



Our Position on the Cessation of Tongues and the Sign Gifts

We affirm that tongues and the other sign gifts gradually ceased when special revelation was perfected in the New Testament scriptures, such that these gifts are no longer normative for believers today (2 Cor. 12:12; Hebrews 2:4).

By tongues, we refer to the act of praising God in a human language which is unknown to the speaker, but which is known to others in the audience. At Pentecost, when the Spirit was originally given, the gathered believers praised God in tongues which were known by those from many nations (Acts 2). This served as a sign to those gathered, validating both the testimony of those who had witnessed the resurrection of Jesus and the claim that Jesus offered forgiveness of sins to those who would believe. Upon Cornelius' conversion, tongues validated that God had also granted to the Gentiles the "repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:15-18 ESV, NASB95) and later, tongues demonstrated that the baptism of Jesus was superior to that of John (19:2-6). Again, these are human languages, understood by someone in the audience – we find no biblical support for the practice of speaking in angelic tongues, as the only potential reference to such is a hyperbolic statement in the midst of several hyperbolic statements used for illustrative purposes (1 Cor. 13:2-3). Paul, who himself had spoken in tongues, emphasized that while tongues built up the speaker, their ongoing purpose was to stand as a sign to unbelievers, and this would occur only if the unbelievers in their midst understood what was being said (1 Cor. 14:1-23).

By sign gifts, we more broadly refer to the miraculous gifts which involved either the giving of divine revelation or the authentication of those who declared divine revelation. The "signs and wonders and mighty works" served to validate true apostles, as they revealed new truths to the church (2 Cor. 2:12; Heb. 2:1-4). The revelations came through gifts of special knowledge and prophecy, which were anticipated to cease per 1 Corinthians 13:8, and were validated by gifts of healing, miracles, tongues, etc. We are not saying here that God no longer heals or does miracles or empowers those who speak on his behalf, but merely affirming that the "foundation of the apostles and prophets" is complete (Eph. 2:20) and therefore the Spirit is no longer distributing gifts for the purpose of revealing and validating new truths to the church (1 Cor. 12:11). Any claims by those purporting to receive special knowledge for the church should be judged carefully, as the New Testament anticipates that false prophets and false teachers will arise within the church in the latter days, who will introduce destructive heresies and encourage sensual behavior for their own benefit (2 Pet. 2:1-3, 18; 1 John 4:1). Further, we are committed towards guarding our flock from misrepresenting the Holy Spirit by falsely ascribing these practices to Him (2 Pet. 3:17).

We accept the New Testament scriptures as the perfect and completed revelation of God by the Holy Spirit to the church, and therefore as being profitable for teaching, training in righteousness, etc., that the man of God may be adequate and equipped for Christian living (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Thereafter, the sign gifts are no longer necessary.

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