises: **Do tongues in 1 Corinthians differ from those in Acts?** Some claim that while Acts describes **human languages**, 1 Corinthians refers to **ecstatic** or even **angelic** speech. Let’s examine these claims carefully.

I. Tongues in Acts vs. 1 Corinthians –

Same Gift, Different Contexts

It's true—tongues in Acts 2 brought about **salvation**, while in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul says tongues can be a **sign of judgment** (vv. 21–23). That may seem like a contradiction, but it's really a difference in **context**, not content.

In **Acts 2**, people from many nations were gathered in Jerusalem. When the Spirit came, the apostles spoke in **real, recognizable human languages**. The hearers didn't need an interpreter—they already **understood the languages** being spoken.

But in **1 Corinthians**, the setting is a **local church** with fewer language groups represented. When someone spoke in a foreign language (a tongue), no one understood unless there was an **interpreter**. The gift hadn't changed—what changed was the **audience's ability to understand**.

So, the tongues in both Acts and 1 Corinthians were **glōssa**—human languages. The need for interpretation in 1 Corinthians reflects the church's situation, not a different kind of gift.

II. What About the “Tongues of Angels”?

A common defense of ecstatic or angelic tongues is **1 Corinthians 13:1**:

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”

This seems to imply that Paul—and possibly others—could speak in **heavenly languages**. But let's read it **in context**.

Paul is using a rhetorical technique called **hyperbole**—exaggeration to make a point. Here's the pattern:

- **He starts with something real**, then escalates to something **impossible or exaggerated**.

- He **did** speak in human tongues.
- But he never spoke in angelic tongues—he’s saying, *“Even if I could...”*
- He had prophetic powers—but not **all knowledge or omniscience**.
- He had great faith—but not enough to literally **move mountains**.

Paul’s point? **Even the greatest spiritual gifts are meaningless without love**. He’s not teaching that anyone actually speaks angelic languages. He’s saying: *“Even if I had these amazing powers and didn’t have love, they’d be worthless.”*

Thus, the “tongues of angels” argument **does not prove** the existence of angelic or ecstatic speech in the church.

III. Paul’s Ministry: The Same Gift in Different Cities

Ed Clowney makes a strong observation: In **Acts 19**, Paul laid hands on believers in **Ephesus**, and they spoke in tongues—**human languages**, just like Pentecost. But in **Acts 18**, Paul had just finished founding the **Corinthian** church.

Are we really to believe that Paul passed on one type of tongue (human languages) in Ephesus and a **different** kind (ecstatic utterance) in Corinth, just one chapter earlier? That seems highly unlikely. The same apostle, operating under the same Spirit, brought the same **gift of glōssa** to both places.

If the gift in Acts 19 was human languages (and it clearly was), then the gift in 1 Corinthians—connected to Paul’s ministry—must be the **same gift**.

IV. The “Sign of Judgment” Argument in 1 Corinthians 14

One of the more complex passages in the discussion of tongues is **1 Corinthians 14:21–23**. Paul quotes **Isaiah 28:11–12**, where God tells Israel:

“By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me.”

This quote refers to the **Assyrian invasion**—a time when the Israelites heard **foreign languages** (Assyrian) outside their city walls. Those “strange tongues” were a sign that **judgment** was coming. Israel had rejected God’s word, and now they would hear the **unintelligible language of invaders** as judgment.

Paul applies that to the church:

“Thus, tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers...” (v. 22)

This may sound confusing—weren’t tongues a blessing at Pentecost? Yes, but here Paul refers to **uninterpreted tongues**. If an unbeliever walks into a chaotic church service where many people are speaking in **unintelligible foreign languages** with **no interpretation**, they will think, *“These people are out of their minds”* (v. 23).

So in this context, tongues are not a **blessing** or evangelistic tool, but a **sign of judgment**—a confusing, chaotic sign that repels rather than invites.

Meanwhile, **prophecy**, which is clear and understandable, is a **sign for believers**—it builds up the church and draws in the unbeliever.

