

b. With gifts. The thought is that in the lists provided, tongues is unmistakably placed as a lesser gift (12:8-10; 12:28-30). The use of the ordinal numbers in the Greek point emphatically to the fact that tongues is on the lower range of a specific scale. The primacy given it today is inconsistent with the Scriptures. To take a last place gift and insert it in slot number one is entirely unwarranted. God didn't do this, but the modern movements do.

c. With maturity. The believers at Corinth were babes in Christ (3:1-4). Their immaturity comprised one of the basic components of their problem with tongues! This is clear from the text (14:20). The present tense of the verb "be" in this verse shows that they needed to stop being childish in their judgments. They needed to grow up! They needed to develop to mature spiritual persons. It is characteristic of the child to prefer the amusing to the useful and the shining to the solid. This is the sort of spirit displayed by the Corinthians.

Conclusion. Tongues are meaningful languages spoken in the early church (Acts and Corinthians). Their usefulness was served. Growth moves people beyond the elementary grades! It is time to demonstrate this (1 Cor. 13:11, 12). Amen.

THE BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

"Prophecy and Tongues" (2)

1 Cor. 14:1-40

Introduction

1. Here is a subject for which there is no lack of interest today! "Tongues" is getting into the very vitals of many assemblies. Unfortunately, it is apparently one of the sharpest tools of the Evil One. Why? Because it is being employed to divide and break down many an otherwise fine group. God help us!

2. The battleground in this matter is what it is in so many other issues: the Word of God. If experience is to be the norm for Christian doctrine, then what the Bible has to say will be of little value. The need of the hour is a movement back to the Scriptures as the plain and ordinary measure of doctrine and practice! People could have an experience of tongues today, either gibberish or foreign languages, but this would not be the "gift of tongues." Experience must never be used to determine the norm of Christian doctrine!

3. It is our persuasion that the "gift of tongues" ceased exactly like the Bible indicates (1 Cor. 13:8). The middle voice of the verb in that verse points to the fact that tongues simply ran their course and were no longer needed. Any careful study of the Bible will unveil a chasm of difference between the modern movements teaching this "tongues" idea and what the Bible actually affirms the gift to be.

4. To help forward this premise, give your own undivided attention to the following issues of the case. Study the texts and amass the truth as the Bible provides it!

1. The DESCRIPTION of tongues--semantically.

What we are concerned with here is getting to the root of the problem about the terms employed.

a. Lexically. The key word here in the Greek is the one for "tongues." It is found 50 times in the N.T. and used 17 of these in reference to the physical organ. Once it is used of the phenomenon at Pentecost (Acts 2:3). Seven times it is used in Revelation of ethnic groups (cf. 5:9, 7:9, 10:11, 11:9, 13:7, 14:6, 17:15). There are 25 specific instances of it in refer-

ence to the "gift" of tongues (cf. Mark 16:17, Acts 2:4, 10:46; 19:6, and 1 Cor. 12-14 where 20 occurrences are found).

It is interesting that from the semantic point of view, Luke employs the transliterated term "dialect" twice (Acts 2:6, 8) which can only mean a spoken known language. Similarly the term "other" is found (Acts 2:4) which means different in the sense of "kind." Indeed, Paul uses this same word "another" and adds a noun meaning "sort or class" with "tongues" (1 Cor. 12:10). This suggests languages which were known and real.

Surely, the words used by the Spirit in Acts and the same one is used in 1 Corinthians, would point with definiteness to foreign languages which are part of the global scheme since Babel (Gen. 11).

b. Contextually.

1) Tongues in Acts. There is no mention of the word "unknown" in this Book. The geographical location of the people at Pentecost is clear evidence that real languages are at stake; when Peter explains what happened at Caesarea, he refers back to Pentecost (cf. Acts 2 with 10:46 and 11:15). The meaning is the same in both instances. The final reference in Acts is associated with prophesying and this speaks of "content" which reasonably suggests a known foreign language. (Acts 19:6).

2) Tongues in Corinthians. To really get at the meaning of the term here, which is the same one as in Acts, one must understand that Luke and Paul were deeply associated the one with the other. It is unlikely that they would convey different meanings by the use of the same Greek word. The reason for this is that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians while at Ephesus on his third missionary journey and after the incident of tongues (Acts 19). It is reasonable to believe that Paul used the term in Corinthians with the same significance as Luke in Acts. Indeed, there is no reason which can be

raised in connection with the 20 instances of the term being employed in Corinthians which would suggest that it should not be studied in its context as a true language. like in Acts. Although the English versions include the term "unknown" with "tongue" it is not so found in the original. There simply is no such Scriptural syndrome as an "unknown tongue."

c. Comparatively. To compare Acts and Corinthians, some basic reasons for equating tongues in Acts and Corinthians:

- 1) The terminology employed is the same.
- 2) Foreign languages are specifically indicated in Corinthians (12:10; 14:21, 22; cf. with Isa. 28:11, 12).
- 3) Angels spoke a language which man understood. That of men could not be less than theirs (13:1).
- 4) The gift of interpretation would involve translation and/or exposition and this is related to real language.

NOTE: Reproducing a foreign language is not easily counterfitted. Gibberish, on the other hand, could easily be counterfitted. Since Paul was correcting a problem at Corinth, it might be that some were abusing the matter and were actually trying to reproduce the gift and ended up mouthing gibberish (cf. 13:1-3).

2. The RELATION of tongues--vertically.

The question raised here is this: how important are tongues? When one tries to get some kind of scale for them, just how do they measure? Study these items from the Word:-

a. With prophecy. The gift of prophecy is clearly a gift which is higher in rank than tongues (cf. 14:1, 3, 4, 5). If this is not the chief intent of the apostle in this chapter, it certainly is one of his major ones. The only time that tongues would have the same value as prophecy is when the gift of interpretation is also exercised (v. 4). In this sense, then, tongues would be utilized to edify the assembly.