

## ***The Church of the Servant King***

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### ***Survey of the Bible Series – Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians***

(SB\_1Cor14 – Orderly Conduct in the Assembly of Believers)

#### **INTRODUCTION**

As we have previously observed, the so-called gift of “tongues” was actually the supernaturally given ability of an individual to instantaneously speak in a “language” which the individual had not previously spoken. The Greek word *glossa* refers to the literal tongue in such passages as Acts 2:26 and 1 Corinthians 14:9 **and** to a known “language” in such passages as Acts 2:6, 11 and Rom. 14:11.<sup>1</sup>

The gift of speaking in tongues was one of the “sign gifts” – i.e. a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit associated with the last days of the Age of Israel in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah and His Kingdom. We have also noted in previous studies the relationship between the subject of the gift of “tongues,” the transition period, the Jewish Apostles to Israel, the Apostle to the Gentiles – Paul, and the eventual cessation of the gift within the early days of the present dispensation. The gift of “tongues” most likely ceased by A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans – an event that forced the cessation of Jewish rituals and traditions surrounding the Temple. These Jewish rituals and traditions were still being observed by Jews who did not accept the resurrected Jesus as the Messiah. Even believers in the resurrected Jesus who identified Him as the Messiah may have continued to observe Jewish rituals and traditions as did the Apostle Paul on occasion; however, as Paul made clear, such rituals and traditions had no salvific benefit.

There are different views within dispensational circles regarding these topics. For instance, there are different flavors of the Acts 2 position (e.g. Progressive Dispensationalism, Classic Dispensationalism, Revised Dispensationalism) and different flavors of the mid-Acts position (e.g. the dual program view and the single program view) just to mention a few. Adherents to each of the various views attempt to reconcile their positions with the numerous questions that surround this subject including the question of why tongues continued to be practiced after their initial manifestation at Pentecost.

One’s views on the subject and one’s answer to that question form one’s paradigm that frames an interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14. Without re-examining each of these subjects in detail again, let me simply state the following points that are consistent with my present understanding, then we will proceed to an examination of 1 Corinthians 14.

- The present Gentile-centric dispensation began with the Apostle Paul who was the recipient of the unique Truth associated with this intercalated age.
- Prior to Paul’s ministry, “tongues” were a sign gift associated with the kingdom gospel and the last days of the Age of Israel (Acts 2:16-21; 3:19ff; cf. Joel 2:28-32).<sup>2</sup>

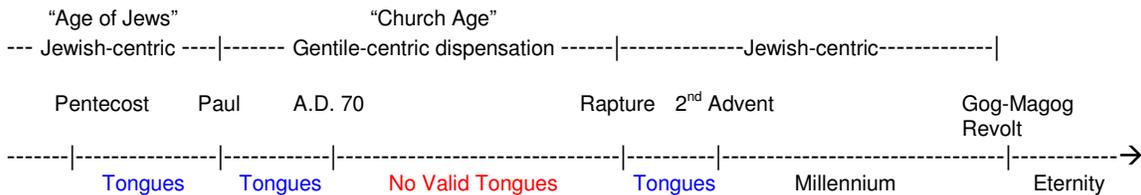
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<sup>1</sup> See *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* by Walter Bauer, 162.

<sup>2</sup> Note that these passages reference a “pouring forth” or a “pouring out” of the Holy Spirit upon man during the “last days.” It is important to note the distinction between this “pouring out” of the Holy Spirit which is associated with the Jewish-centric dispensations of human history and the “filling by means of the Holy Spirit” (a filling with the character of Christ) which is associated with the Gentile-centric dispensation of human history. The latter is normative for this dispensation and is mentioned in only one passage – Ephesians 5:18. The Greek syntax of the phrase “filled with the Holy Spirit” in Ephesians 5:18 is unique and distinct and is designed to highlight the Holy Spirit as the instrument that accomplishes the filling rather than the Holy Spirit being the content of the filling. For more information on this subject, please see the series entitled “Spiritual Life of the Believer.”