V. Summary of the Argument So Far

To wrap up Part 3, here's what we've established:

- **Tongues in Acts and 1 Corinthians are the same gift:** Spirit-given ability to speak **real, human languages** unknown to the speaker.
- **The “tongues of angels” is not proof** of ecstatic or heavenly languages—it's a **rhetorical exaggeration**.
- The context explains the differences in Acts and 1 Corinthians, not a difference in the nature of the gift itself.
- **Paul's consistent ministry** across Ephesus and Corinth supports a **single definition** of tongues.
- Tongues can function as a **sign of blessing** (when interpreted) or a **sign of judgment** (when uninterpreted).

This careful interpretation of Scripture helps us see that the **modern phenomenon of ecstatic or unintelligible speech** is not the same as the **biblical gift of tongues**. The gift in Scripture was always purposeful, public, and understandable—either directly (as in Acts) or through interpretation (as in 1 Corinthians).

Part 4: Evaluating Modern Tongues and Concluding the Case for Cessationism

We've now worked through the biblical teaching on the gift of tongues—especially in Acts and 1 Corinthians—and compared it to what is commonly practiced today. We've seen that tongues in Scripture are always **intelligible, human languages** given supernaturally by the Spirit, often as signs during key

moments of redemptive history. But does what we see in today's charismatic movement match that? Let's explore this final piece.

I. Modern Tongues vs. Biblical Tongues

Even if one believes the gifts continue today, Paul gave **very specific instructions** for how tongues should be used in the church:

- **Only two or at most three** people should speak in tongues during a service (1 Cor. 14:27).
- They must **speak one at a time**, never simultaneously.
- **An interpreter must be present**; otherwise, the speaker must keep silent (v. 28).
- The use of tongues must reflect the **order and peace** of God (v. 33).

Yet, how many charismatic churches follow these clear biblical commands? Instead, it's common to see **many people speaking at once**, often with **no interpretation**, in complete violation of Paul's instructions. This alone disqualifies much of modern practice from being biblical.

But more importantly, the **nature** of modern tongues differs entirely. Most "tongues-speaking" today involves **free vocalization**—repeating syllables or sounds without structure or meaning. This isn't what we see in Acts or 1 Corinthians, where tongues were **known human languages** spoken by people who had never studied them.

II. What Is Free Vocalization?

Free vocalization refers to making repeated syllables or nonsensical sounds—often learned or coached. Some are even told to "prime the pump" by repeating phrases like "*tie my tie*" until speech starts to flow. This can create a feeling of

spiritual connection or emotional release, but it's not the supernatural, Spirit-given language seen in Scripture.

In fact, **other religions and cults** practice similar forms of speech—often accompanied by physical shaking, shouting, or falling down. This shows that emotional experience alone is not a sign of divine activity.

Even respected theologians like **Sinclair Ferguson** and **Ed Clowney** recognize that while free vocalization may not be demonic in every case, it is **not the biblical gift of tongues**. At best, it induces a sense of emotional well-being that's then **misinterpreted as supernatural**.

III. The Real Danger: Interpretation and Authority

The true danger of modern tongues comes when someone **interprets** these vocalizations and claims, "This is a word from the Lord." If the sounds weren't a real language to begin with, then the interpretation is **not from God**—yet it may still be treated as divine authority.

That opens the door for confusion and even heresy. Some will interpret tongues to claim new revelations like:

- "God told me to sell the church building."
- "God is giving us new doctrine."
- "God told me I am a god."

At this point, we've crossed from **innocent misunderstanding** to **dangerous deception**, because we are **putting words in God's mouth** and undermining the authority and sufficiency of Scripture.

IV. Innocent Misunderstanding or Something Worse?

What if someone sincerely believes they are speaking in tongues during private prayer? Should we assume it's demonic? Not necessarily. Many Christians who love the Lord and believe the gospel may genuinely believe they are experiencing the gift. But they are **sincerely mistaken**. They are not speaking in angelic or human languages. They're simply engaging in **emotional vocalization**, often encouraged by peer pressure or church tradition.

However, **if those vocalizations are claimed to be divine revelation**, the danger becomes very real. We cannot claim, "Thus saith the Lord," if the words do not come from Him.

V. Have the Gifts Ceased? The Case for Cessationism

Throughout the New Testament, tongues, prophecy, and miraculous healings were **sign gifts** given during the **foundational period of the church**. Once the apostles had laid the foundation, and Scripture was complete, these gifts were no longer necessary.

