What the New Testament Says About…

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

This study is provided for the purpose of education and clarification, not judgment.

It is our belief that the examination of Scripture will bring a proper understanding to this issue.

All questions may not be answered, but most will be addressed through the light of God’s Word.

This study has been created and written for:
Fort Caroline Christian Church

“Connecting Faith and Family”
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INTRODUCTION:

Speaking in tongues is one subject that is difficult to approach free from presuppositions (beliefs held prior to the study). To get the most from this particular study, we must “divorce” ourselves from any presuppositions and simply allow God’s Word to speak.

Our goal is to discover clear biblical thought on speaking in tongues.

In the process of accomplishing this goal, we will not only clarify what the Bible says, but we will also clarify those thoughts that are simply man’s conjecture and/or opinion.

This study is designed to present students of the Word with the Word. It is designed by a commoner, not a scholar, for commoners not scholars.

If you come with a blank slate (no presuppositions) you will have no problem accepting the Word of Scripture.

The natural process you will encounter through this study has two basic phases. The first phase is the presentation of God’s Word. (This is accomplished and laid out before you through this study.) The second phase requires the student of God’s Word to make any necessary adjustments to their personal belief system so that it matches God’s belief system. This may not be easy to do, but what choice do we have when we are presented with truth? As a Christian, our only choice is to accept the truth. (This can not be done for you. Each individual student must accomplish this with the Holy Spirit’s power.)

Changing personal beliefs can prove to be a difficult challenge. However, this is what true discipleship is all about…becoming a better follower of Jesus Christ…becoming a more consistent follower of Jesus in all areas of the Bible’s teaching.

May God bless you as you begin your journey.

All Scripture in the New Testament pertaining to speaking in tongues will be included in this study.

“In essentials (doctrine) unity, in non-essentials (opinions) liberty, in all things charity.” - Rupertus Meldenius (Peter Meiderlin, the Lutheran priest) 1626

In 1809 Thomas Campbell reworded this statement by saying, “We will speak where the Bible speaks, and we will remain silent where the Bible is silent” or “We will do Bible things in Bible ways” or "Call Bible things by Bible Names."
Section 1: Understanding Biblical “Tongues”

The Purpose of Section One: Establish the Bible’s definition of “tongues”.

Opening Questions for Thought:
1. What is the biblical definition for “tongues?”
2. Are there various meanings for the word “tongues?”
3. Is there biblical support for understanding tongues to include ecstatic utterances?
4. Are biblical tongues still in existence today?

"And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." (Mark 16:17-18)

These words of Jesus tell us that believers (the ones specifically being referenced by Jesus) would speak in “new tongues.” These two words (“new tongues”) stand out in this prophetic statement of Jesus and need to be clearly discerned and defined through biblical context (Greek word meanings) not man’s inference.

Defining “NEW”

In the Greek language there are basically two words for “new.” These two words are: “kainos” and “neos.” The word that is used in Mark 16:17 is the word “kainos.”

Vine’s Expository Dictionary (which will be used for all our definitions in this study) defines these two words for “new”.

“Kainos” emphasizes: “fresh, that which is unaccustomed to, unused”
“Neos” emphasizes: “new in time, never existing before”

Thus, the word “new” used in the proper context of Mark 16:17-18 refers to new and different, not in the sense that these languages had never been heard before or that they were new to the hearers, but that they were new to the speaker, those speaking in the tongue.
Defining “TONGUES”

There are three words in the Greek for “tongues.”

“Glossa” (a noun) is found in Acts 2 when “tongues of fire” appeared above the apostles’ heads. It also refers to the tongue as a speech organ and the supernatural gift of speaking in another language without it having been learned.

“Dialektos” (a noun) refers to another language or dialect.

“Heteroglossos” (an adjective) refers to “other tongues” and is used in 1 Corinthians 14:21. (It is important to note that the word “unknown” (in many translations) is NOT in the original Greek manuscripts and has been added by the translators.)

We can conclude by the use of the Greek words that speaking in “tongues” is a reference to speaking in another intelligible language of mankind. All three of these words are indicative of a native, existing language of mankind. It is interesting to note, despite the Greek’s detail when words have different meanings (as seen in the word “love”) it is THE EXACT SAME ROOT MEANING used every time in the New Testament when “speaking in tongues” is referenced.