Acts 2:16-21; 3:19-21	Joel 2:28-32
<p>2:16 but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 17 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE <b>LAST DAYS,</b>' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; 18 EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS <u>POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT</u> And they shall prophesy. 19 'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. 20 'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, <b>BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME.</b> 21 'AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.'</p> <p>3:19 "Therefore <u>repent</u> and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, <u>in order that times of refreshing may come</u> from the presence of the Lord; 20 and <u>that He may send Jesus,</u> the Christ appointed for you, 21 whom heaven must receive <u>until the period of restoration of all things</u> about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.</p>	<p>28 "It will come about after this [<i>vv. 12-17 – a call to repentance</i>] That I will <u>pour out My Spirit</u> on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions.</p> <p>29 "Even on the male and female servants I will <u>pour out My Spirit</u> in those days.</p> <p>30 "I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire and columns of smoke.</p> <p>31 "The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood <b>Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.</b></p> <p>32 "And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the LORD has said, Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.</p>

- Once the present, Gentile-centric dispensation had been inaugurated through the Apostle Paul, the gift of “tongues” continued for a period – a period of perhaps several decades.



- The purpose of the continued manifestation of this gift during these early days of the “church age” – to serve as a “**sign**” to unbelieving Jews.
- The gift most likely ceased at least by A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed.

Given that context, we will examine Paul’s argument in chapter 14. This important chapter deals primarily with two subjects: (1) the superiority of prophecy to speaking in tongues (vv. 1-25) and (2) orderly conduct in public worship (vv. 26-40).

Chapter 13 highlighted the fact that prophecy, tongues, and all spiritual gifts must be exercised in love. Since the Corinthians were coveting and abusing the gift of tongues, Paul argues in chapter 14 that prophesying was to be preferred over speaking in tongues because prophesying can be understood by all; however, without an interpreter, the use of tongues cannot be understood by anyone. This is the reason that Paul stressed the need for an interpreter whenever the gift of tongues was being exercised in the local assembly.

## **THESIS STATEMENT: THE SUPERIORITY OF PROPHECY TO THE GIFT OF TONGUES (VV. 1-5)**

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. **2** For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. **3** But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. **4** One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. **5** Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying. (1 Cor 14:1-5)

Verse 1 sums up what Paul had just written about love and it resumes the thought in chapter 12:31 (“*But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way*”) by restating that exhortation.

*Distinctions between verbs “pursue” and “eagerly desire”* – In making the transition from the thirteenth chapter, Paul uses a strong verb in verse 1 – “pursue” (*dioko* – Gr. διωκω) – as he charges them to seek *agape* love. The verb *dioko* (translated “pursue”) means “to impel” or “to set in motion” and it carries the idea of promoting a cause such as in Romans 9:30-31 where Paul uses it to highlight the zeal with which the Jews sought after a righteousness in contrast to the Gentiles.<sup>3</sup> The verb *dioko* (translated “pursue”) is a stronger verb than the following one (*dzeloo* – Gr. ζηλώω) translated “eagerly desire” which is applied to seeking spiritual gifts. This highlights the priority of *agape* love. So, the desire for the “gift” of prophecy or the function of “prophesying” was encouraged secondarily.<sup>4</sup>

*Communication that is understood is more edifying to all than communication that is not understood* – In verses 1-4, Paul elaborates on the inferiority of the gift of tongues that had been improperly elevated by the Corinthians. Paul encouraged them to desire and pursue more important gifts. His point was that *intelligible* inspired speech (i.e. prophecy) is superior to *unintelligible* inspired speech (i.e. “tongues”) in the assembly. In this whole comparison Paul was dealing with the gift of tongues that was being exercised in Corinth apart from the accompanying gift of the interpretation of tongues.

*Corinthian experience was distinct from experience at Pentecost* – At Pentecost, some of the Jews who had assembled spoke in tongues and others who had arrived from regions where those languages were spoken understood and received edification because they heard of God's