We now have God's **full and final revelation** in the 66 books of Scripture.

Here's the summary:

- **Tongues**: Originally, the gift was the ability to speak God's Word in a human language unknown to the speaker. Today, that's been replaced with **free vocalization—a watered-down imitation**.
- **Prophecy**: New Testament prophecy was **infallible divine speech**, but today it's often presented as **fallible impressions or guesses**—again, a **lesser version**.

- **Healing:** In the Bible, the blind received sight, the dead were raised. Today, it's often about **back pain relief** or **mild symptoms**, and not the kind of miraculous, public healing seen in Acts.

In all three cases, the modern versions are **not the biblical gifts**. They are **diluted substitutes**, often created to maintain a theology that these gifts must still exist.

VI. Final Thoughts: Scripture Is Enough

In closing, it's important to remember that **Scripture is sufficient**. If someone says, "God told me He loves His church," we don't need a tongue or prophecy to affirm that. **We already know it—from the Bible.**

As Clowney said, it's entirely possible that the apostolic gift of tongues has ceased, even if millions of Christians believe they now possess it. That belief does not make it true.

And ultimately, the decision about whether tongues still exist today must not be based on **emotion, tradition, or personal experience**—but on **clear biblical exegesis**. When we compare today's practices with the biblical record, it becomes unmistakably clear:

The gift of tongues has ceased.

Final Summary: What We've Learned About the Gift of Tongues

Over the course of this study, we examined the gift of tongues in Scripture and compared it with modern claims and practices.

Here is what we've learned:

1. **Biblical tongues were real human languages**, supernaturally spoken by those who had not learned them. This was clearly demonstrated in Acts 2, 10, and 19, and defined by the Greek word *glōssa*.
2. **Tongues were a form of divine revelation**, equivalent in authority to prophecy when interpreted. Since prophecy has ceased with the completion of Scripture, tongues—being a form of prophecy—must have ceased as well.
3. **Context, not content, explains differences** between Acts and 1 Corinthians. In Acts, the audience understood the languages; in Corinth, interpretation was needed. Both referenced the same gift, not two different ones.
4. **Modern tongues do not match the biblical gift**. Today's versions often involve free vocalization—unstructured syllables or sounds—with no connection to known human languages. These practices, though often sincere, are not the miraculous gift seen in the New Testament.

Therefore, when evaluated biblically and theologically, we must conclude that the **true, apostolic gift of tongues has ceased**, having served its purpose in the foundational era of the church.

*Let us rest in the **sufficiency of Scripture** and remain grounded in what God has clearly revealed through His Word.*

Video

Understanding γλῶσσα (*glōssa*): The Biblical Gift of Tongues and the Myth of a Heavenly Prayer Language

The topic of speaking in tongues remains one of the most controversial and misunderstood subjects in the church today. At the center of this confusion lies the Greek word γλῶσσα (*glōssa*), which is the New Testament term translated as “tongue” or “language.” While many modern Christians—especially within charismatic and Pentecostal circles—believe that speaking in tongues refers to an ecstatic, heavenly, or angelic prayer language, the biblical and linguistic evidence for such a claim is lacking. This essay will explore the true meaning of *glōssa* in Scripture, show how it consistently refers to **human languages**, and explain why the concept of a mystical, heavenly prayer language contradicts the biblical use of the term.

The Meaning of *Glōssa* in Greek

The Greek word γλῶσσα (*glōssa*) carries two primary meanings:

1. The physical **tongue** (as in the bodily organ), and
2. A **language or dialect** spoken by a specific group of people.

In both secular Greek usage and New Testament Greek, when *glōssa* is used in the context of communication, it clearly and consistently refers to **intelligible human language**. According

to **Thayer's Greek Lexicon**, it is "the language or dialect used by a particular people distinct from that of other nations." Likewise, the authoritative **BDAG lexicon** defines it as "speech characteristic of a particular people group, i.e., language."

In short, there is no lexical evidence that *glōssa* ever referred to ecstatic or angelic sounds disconnected from human communication.

Scriptural Evidence: Tongues as Human Language

Acts 2:4–11 – The Day of Pentecost

The most explicit and definitive account of tongues occurs in **Acts 2** at Pentecost. The apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other *tongues* (*glōssais*) "as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). Jews from every nation heard them:

"Every man heard them speak in his own language... we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:6,11, KJV).