3 “They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs--we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" (Acts 2:2-11)

When the first “tongue speakers” spoke, they spoke according to the biblical concept of tongues, that is, they spoke native languages. Look at how many people groups were represented in the crowd that day. How many languages must have been spoken to launch the Gospel into all the world! How wonderful it was that people heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached in a language they spoke and understood! What good would it have been then (and in our day) to have the Gospel preached and not be able to understand it?

Don’t miss this important detail…

Ecstatic utterances (babbling or words with no meaning) did not occur. These languages (tongues) were spoken and heard by human inhabitants of the earth. They identified these languages (tongues) as their own native languages (verse 6). Yet, the men speaking these languages were not from their own homelands (verses 7-8).

6 “Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? 7 Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? 8 Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get
ready for battle? 9 So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. 10 Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. 11 If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me. 12 So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.” (1 Corinthians 14:6-12)

Other information regarding this text will be dealt with in other sections of this study, but the main point here is: without an interpreter, the language (the tongue) is lifeless, without meaning, words spoken into the air. Paul refers to the languages of the world and explains that they have meaning. Paul draws a direct connection between tongues and native, earthly languages.

At this point in our study, (and we will have more to say on this later) we would have to conclude that IF biblical tongues existed today, they would exist consistent with the biblical concept of speaking in tongues. This means that tongues would be other languages of mankind in existent in the world today (i.e. Russian, Spanish, German, French, etc.) There is no evidence in the Bible to support the modern concept of tongues including ecstatic utterances.

### BUILDING BIBLICAL THOUGHT...


2. The identical Greek meaning is supplied at each reference to “tongues” throughout the New Testament.

3. The Bible is silent (providing no hint of existence) regarding “ecstatic utterances” or a “heavenly prayer language” by definition. The Bible provides no other meaning for tongues other than a native language of mankind. If we claim biblical tongues support ecstatic utterances, we do so purely upon human conjecture, not on Scriptural grounds.
Section 2:

The Purpose of Section Two:
Clarify the difference between the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and the gift of speaking in tongues given by the Holy Spirit.

Opening Questions for Thought:
1. What is the difference, if one exists in Scripture, between the Holy Spirit’s gifts and the gift of the Holy Spirit?
2. Why is this difference important to acknowledge?

There is a Scriptural distinction between the gift of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. According to Acts 2:38, the gift of the Holy Spirit is given at the time of our baptism. This is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, Himself. The Holy Spirit gives believers spiritual gifts at conversion for Kingdom purposes. A few of these gifts appear to be outward manifestations for the period of the early church (apostolic times). One of these gifts seems to be speaking in tongues. This difference is illustrated in Acts 8:14-20 where the believers had been baptized into Christ and had received the Holy Spirit, but not the gift of speaking in tongues, which came via the apostle’s laying their hands upon the believers.

14 “When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. 15 When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 16 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 17 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money 18 and said, “Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” 20 Peter answered: “May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!” (Acts 8:14-20)

Look carefully at this Scripture, specifically the words “come upon” in verse 16. This Scripture does not say the believers had not received the Holy Spirit “in” them. It says that the Holy Spirit had not come “upon any of them.” This language (come upon) is quite common throughout the New Testament in reference to the Holy Spirit’s power and giftedness with outward manifestations- i.e. speaking in tongues.

A proper understanding is that the Holy Spirit had not come upon them in an outward manifestation such as speaking in tongues. He was certainly living inside of them having been immersed believers. This understanding is totally consistent with Scripture.

44 “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. 45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” 48 So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.” (Acts 10:44-48)

Here we see the thought of “coming upon” specifically referencing the Gentiles being empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak in tongues. It is referred to as the “gift of the Holy Spirit.” Confusion can
exist if one does not interpret this Scripture through the light given in other Scriptures. (Many have made this mistake by taking one verse of Scripture and developing an entire belief system on it.)