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<sup>3</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> It has been my observation that there has been confusion introduced into the discussion of this passage when writers, theologians and pastors fail to explain distinctions between the “gift” of prophecy and the activity of prophesying. Just as there is a distinction between the “gift” of evangelist and the activity of “evangelizing,” we should note a distinction between the “gift” of prophecy and the activity of “prophesying.” If “prophesying” is defined in a very general way to mean “proclaiming the truth,” then, of course, all believers are to “prophesy,” just as all believers have a responsibility to evangelize. However, great confusion has been introduced into the discussion of whether such spiritual gifts as “tongues” and “prophecy” are still valid today due in large part to the fact that these distinctions and definitions are not made clear. When a believer is trying to discover their spiritual gift, the failure to recognize these distinctions can lead to an improper focus and confusion of purpose in the Christian life. In addition, believers who are trying to discern their spiritual gift must recognize that several valid spiritual gifts today have areas in which there may be similarity of function. For instance, the believer with the spiritual gift of exhortation will “proclaim the truth” just as will the believer who has some other communication gift – either one of the temporary gifts such as “prophecy” or one of the permanent gifts such as “evangelist.” However, that similarity in function does not mean that the different spiritual gifts are identical.

mighty deeds in their native languages (Acts 2:1-11). Interpreters were unnecessary at the Pentecost event (cf. Acts 10:46; 19:6).

However, evidently what was taking place in the Corinthian church was different from what took place on the day of Pentecost. In Corinth, and perhaps in other early churches, believers were speaking in tongues among other believers who did not understand the languages. An interpreter was necessary for those present to understand and benefit from what the tongues-speaker was saying in a foreign language (vv. 5, 13).

*Another important point* – Paul used "tongues" (*glossa* – Gr. γλῶσσα) and "languages" (*phonē* – Gr. φωνή) interchangeably in this passage (cf. vv. 2, 10, 11, 13, et al.). This is an important proof that tongues were languages.

*2 For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.*

*Other important distinctions* – We see this in verse 2 where Paul argues that by speaking in "tongues," the speaker is talking only to God (cf. Rom 8:26) in a "tongue" (note the singular noun) – i.e., in a language that was unknown to other people in the assembly, who could not understand what was said since they did not speak that language. Many have attempted to establish a connection between verse 2 and Paul's teaching in Romans 8:26 where Paul indicates that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with "groanings too deep for words." However, there is no connection between the "groanings" of the Holy Spirit in intercession for the believer and a foreign language (i.e. "tongue") spoken by the believer.<sup>5</sup>

"Mysteries" refers to the deep truths of God's salvation (cf. Acts 2:11 – "Cretans and Arabs--we hear them in our own tongues **speaking of the mighty deeds of God**") and since there was no interpreter, any truth so communicated was hidden from the others in the assembly. "By [or, with] his spirit" (*pneumati*) is not to be understood as referring to the Holy Spirit, who is not mentioned in the context, but to the person's own spirit (vv. 14, 15; cf. Jn 4:24).

*3 But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. 4 One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.*

*Edification of all versus "approbation" lust of the individual* – In verses 3-4, Paul describes the advantage of prophesying. When a believer prophesies, the whole assembly of believers is edified. However, when a believer in the local assembly in Corinth spoke in a "tongue," they were only edifying (*oikodomeo* – Gr. οἰκοδομῶ) or building up themselves in the eyes of others. In other words, it was their approbation lust that was being satisfied – not fellow believers.

*5 Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.*

There is no mention in these verses that the speaker understood the "tongue" or language that was spoken. In fact, the indication is to the contrary. It is not until later in Paul's

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<sup>5</sup> Romans 8:26 – "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." This passage has nothing to do with speaking in another existing language that was not previously known to the speaker, i.e. "tongues." Rather, this passage is referring to the intercessory ministry of the Holy Spirit on behalf of believers. The Greek word translated "intercedes" here (*huperentugchano* – Gr. ὑπερεντυγχάνω) is only used here in all of the New Testament. Perhaps more than anything, this passage highlights the intimate oneness of the Trinity's attributes, especially omniscience, as the heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit commune with each other in perfect harmony.

argument that he addresses the subject of understanding (vv. 13-15). Paul does not disparage the proper use of the gift by the Corinthians since it had its place. Instead, Paul insists in verse 5 that the gift of interpretation should be sought by those who desire to speak in a tongue. If the Corinthians had desired the gift of interpretation, it would have been an indication that they were more interested in the edification of others instead of their own individual approbation.

*Addressing another incorrect argument:* Some have suggested another distinction is being made in these verses. They have claimed that the “tongues” in Acts were foreign languages, but the “tongues” mentioned here in Corinthians were ecstatic utterances, not “languages” but “unintelligible speech.” Of course, this interpretation is an attempt to find justification for their improper practice of *babel* today within the assembly.