This was not gibberish. It was not angelic speech. It was **real, known human languages** spoken supernaturally by men who had never learned them. The purpose was evangelistic—serving as a miraculous sign that validated the apostles' message and fulfilled the prophecy of Joel.

Acts 10:46 and Acts 19:6

In both Acts 10 (Cornelius' household) and Acts 19 (Ephesian disciples), individuals speak in *tongues* after receiving the Holy Spirit. These events are linked back to Acts 2, as Peter declares that Cornelius' household received the Spirit "**just as we have**" (Acts 10:47). The implication is that the **same**

phenomenon occurred—speaking in **foreign languages**.

1 Corinthians 12–14

In 1 Corinthians, Paul regulates the use of tongues in the church. While the Corinthian misuse of the gift had led to confusion, Paul never redefines tongues as mystical speech. In fact, he reinforces its nature as language by requiring **interpretation** (1 Cor. 14:13, 27–28), and using the word *hermēneia*, which means **translation**. The entire problem was that people were speaking in languages unknown to the congregation and **no one could understand** unless someone interpreted.

Paul even compares uninterpreted tongues to foreign speech that sounds like barbarian language (1 Cor. 14:11), further reinforcing the point: tongues are **actual languages**—not heavenly utterances.

What About the “Tongues of Angels”? (1 Corinthians 13:1)

Many argue for a heavenly or angelic prayer language based on **1 Corinthians 13:1**:

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass...” (KJV)

This verse is often cited as proof that Paul and others spoke in **angelic languages**. However, when read in context, it becomes clear that Paul is using **hyperbole**—a rhetorical exaggeration to emphasize the **supremacy of love**.

In the next verses, Paul continues the pattern:

- “If I have **prophetic powers** and understand **all mysteries** and **all knowledge...**”

- “If I have **all faith**, so as to **remove mountains...**”

These are not literal claims. Paul is saying: “Even if I could do the impossible... but lacked love, I am nothing.” The “tongues of angels” line follows the same pattern. Paul is not stating that he or others speak in angelic languages. He is saying that **even if he could**, it would be meaningless without love.

There is no scriptural evidence that the Corinthian church—or any other New Testament believer—ever spoke in a language of angels. Nor are we given any biblical example of angelic language being spoken or interpreted.

Is Tongues a Private Prayer Language?

Another claim is that tongues are meant for **private prayer**, even if not understood. Some base this on **1 Corinthians 14:2**:

“For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him...”

Again, context is key. Paul is not praising this kind of speaking—he’s correcting it. The whole chapter aims to bring **order and clarity** to chaotic worship services. Paul’s point is that **uninterpreted tongues** are unhelpful in church because no one understands them—not even the speaker himself (v. 14).

He even tells those who cannot interpret to **keep silent** in the church (v. 28), reinforcing the idea that **intelligibility** is essential. Paul values **edification of others** more than personal experience (v. 19), saying:

“Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding... than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue” (1 Cor. 14:19, KJV).

If Paul saw tongues as a personal prayer language, he certainly would not discourage its use to this degree in the gathered church.

The Dangers of Redefining the Gift

Redefining tongues as angelic, ecstatic, or private prayer language opens the door to subjective and dangerous claims. If someone believes their spontaneous syllables are direct communication from God, and someone else interprets them as prophecy, it becomes indistinguishable from **false revelation**. This undermines the **sufficiency of Scripture** and the finality of God's Word.

Conclusion: Tongues Were Human Languages, Not Heavenly Speech

The weight of biblical evidence is clear:

- **γλῶσσα (*glōssa*)** refers to real, intelligible **human languages**.
- In **every instance** where tongues appear in Scripture, they serve as a sign to authenticate God's work in the early church.
- There is **no evidence** in the New Testament for ecstatic or angelic languages being spoken.
- Claims of private prayer languages are inconsistent with Paul's emphasis on clarity, order, and edification.

Therefore, any modern practice that does not involve the **miraculous ability to speak an unlearned human language** cannot be the biblical gift of tongues.