This unusual event at Cornelius’ house was proof that God had opened the door of salvation to the Gentile world. They spoke in other languages, prior to being baptized into Christ. The Holy Spirit had manifested Himself by the fact that He “came upon them.” This was an “outside” manifestation, not an “inside” dwelling. Surely God was opening salvation’s door to all of mankind, not just to the Jews. These Gentile believers were immediately baptized into Christ. Peter refers to these believers receiving the Holy Spirit “just as we have.” He is referring to the Spirit’s gift of speaking in tongues which happened on the Day of Pentecost.

4 “Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.” (Acts 19:4-6)

We will take a more in depth look at this Scripture under “Section 4: Prayer and Laying On of the Apostles’ Hands.” However, it is in this section because it supports the principle that new believers did not necessarily receive this gift of speaking in tongues from the Holy Spirit even though they had received the gift of the Holy Spirit living inside of them. It was only after the Holy Spirit “came on them” that they were able to speak in tongues.

**BUILDING BIBLICAL THOUGHT…**

1. The Bible uses language that specifically highlights the Holy Spirit’s involvement in speaking in tongues such as “coming upon” believers.

2. There is a clear biblical distinction between the indwelling presence of God’s Spirit and the gift of speaking in tongues.
Section 3:  
The Holy Spirit’s Role in Tongues

The Purpose of Section Three:  
Clarify the Holy Spirit’s involvement in speaking in tongues.

Opening Questions for Thought:
1. What is the biblical role the Holy Spirit plays in the event of speaking in tongues?
2. What is the modern role the Holy Spirit plays in the event of speaking in tongues?
3. Why is there a difference between the two?

3 “They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:3-4)

Two things stand out in this passage as the biblical role of the Holy Spirit in speaking in tongues:
1.) The Holy Spirit filled the believers.
2.) The Holy Spirit enabled believers to speak in other tongues.

What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit doing these two things? Acts 2 demonstrates the purpose. It was to present the world with Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

The Holy Spirit has the responsibility to testify about Jesus, not Himself (John 15:26, John 16:13-14). This is where many in the charismatic movement are so off track. They elevate the Holy Spirit rather than Jesus Christ. Many unsuspecting believers are treated and classified as second class citizens in the Kingdom if they are unable to speak in tongues in many charismatic movement churches. Some suggest a lack of true spirituality, yet if you look at recent moral failures in television evangelists of recent years, many are proponents of tongue speaking.

The fact is: it’s all about Jesus, not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit testifies to this fact. This testimony of the Holy Spirit happened in the New Testament by “filling” and “enabling.”

44 “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. 45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, 47 “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” 48 So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.” (Acts 10:44-48)

Here, the Holy Spirit empowered Gentiles to speak in tongues as we have already mentioned. The Holy Spirit was instrumental in testifying through other languages that Jesus is the Christ.

7 “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.” (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)
This Scripture informs us that it is the Spirit who gives spiritual gifts as He determines. Two specifically are worth mentioning for the purpose of our study:

1.) Speaking in different kinds of tongues.
2.) Interpretation of tongues.

The Holy Spirit gives the spiritual gifts to Christians based upon benefit to the church body...the common good. No amount of bargaining with God will change the gifts you have received. No matter how many classes you take on getting the gift of speaking in tongues, it will not make any difference because this was not (and is not) how any spiritual gift is given to believers, including speaking in tongues.

**BUILDING BIBLICAL THOUGHT...**

1. The Holy Spirit, not mankind, is responsible for giving spiritual gifts, including the gift of speaking in tongues.

2. Without the Holy Spirit’s filling and enabling, no speaking in tongues gift would exist.

3. If the Holy Spirit is elevated above Jesus Christ, it is not His biblical role.
Section 4:
Prayer and Laying on of the Apostle’s Hands
(The Transfer of Power)

The Purpose of Section Four:
Clarify the connection between speaking in tongues and the apostle’s touching (laying their hands) on believers.

Opening Questions for Thought:
1. Is there a connection between speaking in tongues and the laying on of apostle’s hands? If so, what is it?
2. Is there any evidence that those who the apostle’s laid their hands upon were able to pass on the gift of speaking in tongues to others by laying on their hands on someone else?

Scripture DOES directly connect speaking in tongues with an apostle laying their hands upon an individual. This would create a problem for modern day tongue speakers considering there are no apostles living today since no one can meet the biblical qualifications found in Acts 1:21-22.