There is no basis for this distinction in the biblical text. The terminology used is the same in the book of Acts (authored by Luke) and Corinthians (authored by Paul). Furthermore, the passages make good sense if we take tongues as languages wherever they occur. If someone spoke in a “language” unknown to everyone present and no one could interpret what he was saying, the person speaking was not speaking to men. God knew what he was saying even though no one else did – including the person doing the speaking.

Obviously Paul's concern was the edification of the assembly. He did not disparage the gift of tongues itself, but he put it in its rightful place.

#### ***SUPPORTING ARGUMENT (1 COR 14:6-12)***

**6** But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching? **7** Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? **8** For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? **9** So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. **10** There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. **11** If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me. **12** So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.

#### ➤ *Verse 6 – Paul pauses and summarizes*

**6** *But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?*

Verse 6 serves as a pause in Paul's discourse. Essentially, Paul is saying that unless he speaks intelligibly, there is no benefit at all to those in the assembly. “Revelation,” “knowledge,” “prophecy,” and “teaching” are all intelligible forms of communication. Supernaturally speaking in a language that no one in the assembly spoke or understood was not edifying to anyone – except the speaker in the wrong way, i.e. it appealed to the approbation of the speaker.

#### ➤ *Verses 7-9 – Illustrations using musical instruments*

**7** *Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp?* **8** *For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?* **9** *So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is*

*clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.  
(1 Cor 14:7-9)*

The flute and the harp were well-known and valued musical instruments in Greece. The trumpet has throughout history been used as an instrument by military forces to convey different commands. Producing an intelligible sound on an instrument requires the ability to systematically create differences in pitch, tone and meter.

At best, there might have been some entertainment value derived when one person in the assembly spoke in a language not known to anyone present. It might be similar to listening to someone sing “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” in German or Russian or French if you only speak English and Spanish.

➤ *Verses 10-12 – Direct application to the Corinthians*

***10** There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. **11** If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me. **12** So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.*

*Paul had existing languages in mind – As has been previously noted, Paul used "tongues" (*glossa* – Gr. γλῶσσα) and "languages" (*phonē* – Gr. φωνή) interchangeably and this is an important proof that tongues were languages. Paul had in mind foreign languages that actually existed. *Phonē* (translated “languages”) can at times mean “voices” or “sounds;” however, since Paul also uses *aphonos* (“no kind is without meaning”) in reference to these languages, it is clear that he is referring to existing languages that had meaning if understood by the hearer. The power or strength (*dunamis* – Gr. δυναμις) of a language is in its ability to convey meaning when understood. Therefore, Paul exhorts these believers to strive for the exercise and promotion of those spiritual gifts that edify the entire assembly.*

*An interesting point from the Greek text – Paul begins verse 12 with the phrase that has been translated into English – “So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts...” The word translated “spiritual gifts” is actually the Greek word *pneumatōn* (Gr. πνευματων) which means “spirits.” The translators have interpretively translated this word in a way so as to be synonymous with “spiritual gifts” – the Greek word *pneumatikon* (Gr. πνευματικον).*

*By using the Greek word *pneumatōn*, Paul was probably referring to the Corinthians inordinate desire for a particular manifestation of the Spirit (i.e. tongues) which they considered to be the mark of a “spiritual” Christian. In reality, it was a mark of their “carnality” – a 180 degree reversal of the truth.*

**Principle:** Until the thinking of a new or spiritually immature believer has been transformed with the Truth, that believer is prone to accepting the “lie” of carnal thinking and of the cosmos (collective carnal thought) as the “truth.”

#### **APPLICATION – BELIEVERS (1 COR 14:13-19)**

**13** Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. **14** For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. **15** What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. **16** Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? **17** For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified. **18** I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; **19** however, in the church I desire to

speaking five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.

➤ *Verses 13 & 14 – Pray for interpretation*

**13** Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. **14** For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.

*Pray for interpretation so that there is edification* – Paul urges those who were exercising the gift of speaking in a tongue (existing language, but not known to the speaker) to “pray” for the accompanying ability to interpret what he or she spoke. The interpretation of what was spoken in a tongue would benefit the assembly and the speaker since all would then understand what was spoken.