*Let us be committed to what Scripture actually teaches—not what tradition or experience may lead us to feel. And let us find our assurance not in ecstatic speech, but in the **clear**,*

Response: Why the Cessation of Tongues Is Biblical Even Without a Direct Verse

1. Not Every Doctrine Is Based on One Verse

First, it's important to remember that **not all biblical truths are taught by a single, explicit statement**. For example, the doctrine of the Trinity is not found in one verse—it is formed by the **consistent witness of the whole Bible**. Likewise, the **cessation of tongues** is not taught in a single “proof text” that says *“tongues shall cease at the end of the first century”*, but it is clearly implied when we examine the purpose, function, and historical role of the gift within the redemptive plan of God.

2. Tongues Were a Sign Gift Meant for the Foundation of the Church

Paul tells us in **Ephesians 2:20** that the church is:

“built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.”

The gifts of tongues, prophecy, and miracles were given to **confirm the gospel message** and **authenticate the apostles** during the **foundational period** of the church. This is consistent with:

- **Hebrews 2:3–4** – God bore witness to the gospel “*by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*”

Once the **foundation** was laid, there was no longer a need for **ongoing signs** to validate it. You don’t keep laying a foundation after the building is already standing.

3. The Nature of Tongues Makes Continuation Impossible Today

As we saw in the study of **γλῶσσα** (*glōssa*), the gift of tongues was the **miraculous ability to speak a real human language** that the speaker had not learned. If this gift were still in operation today, we would expect to see people suddenly speaking fluent Chinese, Swahili, or Russian without having ever studied those languages.

But that’s not what’s happening in the modern charismatic movement. What we see today is **free vocalization**, often repetitive syllables that **don’t resemble any known language**, and this falls far short of the biblical gift.

So the question isn’t just “Where does it say it stopped?”—it’s also “**Where is the biblical gift still happening?**” And there is no credible evidence that it is.

4. 1 Corinthians 13:8–10 – A Prophecy of Cessation

Some point to **1 Corinthians 13:8–10**:

“Love never fails. But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away... when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”

Paul **does** say that tongues *will cease*. The debate centers on **when**.

Charismatics argue “that which is perfect” refers to the second coming of Christ. Cessationists argue it refers to the **completion of God’s revelatory work**, namely the **canon of Scripture**. Here’s why that interpretation makes sense:

- Paul is discussing **gifts of revelation**—prophecy, tongues, and knowledge.
- These gifts were **partial, fragmentary, and temporary** (v. 9).
- Once the **full revelation of God** was given (Scripture), the **need for partial revelation ceased**.
- Historically, after the **apostolic age ended**, these gifts disappeared from the church. Even church fathers like **Chrysostom and Augustine** acknowledged tongues had **already ceased** in their time.

5. The Shift from Sign to Scripture

The early church **depended on signs** because the **New Testament was not yet complete**. But once the canon of Scripture was finished, the church had **all it needed for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness** (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Why continue tongues if their purpose—to confirm the gospel during the apostolic era—has already been fulfilled, and we now have the **completed, sufficient Word of God**?

In Summary

So, when someone says “*Where does it say tongues have ceased?*” you can graciously respond:

“While there isn’t one verse that says, ‘tongues stopped in

*A.D. 100,' Scripture clearly shows that tongues were a **temporary, foundational sign gift** for the early church. Their purpose was to confirm the gospel message and validate the apostles. Once the **foundation was laid**, and the **New Testament was completed**, the gift naturally ceased—just as Paul said it would in 1 Corinthians 13. What people claim as tongues today doesn't match the biblical description, and there's no evidence the true gift continues."*

Can a Demon Possess a Spirit-filled believer?

□ Short Answer:

No, the Bible **does not teach** or give an example of **a demon being cast out of a Spirit-filled believer**. In fact, the New Testament presents a picture in which **true Christians—indwelt by the Holy Spirit—cannot be demon-possessed**.

Let's unpack that with biblical clarity.

1. Who Did Jesus and the Apostles Cast Demons Out Of?

In every example in the Gospels and Acts, demons were cast out of people who were **not yet believers**, and certainly not indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Examples:

- **Mark 5:1–20** — The demoniac of the Gadarenes (Legion)
- **Mark 9:17–29** — A boy with an unclean spirit

- **Luke 8:2** – Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus cast out seven demons
- **Acts 16:16–18** – A slave girl with a spirit of divination (Paul casts it out)

□ In **every case**, demon possession occurs **prior to conversion**. None of these people were Spirit-filled believers at the time of the demonic oppression.