14 “When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. 15 When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money 19 and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!" (Acts 8:14-20)

These believers had received the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, because Acts 2:38 tells us that this is one of the things that happens at our baptism. What they had not received was the gift of speaking in tongues. At the laying on of the apostle’s hands, these believers received the ability to speak in other languages.

Simon saw what had happened and tried to bribe the apostles in such a way that they would lay their hands on him. Simon ASSUMES that he would be able to transfer this power to others, however, NOTHING IN SCRIPTURE SUPPORTS THIS IDEA that a transfer would even work. Thus, there is no evidence that the continual transfer of this power were possible. However, the Bible does clearly state that it was by the apostle’s hands that this gift was given. Simon was purely speculating. He is harshly rebuked for offering money for such a gift. The gift could not be bought, nor would it be sold.

4 “Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.” (Acts 19:4-6)

Again, we see from Scripture another incidence where it was the laying on of the apostles’ hands that imparted the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues. It is interesting that Scripture emphasizes the hands of the apostles being placed upon other believers. New believers had not received this gift (of speaking in tongues) at their baptism. It appears it was a gift that necessitated an apostles’ personal touch.
Once the apostles died out, this gift of speaking in tongues would slowly die out as well. How? Once the apostles died, no other people would have the apostles giving the gift of speaking in tongues through the laying on of their hands. Then, once those who had apostles lay hands upon them, imparting this gift, died, the gift would no longer be in practice. It would be at the death of the apostles and the death of those who had this gift via the laying on of the apostle’s hands, that the gift would be stilled.

**BUILDING BIBLICAL THOUGHT...**

1. The gift of speaking in tongues appears to be given, by the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of the apostles’ hands.

2. There is no evidence that a person who had the apostles lay their hands on them to speak in tongues would be able to transfer that power to someone else.

3. Once the gift imparters (the apostles) and the gift recipients (those the apostles laid hands upon) died, the gift of speaking in tongues would come to a halt.
Section 5:
Love and Tongues

The Purpose of Section Five:
Discover the role of love in tongue speaking.

Opening Questions for Thought:
1. How important is love in the process of tongue speaking?
2. What is the correct understanding of “tongues of men and angels?”
3. Does this verse support ecstatic utterances?

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.” (1 Corinthians 13:1)

The profoundness of this verse is simply this: speaking in a tongue without love is simply noise. This makes love not only a priority but a necessity in speaking another language.

Paul sets up a hypothetical situation with the word “if.” Just because Paul proposes a hypothetical situation does not make the hypothetical situation a reality. (We do this with our own speech all the time.) Paul refers to the language (tongue) of men and angels. We have already clearly established that “tongues of men” refers to another native, intelligible language, but what about “tongues of angels?”

We need to remember an important fact about angels.

Whenever angels spoke in the Bible, what language did they speak? This is not a quiz on whether it was Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. The answer is: they spoke the language of the person or people they were addressing. Far from supporting a “heavenly language” or “ecstatic utterances” this verse continues to support the Scriptural pattern of comprehensible speech.

Personally Speaking…

If an angel came and was to speak to you today, what language would he speak? Any other language other than the one(s) you personally speak would be totally useless.

8 “Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:8-13)

Interesting enough is the fact that tongues would cease to exist, but love would remain. (We will discuss this detail of tongues ceasing in Section 6.) This shows the eternal value of love and the temporary value of tongue speaking.

1 “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. 2 For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit.” (1 Corinthians 14:1-2)
This verse clearly states that speaking in a tongue is to God, not to men. Even so, this verse does not prove a “prayer tongue.” In context, this verse is speaking about the desire we should have for the gift of prophecy over the gift of tongue speaking. Tongues were not to be used unless an interpreter was present. This would be a demonstration of love for the hearers. Without an interpreter, there would be no understanding by the hearers unless, of course, they spoke the language of the speaker.

Think about this illustration though it is limited by its simplicity. If a group of young people come to your church and sung a song in Spanish during the worship service, unless the rhythm was recognizable, you would not know the words they were singing. Their offering would be directly to God, seeing that He would be the only One able to understand. This illustration, however is limited because those singing know what they are saying. However, in proper context of this Scripture, the speaker (or singer) would not have known what they were saying. This is why an interpreter was required to be present.