Public prayer is in view here as it is in the entire chapter (see v. 16). So, at least some of those who were speaking in a tongue were doing so during public prayer. Some may have been also praying in private in a tongue.

Regardless, Paul’s point is interesting and highlights the fact that the Holy Spirit interacts with the *human spirit* (*pneuma* – Gr. πνευμα) to produce praise and thanksgiving to God – even in the case of the believer who had been supernaturally gifted with the ability to speak in a tongue – an existing, but not previously spoken or understood language to the speaker (and the Corinthian assembly in this case). So, the Holy Spirit produced the utterances of praise and thanksgiving using the human spirit of the believer, but the believer did not understand with his or her mind (*nous* – Gr. νοϋς) what was being spoken – emphasized by the phrase “*my mind is unfruitful.*”

➤ *Verses 15-17 – What is the result at the “end of the day?”*

**15** What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. **16** Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? **17** For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified.

If interpretation accompanied the speaking in a tongue, then both the mind and spirit of all would benefit. Otherwise, the “ungifted” (*idiotēs* – Gr. ἰδιότης) could not express agreement (the word “*amen*” means “*it is true*” and is ultimately traceable to praise to the Lord by Jewish believers within the Age of Israel – 1 Chron 16:36; Neh 5:13; 8:6).

It is clear in verse 16 that Paul was speaking about a public worship situation (versus a private prayer). Giving thanks in public worship is important even if no one else joins in, but it is even more important that other believers can join in.

Paul’s argument in these verses and the preceding verses is premised upon the understanding that the “tongues” were existing languages that could be interpreted – not some supernatural *babel* that did not correspond to any existing language. An inordinate interest in a supernatural experience and/or a “feeling” is at the root of the motivation of those today who seek to speak in what they call a tongue. However, modern-day experiences result in an emotionally induced *babel* at best or a demonically inspired utterance at worst (in the case of the unbeliever).

➤ *Verses 18-19 – Paul’s experience with tongues should be an example*

**18** I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; **19** however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.

The Corinthian “tongues enthusiasts” had no basis for rejecting Paul’s arguments and instructions as one who was motivated by the “sour grapes” situation. Paul had the ability (at least for a time) to speak in tongues and would have therefore not been critical of the practice due to jealousy or some other improper motive. Instead, Paul affirms that the gift was valid (for a period of time); however, he did not value it very highly within the assembly of believers – especially when compared to the use of a gift that actually resulted in others being edified such as the gift of prophesy or the function of prophesying.

**APPLICATION – UNBELIEVERS (1 COR 14:20-25)**

**20** Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature. **21** In the Law it is written, "BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME," says the Lord. **22** So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe. **23** Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? **24** But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; **25** the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.

*The need for transformation and the goal of maturity* – In verse 20, the carnally motivated desire to speak in tongues was seen by Paul to be nothing more than a manifestation of their immaturity (cf. 3:1-3).

1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, 3 for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? (1 Cor 3:1-3)

These believers had yet to “put on the new man” in their thinking. They had yet to *internalize* new man thinking and *actualize* that new man thinking into their life situations. In Paul’s letters to the believers in Ephesus and Colossae written a few years later in A.D. 60, Paul continues this theme

20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you **be renewed in the spirit of your mind**, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Eph 4:20-24)

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. (Eph 6:10-13)

8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. 12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.  
(Col 3:8-17)

Based upon these passages, there should be no doubt that the Lord expects believers to grow to maturity and become complete in Christ through the transformation of their thinking. Paul highlights this expectation with the word translated “mature” in verse 20 which is the Greek work *teleios* (Gr. ΤΕΛΕΙΟΣ). This word carries the idea of a goal and in regards to the Christian life, a goal of completion – that of becoming like Christ in His humanity.

*Paul uses an illustration from the Law as an analogy and quotes Isaiah 28:11-12* – Paul selects an example in Hebrew Scripture where a prophet (Isaiah) prophesied regarding how a foreign language would be used to warn unbelieving Israel. It provided a perfect analogy for the purpose of tongues in the early church during the middle portion of the First Century A.D. Note that Paul does not indicate that tongues in the First Century A.D. fulfilled the Isaiah prophecy in any way. Paul just uses the prophecy as an analogy.