2. What Happens When Someone Is Saved?

When someone puts their faith in Christ, several important things happen:

1 Corinthians 6:19

“Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you...”

Romans 8:9

“If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

Colossians 1:13

“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”

Key Takeaways:

- The believer's body becomes the **dwelling place of the Holy Spirit**.
- We are **delivered from the domain of darkness**.
- We belong to Christ and are under **His lordship**, not Satan's.

□ **Implication:** A demon cannot inhabit the same space as the **Holy Spirit**. God does not co-possess people with demons. Light and darkness cannot dwell together (2 Cor. 6:14–16).

3. Can Christians Be Oppressed or Influenced? Yes. Possessed? No.

It's biblical to say that Christians can be:

- **Tempted** by Satan (e.g., 1 Peter 5:8)
- **Accused** by Satan (Revelation 12:10)
- **Harassed or oppressed externally** (e.g., 2 Cor. 12:7 – Paul's thorn in the flesh, possibly demonic)

But **nowhere** in the New Testament are believers said to be **possessed** by demons. There is no teaching or precedent for performing **exorcisms on born-again, Spirit-filled people**.

4. What About People Who Claim They've Seen This?

Many experiences and testimonies get cited, but Scripture—not experience—is our authority.

Some who claim Christians have demons may misunderstand:

- **Sinful habits** or strongholds
- **Mental health struggles**
- **Spiritual oppression**

These are real struggles, but the solution is **biblical sanctification**, not exorcism.

5. Final Word: Scripture Guards the Christian from Fear

1 John 4:4

“Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”

James 4:7

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

The Christian's call is not to fear demonic indwelling but to walk in the Spirit, resist the devil, and stand in the power of Christ.

Conclusion:

The Bible does **not** teach that demons can indwell Spirit-filled Christians. It does **not** instruct us to cast demons out of believers. Every example of exorcism is directed toward **unbelievers**, and every passage describing the indwelling of the Holy Spirit presents it as **incompatible with demonic occupation**.

If someone is truly saved, they are already delivered. They don't need a demon cast out—they need to walk in the Spirit and be renewed in the truth of God's Word.

Question Regarding Mark 16:17 ...***they shall speak with new tongues.***

“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new

tongues;”

What This Verse Is Saying

Jesus is speaking after His resurrection, and this verse is part of a passage often called the **“Long Ending of Mark”** (Mark 16:9–20). In verse 17, Jesus lists **signs** that would accompany those who believe:

- **Casting out demons**
- **Speaking with new tongues**
- Later verses mention taking up serpents, surviving poison, and healing the sick.

The mention of **“new tongues”** here refers to **new, previously unlearned human languages**—just like we see fulfilled in **Acts 2** at Pentecost. The phrase implies that those who believe will have supernatural ability to speak languages they did not previously know, as a **sign** validating the gospel in the early church.

This was fulfilled:

- In **Acts 2**, the apostles spoke in known languages.
- In **Acts 10** and **Acts 19**, Gentiles and others received the Spirit and also spoke in tongues.

Important Context and Interpretation Notes

1. Descriptive, Not Prescriptive

Mark 16:17 is not prescribing what every believer will do for all time, but describing **signs that accompanied the spread of**

the gospel in the apostolic era.

Not every believer in the New Testament cast out demons or spoke in tongues. Paul even asks in **1 Corinthians 12:30**:

*“Do all speak with tongues?” – implying, **no**, not all do.*

2. The Long Ending of Mark: Textual Note

Verses **9–20** of Mark 16 are absent from some of the **earliest and most reliable Greek manuscripts**, such as *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Vaticanus*. Many scholars believe this ending may have been **added later** to summarize post-resurrection appearances and apostolic miracles.

That said, the teachings in this passage are consistent with truths found elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g., tongues in Acts, healing in James 5). But it's important to interpret Mark 16:17 **through the lens of clear, doctrinal texts** like Acts and 1 Corinthians.

Conclusion: What Is Mark 16:17 Saying About Tongues?