**BUILDING BIBLICAL THOUGHT...**

1. Love must accompany tongue speaking otherwise only noise is made.
2. Love is priority, not tongue speaking.
3. The Bible clearly states that the spiritual gift of prophecy is of higher value than tongue speaking.
Section 6:  
Ceasing Tongues

The Purpose of Section Six: 
Acknowledge the Bible’s teaching and timeframe for speaking in tongues ceasing.

Opening Questions for Thought:
1. Is there clear biblical teaching that speaking in tongues will cease?
2. When will the gift of tongue speaking cease (be stilled)?
3. What is the proper understanding of the timing words “when perfection comes”?

8 “Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:8-13)

The Greek word (pauo) which is the verb translated “will cease” and “be stilled” means “to cease permanently.” This implies that once tongue speaking stops, it will not be started again. In other words, when tongues cease, they will not begin ever again. Because of this, the timetable the Bible presents for being stilled (ceasing) is of critical importance.

Many people have offered some wrong time tables for tongues, knowledge, and prophecies ceasing. Most proponents of speaking in tongues today will say, “The perfection referred to in this verse is the second coming of Christ.” This allows them to support their view that speaking in a tongue is still viable today. This interpretation may sound reasonable, factual and a correct interpretation, but in actuality it is faulty and will not hold up to the most basic of scrutiny.

The truth is, the perfection coming that brings the ceasing and stilling CAN NOT be the second coming of Christ. We may not be able to determine with 100% assuredness when this occurs without speculating (since the Bible does not just come right out and tell us) but we can certainly discount that it refers to the second coming of Jesus. In other words, it has to be some other time frame other than Jesus returning.

Go on a short journey and you will discover the truth.

Step #1: Acknowledge that Paul highlights 3 spiritual gifts from many existing spiritual gifts listed in Scripture (Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12). These 3 gifts will cease when “perfection” comes. Paul says specifically they are:
   a. Speaking in tongues (Speaking in other languages).
   b. Prophecy (New predictions for fulfillment).
   c. Knowledge (New revelations from God).

Step #2: Answer this question. “At the second coming of Jesus Christ, what spiritual gift will remain?” The correct answer is “None.” No spiritual gift will continue after the second coming of Jesus because the gifts will no longer be needed, life on earth will be over and our heavenly life will have begun.
Examples: What need is there for the spiritual gift of leadership after Jesus has returned?

What need is there for the spiritual gift of preaching, encouragement, administration, teaching, or any other spiritual gift after Jesus has returned?

Step #3: **Affirm** the fact that this reference to when “perfection” comes speaking in tongues will cease MUST be some other time than the second coming. Otherwise, what is the purpose of Paul pulling these three spiritual gifts out and making a point? If Paul was referring to the second coming, he would have simply said, **ALL** the spiritual gifts will cease when perfection comes.

So what is the “perfection” referred to? Many scholars suggest that it is a reference to the end of the age of the apostles when God’s Word would be completed. This would be a time frame around the end of the first century or the beginning of the second century. Considering the many languages the Bible has been translated into, covering over 98% of the world, this may be exactly what Paul intended.

**Remember this…**

All that we need to know, God has revealed in His Word. We see completely what God has chosen to allow us to see. God’s Word is complete.

**BUILDING BIBLICAL THOUGHT…**

1. The second coming IS NOT an appropriate interpretation for when “perfection comes” otherwise there is no distinction between the spiritual gifts Paul mentions.

2. Whenever tongues were said to cease, they would not start up again.
Section 7:
The Mind and Spirit Connection

The Purpose of Section Seven:
Discover God’s desire for mankind to engage Him with their mind and spirit.

Opening Questions for Thought:
1. What is the Bible’s understanding of the idea of praying in a tongue?
2. What is the desired method of praying?

13 “For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 15 So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. 16 If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? 17 You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. 18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.” (1 Corinthians 14:13-19)

This verse speaks about prayer and tongue speaking. Tongue speakers were encouraged to pray that they would also be able to interpret the language they were speaking.

Many have made the false assumption that this verse is referencing a special prayer language or prayer tongue. Why would there be a need for this when you can pray to God in your own language and understand what you are saying to Him?