The context of Isaiah’s prophecy is the impending invasion of the Northern Kingdom of Israel which occurred in ca. 721 B.C. Israel had refused to listen to the message proclaimed by the prophets to Israel in her native tongue (2 Ki 17:14, 22-23). So, God would deliver a message to Israel using those who spoke a foreign, unintelligible language, yet the message would be clearly understood by Israel when it came. The foreign tongue symbolized God’s discipline of His rebellious and unbelieving people (Deut 28:49).<sup>6</sup> Thus, the foreign language was a sign of God’s discipline of His people (cf. Isa 33:19) and foreigners were the temporary agents of God to Israel and the Jewish people (cf. Isa 5:26, Hab. 1:6; Rom 10:19-21).

14 However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. (2 Ki 17:14)

22 The sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them. 23 until the LORD removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day. (2 Ki 17:22-23)

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<sup>6</sup> Deuteronomy 28 is a parallel passage to Leviticus 26. In Leviticus 26 (specifically verses 14ff), we find the 5 cycles of discipline that are described in the Law to be the nation Israel’s punishment if she failed in her divinely appointed responsibility.

49 "The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand. (Deut 28:49)

You will no longer see a fierce people, a people of unintelligible speech which no one comprehends, of a stammering tongue which no one understands. (Isa 33:19)

26 He will also lift up a standard to the distant nation, and will whistle for it from the ends of the earth; and behold, it will come with speed swiftly. (Isa 5:26)

6 "For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans,  
That fierce and impetuous people  
Who march throughout the earth  
To seize dwelling places which are not theirs. (Hab 1:6)

19 But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says,  
"I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION,  
BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WILL I ANGER YOU."

20 And Isaiah is very bold and says,  
"I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO DID NOT SEEK ME,  
I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME."

21 But as for Israel He says, "ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE." (Rom 10:19-21)

***LET ALL THINGS BE DONE IN A PROPER AND ORDERLY MANNER (1 COR 14:26-40)***

**26** What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. **27** If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; **28** but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. **29** Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. **30** But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. **31** For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; **32** and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; **33** for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. **34** The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. **35** If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church. **36** Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only? **37** If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. **38** But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. **39** Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. **40** But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.

When the assembly met, some might contribute by offering a psalm (a hymn) or a teaching (the gift of teacher) or a revelation (the gift of prophecy) or a tongue and its interpretation (two of the temporary spiritual gifts). Paul then proceeds to provide an orderly model that the church in Corinth could follow.

- First, the believers should permit only two or at the most three interpreted tongues messages. This is in harmony with the inferior contribution that tongues make compared with prophecy.

- Second, the speakers should give them consecutively rather than concurrently to minimize confusion. Note that the Holy Spirit does not overwrite the volition of the person exercising the gift, but is subject to the volition of the speaker.
- Third, the Christians should not allow tongues without interpretation in the church services.
- Fourth, the prophets should minister in an orderly fashion and limit themselves to two or three messages at a service. Everyone else was free to evaluate the content of the message.
- If one prophet was speaking and one seated received a revelation from the Lord, then the first prophet was to cede his or her place to the 2<sup>nd</sup> individual as this was God's mechanism of checking or controlling prophecy – “the spirits of prophets were subject to the prophets.”

With regard to the role of women in the early church, Paul's instructions are very clear. In the interest of order in the church, women were to refrain from speaking. But, the question arises as to how to reconcile Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 14 with his teaching in 1 Corinthians 11 regarding prayer or prophesying by a woman in the assembly meetings. Various positions have been taken by various theologians. However, the context of each passage is the best guide. The context of 1 Corinthians 14 is order in the service and especially order in the exercise of the spiritual gifts of prophecy and tongues.

Rather than calling out a question in the middle of some male or female prophet's message, a woman was to wait and ask her husband about it at home after the service. Presumably unmarried women would ask their fathers or some other man in the church after the service. Men could raise questions or make comments, but too much of this could ruin the order of the service and the edifying value of the message. Consequently Paul asked the women, evidently because of their natural position of subordination, to refrain. It is improper for a woman to speak in church meetings in the situation Paul addressed in the context. That situation is the questioning and perhaps challenging of what a prophet said who was sharing something he or she believed God had given him or her to pass on to the church.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Constable, “Notes on 1 Corinthians,” [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)