- Jesus is saying that **miraculous signs** will accompany the spread of the gospel, including **speaking in new (unlearned) languages**.
- This prophecy is fulfilled in **Acts**, especially at Pentecost.
- These signs served to **confirm the message and the messengers** during the early, foundational period of the church.
- It is not teaching that **all believers at all times** will speak in tongues.

So, Mark 16:17 affirms the legitimacy of tongues as a sign

gift, but it must be understood **within the context** of its purpose in the apostolic age—not as an ongoing universal experience for all believers.

Where Does “Unknown Tongue” Appear in 1 Corinthians 14 (KJV)?

Here are the 6 verses where “*unknown tongue*” appears in the KJV:

- **1 Cor. 14:2** – “For he that speaketh in an *unknown tongue* speaketh not unto men, but unto God...”
- **1 Cor. 14:4** – “He that speaketh in an *unknown tongue* edifieth himself...”
- **1 Cor. 14:13** – “Let him that speaketh in an *unknown tongue* pray that he may interpret.”
- **1 Cor. 14:14** – “If I pray in an *unknown tongue*, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.”
- **1 Cor. 14:19** – “I had rather speak five words... than ten thousand words in an *unknown tongue*.”
- **1 Cor. 14:27** – “If any man speak in an *unknown tongue*, let it be by two, or at the most by three...”

In every case, the word “**unknown**” is **italicized**, showing it was **added** by the translators to help clarify the sense of the passage.

Why Did the KJV Translators Add the Word “Unknown”?

The translators likely added “unknown” to reflect the context:

- Paul was discussing people speaking in **foreign languages** that the **local congregation did not understand**.
- The original Greek just says “*glōssē*” (tongue/language),

without the word “unknown”.

- The KJV translators added “unknown” to signal that this **wasn’t the native tongue** of the hearers in Corinth.

They did NOT mean “unknown” in the mystical sense—as in a supernatural or heavenly language—but simply **a language not understood** by the people present.

So “unknown” meant unknown to the congregation, not unknown to humanity.

How Is This Misused Today?

Many in the **modern charismatic or Pentecostal movement** point to the phrase “unknown tongue” and say:

“See! This is a spiritual prayer language that no human understands—it’s just between me and God.”

However, this interpretation **relies on a misunderstanding**:

- It treats the **added English word** (“unknown”) as if it were part of the inspired Greek text.
- It **overlooks Paul’s consistent theme** in 1 Corinthians 14: the need for **understanding and interpretation** so the church is edified.

□ What Does Paul Actually Say in Context?

Let’s clarify Paul’s meaning by the context:

□ 1 Corinthians 14:2 (KJV):

“For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him...”

Paul isn't saying the language is **mystical** or **angelic**—he's saying:

- If you speak in a language that **no one in the room understands**, only **God understands** you.
- The **lack of understanding** makes the speech **unfruitful** for the church.

Original Greek Word: γλῶσσα (*glōssa*)

- *Glōssa* always means **language**—a known, structured language of a people or nation.
- There is **no indication** in 1 Corinthians 14 that Paul is introducing a new category of language (e.g., “heavenly languages”).
- Every time Paul discusses tongues, he insists on the **need for interpretation**, proving he is not talking about incomprehensible gibberish.

What's the Right Way to Understand “Unknown Tongue”?

Misunderstood View	Biblical Contextual Meaning
A mystical prayer language only God understands	A foreign human language not understood by the hearers

Misunderstood View	Biblical Contextual Meaning
Supernatural language of angels	No such language is referenced— <i>glōssa</i> means human language
Proof of spiritual depth or maturity	Without interpretation, it's unfruitful and unedifying (v. 14)
Private devotional tool	Paul focuses on edification of the church , not personal experience

So Why Does “Unknown” Matter?

Because it becomes a **launchpad for doctrinal error** if misunderstood.

Adding “unknown” (even helpfully) has led some to:

- Justify **unbiblical practices** (e.g., public gibberish without interpretation).
- Claim a **private prayer language** that bypasses understanding—when Paul actually argues *against* such speech in public worship (1 Cor. 14:19).
- Create a category of **tongues** that **never existed** in Scripture.