It is interesting to note what Paul says here. Paul encourages believers to pray with both SPIRIT and MIND…thus praying in a tongue (having your mind unfruitful) is DISCOURAGED!

Again, what good would it be to pray to God in a language you do not understand? Why would God want you to communicate with Him in a way that you do not have the slightest idea what you are saying? Is there anywhere in the Bible that God actually encourages one human being to do this? No. Just the opposite is true.

Many tongue speakers today say that praying in a tongue makes them feel good and draws them closer to God. If you try to find one place in the Bible where this is given as the purpose of speaking in tongues, it does not exist because it is not a purpose for speaking in tongues.

Paul tells us that we are, as singing, to use our spirit and mind when we pray. He goes on to explain that five intelligible words are more desirous than ten thousand words in a tongue. This shows the value of knowing what you are saying in prayer.

Let us break it down another way.
A believer can easily conclude that Paul values praying in a tongue as 1/2000th as valuable as using your native language to pray. This puts tongue speaking in perspective doesn’t it?
**BUILDING BIBLICAL THOUGHT...**

1. The Bible encourages praying with mind and spirit.
2. Praying in a tongue only uses one’s spirit, not one’s mind.
3. Instructing others with intelligible words is much more valuable than using a tongue.
Section 8:
Tongue Guidelines

The Purpose of Section Eight:
Clarify biblical guidelines for speaking in tongues.

Opening Questions for Thought:
1. Were there biblical guidelines given to the church to monitor tongue speaking? If so, what were they?
2. Why were these guidelines given?

26 “What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. 27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. 28 If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God. 29 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. 30 And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. 31 For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. 32 The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. 33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, 34 women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. 35 If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. 36 Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? 37 If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. 38 If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored. 39 Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. 40 But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.” (1 Corinthians 14:26-40)

The church at Corinth was suffering from the over indulgence of the “spirituals.” Things were so bad in the church, Paul had to spend several chapters in 1 Corinthians trying to correct their thinking and their practices. Here, Paul clearly spells out guidelines for tongue speaking in the church.

1. Using any spiritual gift should strengthen the church. (26)
2. Two speakers, and at the most, three speakers. (27)
3. One at a time. (27)
4. Interpretation is required. (27)
5. Without interpretation, the tongue speaker is not to speak. (28)
6. Women were not allowed to speak in tongues in the church. (34)

These guidelines certainly contradict many practices of modern tongue speakers. A better way of phrasing it would be, many modern tongue speakers violate the guidelines given specifically in Scripture regarding tongue speaking. (This is assuming tongues were still relevant today. As we studied in Section 6, biblical evidence shows they have ceased.)

Two more guidelines can be asserted from this passage. These guidelines would include:
7. Believers must acknowledge that Paul’s teaching on spiritual gifts is from the Lord. (37)
8. Speaking in a tongue was not to be forbidden, but done in the proper way: fitting and orderly. (38)
God is not the god of chaos and disorder, but the God of order and peace (1 Corinthians 14:33). Because of this, God’s people should reflect His character and nature. This is Paul’s desire for writing these prerequisites for speaking in tongues. Nothing that happens within the church should demonstrate anything inconsistent with the Fruit of the Spirit presented in Galatians 5.

BUILDING BIBLICAL THOUGHT…

1. Paul offered strict guidelines for speaking in tongues.

2. If speaking in tongues were to occur today (assuming the gift was still active) these guidelines would have to be implemented as direct Scriptural principles.
Section 9: Edification of the Church

The Purpose of Section Nine:
Clarify the difference between those gifts which edify the church and those gifts that edify self.

Opening Questions for Thought:
1. What does Paul mean when he states that tongue speaking edifies one’s self rather than edifying the church?
2. How are we to properly understand Paul wishing every person to speak in tongues?
3. Is there a “priority list” of spiritual gifts?

"He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified. Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me. So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.” (1 Corinthians 14:4-12)

Speaking in tongues edifies (builds up) the speaker, not the church. In one way you could say it was more of a self-oriented gift. By definition, this would make it unfit for a worship service environment because it does not build up the church, unless there were an interpreter.

When we look at all that was happening in the Church of Corinth, we can see that these believers (tongue speaking being at the forefront) were concerned about themselves over others. This will always be the tendency with a gift that focuses upon the individual rather than the church body.

Just because Paul makes a wish, does not mean it will become a reality. In fact, Paul wishing that all would speak in tongues is just that, wishful thinking, because he wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:14-20 that not everyone has or will have the same spiritual gift.


"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?"

This verse proves the fact that not all believers would have the same gifts. We are all a part of the Body of Christ, and important, but each of us have a different giftedness.
Going back to 1 Corinthians 14:4-12, it is as if Paul is providing another hypothetical situation. As if to say, “Listen, I wish all of you spoke in tongues so that it was no longer an issue in the church. There is more to do than just speak in tongues or want to speak in tongues. The world needs you to love them and share Jesus with them. Get on with it!”

As earlier stated, speaking in a tongue is lifeless without interpretation. Speaking in a tongue without interpretation is simply speaking into the air. This was critical for the Corinthians church to remember because without an interpreter, no one would have a clue what was going on. This would mean that no one would be built up in Christ, just confused. Confusion is not the purpose of using spiritual gifts in the church.

There does seem to be a priority list of spiritual gifts. Speaking in tongues is not very high on the list. In fact, it appears that it may be on of the lowest levels of spiritual giftedness. Unfortunately in today’s movement of charismatics, speaking in tongues is elevated in status to one of the highest levels of spiritual giftedness. This view contradicts Scripture.

13 “For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 15 So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. 16 If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? 17 You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. 18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.” (1 Corinthians 14:13-19)

We see through this verse the confirmation of the self-orientation of the gift of speaking in tongues. Look at verse 16 again.

26 “What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.” (1 Corinthians 14:26)

Simply put, if it does not strengthen the church, it has no place in the church, especially in the worship service.

**BUILDING BIBLICAL THOUGHT…**

1. Speaking in tongues is a gift that does not build up the church body, but edifies an individual.

2. Appropriate elements in a worship service are those methodologies that build up the entire church body.
Section 10:
Various Tongue References

The Purpose of Section Ten:
Insure that all Scriptures have been discussed regarding the issue of speaking in tongues.

Tongues of fire (Acts 2:3):
“They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.”

The reason the word “tongues” is used in this verse is because what the people saw “looked like” tongues because of their obvious shape. The tongues were not literal fire, but appeared to be like fire. What is happening in this verse is an effort to describe what was seen with words that readers who were not there could identify. This was not permanent but temporary for these speakers to have these tongues of fire above their heads. It seems that some light source must have been present prior to the separation that came to rest on the individual apostles.

Tongues are a Sign to Unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:20-23):
20 “Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.
21 In the Law it is written: "Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me," says the Lord. 22 Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers.
23 So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?”

It is interesting that this verse says that God would use PEOPLE to speak in foreign tongues TO PEOPLE. If these were not intelligible languages how would this be possible? Look what verse 22 says. Tongues were for unbelievers, not believers, yet many in Pentecostal churches promote the use of speaking in tongues within the church.

The Bible clearly states that speaking in tongues is for unbelievers. Unbelievers are the target. The purpose of speaking in tongues is consistent with that target group. The purpose of speaking in tongues was to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Evangelism was at the heart of speaking in tongues.

Not that all people will necessarily speak at the same time, but what happens if one after another, someone speaks in a foreign language and an unbeliever walks in? Instead of speaking the language of the guest, if believers continue uttering foreign words of another language, what good would it be? A wasted opportunity would result and the unbeliever (left in the dark) would assume that Christians are crazy.

Prioritizing Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:27-31a):
27 “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But eagerly desire the greater gifts...”
We have already discussed several Scriptures that show that speaking in tongues is not one of the greater spiritual gifts. Here we have another Scripture that verifies that tongue speaking is if not the lowest priority of giftedness, certainly one of the lowest. Though low on the list, the Pentecostal Movement has elevated it to a very high standard, as proof of conversion and even a test of fellowship among themselves. How unfortunate.

Paul encourages us to desire the greater gifts. This desire would mean that we would keep in proper perspective our giftedness and those around us who may be gifted with higher priority gifts needing to be used for Kingdom development.