Helpful Summary

- The word “**unknown**” in the KJV is **not in the Greek text**.
- It was added to signal a **foreign language not understood by the hearers**.
- Paul’s consistent point in 1 Corinthians 14 is: **if no one understands it, it doesn’t help—so interpretation is required**.
- There is **no biblical basis** for an “unknown tongue” being a **mystical, heavenly prayer language**.

- The misuse of that one added word has led many into **theological confusion** about the nature of tongues.
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Pagan Religions as Well Spoke in Gibberish – A Tongue That Was Not a Human Language

A crucial point that helps bring clarity to the modern debate about the gift of tongues, it is **historically documented** that many **pagan religions and cults practiced ecstatic speech**, or what some might call *gibberish*—utterances that were **not real human languages**. Here's a clear, biblical and historical breakdown of this issue:

1. Ecstatic Speech in Pagan Religions

Historical Evidence

Long before and during the time of the New Testament, **various pagan religions practiced ecstatic utterances** as part of their spiritual rituals. These were emotional, spontaneous, and often **incoherent strings of syllables**, produced during **trances or altered states**.

Examples include:

- **The Oracle of Delphi** (Greek): The priestess of Apollo, called the **Pythia**, would enter a trance and utter ecstatic sounds which priests would “interpret” as divine messages.
- **Bacchic and Dionysian cults**: Worshippers would

experience **emotional frenzy**, shout, dance, and speak in wild utterances they believed were inspired by the gods.

- **Hinduism and Buddhism** (even in ancient forms): Included **mantra chanting** or **ecstatic sounds** to invoke spiritual feelings or enlightenment.
- **Shamanistic practices**: In various tribal religions, shamans have long used **non-linguistic utterances** during spiritual ceremonies.

Key Point:

*These utterances were **not structured languages**, but **ecstatic vocalizations**—similar to what is practiced in some charismatic circles today under the label of “tongues.”*

2. Contrast With the Biblical Gift of Tongues

Biblical tongues (Greek: *glōssa*) are real human languages.

- Acts 2:8 – “How hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?”
- The miracle was that people heard **actual dialects** (Parthians, Medes, Elamites, etc.).
- In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul insists that tongues must be **interpreted** (translated), which only makes sense if the utterance has **linguistic meaning**.

Biblical tongues are purposeful, God-given revelation.

- They edify when interpreted (1 Cor. 14:5).

- They are under the speaker's control—not uncontrollable or chaotic (1 Cor. 14:32–33).
- They serve as a **sign**, not an emotional experience (1 Cor. 14:22).

3. Why This Matters Theologically

If **pagan religions** produced *ecstatic speech*, and modern charismatic practice **closely resembles** that speech—yet differs significantly from the **biblical pattern**—we have a serious issue:

*Could the modern practice of “tongues” in many churches be more similar to **pagan ecstatic utterance** than to the **apostolic gift of languages**?*

This is not a light accusation—but it is worth seriously considering when:

- Modern tongues are unintelligible
- Not translatable
- Practiced widely **without interpretation**
- Treated as a **personal prayer language**, often in emotional or trance-like worship settings

None of that reflects what we see in Acts or 1 Corinthians.

Caution From Church History

Even early church fathers like **Chrysostom (4th century)** noted that **tongues had ceased**, and warned against **imitations**. The church has historically recognized that spiritual gifts were **unique to the apostolic era** and should be carefully evaluated against Scripture.

Conclusion: Two Very Different Phenomena

Biblical Tongues	Pagan Ecstatic Speech
Real, translatable human language	Gibberish or unintelligible vocalizations
Given by the Holy Spirit	Induced through emotion, trance, or ritual
Edifies others when interpreted	Creates self-focused emotional experiences
Controlled and orderly (1 Cor. 14)	Often chaotic, frenzied, and uncontrolled
A sign to authenticate divine message	A tool to invoke deities or spiritual ecstasy

Bottom Line:

*The presence of ecstatic speech in **pagan religions** shows that **not all supernatural-sounding utterances are from God**. The fact that these practices **pre-date Pentecost** and are **functionally similar** to many modern “tongues” should raise red flags.*

So, when someone asks, “*What’s the harm in speaking in tongues if it feels spiritual?*”, the answer is:

- Because **not all spiritual-feeling experiences are biblical**, and some may even mirror pagan practices.
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