Not everyone will have the gift of speaking in tongues. To teach anything contrary to this truth is a lie. Not every Christian will have all the spiritual gifts. Not every Christian will have the same gift. To teach that all Christians should seek speaking in tongues is not a biblical foundation.

Notice in this verse the words “different kind of tongues.” Again, we have biblical support to confirm that we are talking about native, intelligible languages. There is no proof in this verse that ecstatic utterances exist.

**One Baptism or Two (Ephesians 4:4-6):**
Many in the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements proclaim that undergoing “The Baptism of the Holy Spirit” gives them the ability to speak in tongues. These individuals separate baptism by immersion for the purpose of the forgiveness of sins spoken of in Acts 2:38 and many other New Testament places (a water baptism) from the baptism of the Holy Spirit (a spiritual baptism). Only one BIG problem with this teaching…it contradicts the Bible. There is only one baptism, not two.

4 “There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

So where do proponents of this teaching base their beliefs? Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, and John 1:33 all speak of the One coming after John the Baptist (Jesus, the Messiah) who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal and Charismatic believers have the opinion that this is a separate baptism. Acts 2:38 would tell us that at our immersion when we are baptized into Christ we then receive the Holy Spirit. Again, there is one baptism, not two. No where in Scripture does it teach that we are to experience a baptism of the Holy Spirit so that we can speak in tongues.
Conclusion
Our conclusion is simple. Here is a review of what we have discovered as biblical thought along our journey.

BUILDING BIBLICAL THOUGHT...

2. The identical Greek meaning is supplied at each reference to “tongues” throughout the New Testament.
3. The Bible is silent (providing no hint of existence) regarding “ecstatic utterances” or a “heavenly prayer language” by definition. The Bible provides no other meaning for tongues other than a native language of mankind. If we claim biblical tongues support ecstatic utterances, we do so purely upon human conjecture, not on Scriptural grounds.
4. The Bible uses language that specifically highlights the Holy Spirit’s involvement in speaking in tongues such as “coming upon” believers.
5. There is a clear biblical distinction between the indwelling presence of God’s Spirit and the gift of speaking in tongues.
6. The Holy Spirit, not mankind, is responsible for giving spiritual gifts, including the gift of speaking in tongues.
7. Without the Holy Spirit’s filling and enabling, no speaking in tongues gift would exist.
8. If the Holy Spirit is elevated above Jesus Christ, it is not His biblical role.
9. The gift of speaking in tongues appears to be given, by the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of the apostles’ hands.
10. There is no evidence that a person who had the apostles lay their hands on them to speak in tongues would be able to transfer that power to someone else.
11. Once the gift imparters (the apostles) and the gift recipients (those the apostles laid hands upon) died, the gift of speaking in tongues would come to a halt.
12. Love must accompany tongue speaking otherwise only noise is made.
13. Love is priority, not tongue speaking.
14. The Bible clearly states that the spiritual gift of prophecy is of higher value than tongue speaking.
15. The second coming IS NOT an appropriate interpretation for when “perfection comes” otherwise there is no distinction between the spiritual gifts Paul mentions.
16. Whenever tongues were said to cease, they would not start up again.
17. The Bible encourages praying with mind and spirit.
18. Praying in a tongue only uses one’s spirit, not one’s mind.
19. Instructing others with intelligible words is much more valuable than using a tongue.
20. Paul offered strict guidelines for speaking in tongues.
21. If speaking in tongues were to occur today (assuming the gift was still active) these guidelines would have to be implemented as direct Scriptural principles.
22. Speaking in tongues is a gift that does not build up the church body, but edifies an individual.
23. Appropriate elements in a worship service are those methodologies that build up the entire church body.
APPENDIX A
New Testament References to Speaking in Tongues

Mark 16:17-18
Acts 2:3-11
Acts 8:14-20
Acts 10:44-48
Acts 19:4-6
1 Corinthians 12:7-11
1 Corinthians 12:27-30
1 Corinthians 13:1
1 Corinthians 13:8-13
1 Corinthians 14:1-2
1 Corinthians 14:4-12
1 Corinthians 14:13-19
1 Corinthians 14:20-23
1 Corinthians 14:26-35
1 Corinthians 14:36-40

APPENDIX B
References

These references are freely used as support references and background material only.


