

Modern Christianity Astray From The Bible

Popular Church Tradition Explored

A Biblical inspection of popular church teachings

Acts 1:15-17 “And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty, Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, *which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.*” (Quoted from *Psa. 41:9*)

There has been much confusion and misrepresentation regarding the subject of the “holy spirit.” However, a simple scriptural investigation of the matter will clear away the misunderstanding of this important Bible teaching. In the above reference, we discover that the “Holy Spirit” (*Holy Ghost* in some translations) foretold of the betrayal of Judas Iscariot, “by the mouth of David.” In simple terms, it was God influencing David to speak in an inspired manner, and therefore attribution is given to the “Holy Spirit.” David spoke as “a prophet” inspired by God.

Acts 2:29-31 “Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of *the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.*” (v. 27-34 is a succession of quotes from *Psa. 16:8-11; 132:11; 110:1-2*)

2Samuel 23:1-2 “Now these be *the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.*”

Mark 12:36 “*For David himself said by the Holy Spirit, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.*” (Quote from *Psa. 110:1*)

In these verses we are introduced to the subject of “the Holy Spirit.” David, influenced by God’s “holy spirit,” was caused to speak in particular words—inspired Words. They were “inspired” because they were from God. This principle is supported by other Scriptures:

2Peter 1:20-21 “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

The Bible, then, is the product of the “Holy Spirit” and not the “will of man.” Men were merely the means by which the Divine Will was expressed.

2Timothy 3:16-17 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Hebrews 1:1-2 “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds”

David and other men were “inspired” by God—through the power of the Holy Spirit—to speak the Will of the Creator. The words were not of themselves, but of the influence of God’s holy spirit. The Word of God revealed in Scripture is the final product of that Holy Spirit influence. Thus, Paul speaks of the Scriptures this way:

Ephesians 6:17 “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

The Lord Jesus Christ, who spoke only as directed by his Father (John 8:28-29; 17:20-21; 6:38; 14:8-11) states:

John 6:63 “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

The coming of the Messiah, his death and resurrection were all the subjects of prophecy. God foretold His people what would come to pass by His servants the prophets by influence of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 3:17-24 “And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.”

God speaking through “the mouth of all his prophets” is Scriptural language indicating they were men moved by the Holy Spirit. God was the source, the Holy Spirit was the vehicle and the prophets were the instruments to fulfill His purpose. Accordingly, Stephen told the Jews that their rejection of the prophets was, in fact, a rejection of the Holy Spirit!

Acts 7:51-52 “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.”

Nehemiah 9:29-31 “And testifiedst against (Israel), that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but

sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear. *Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands. Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God.*”

Acts 28:23-27 “And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, *Well spake the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say...*” (Quoted *Isa. 6:9-10*)

Therefore when we read the Bible we are reading the results of the Holy Spirit. When we study the Scriptures we are absorbing the impression of the Holy Spirit. The inspired Word of God and the testimony of the Holy Spirit are synonymous. When the Bible speaks, the Holy Spirit speaks.

Hebrews 3:5-10 “And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. Wherefore *as the Holy Spirit saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.*”

The above reference is a quote from *Psa. 95:7-11*. Thus, in quoting the psalmist from Old Testament is quite appropriate for the writer of Hebrews to state that the “Holy Spirit saith,” because the Word of God is the result of the Holy Spirit’s guidance upon the men who recorded the Scriptures. Notice how the Lord Jesus Christ refers to the writings of the psalmist:

Matthew 22:41-45 “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, *Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?*”

And again in the Book of Hebrews:

Hebrews 10:11-17 “And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof *the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*”

As the margin of most Bibles will note, the above quote is taken directly from Jeremiah 31:33. The recorded words of the inspired prophet constitute the witness of the “Holy Spirit.”

Hebrews also refers to the details of the Tabernacle, recorded in the Old Testament (Exodus chapters 25-40), as being the effects of the Holy Spirit that pointed forward to Christ.

Hebrews 9:1-9 “Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary... Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: *The Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing*”

We apologize for the redundancy to emphasize again that the Holy Spirit and the Holy Scriptures are, as it were “cause and effect.” The latter is a result of the former. Therefore, when the Bible testifies it is appropriate to recognize it is the Holy Spirit that speaks.

Note the Holy Spirit’s influence on the father of John Baptist at the revelation that Messiah would come, and his understanding of the Covenants with Abraham and David in relation to his coming:

Luke 1:67-77 “And his father *Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins*”

As the influence of the Holy Spirit was upon the Old Testament prophets, it was also in evidence upon apostles and prophets in the first century.

Acts 4:8, 31 “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel... And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”

Stephen, described as a man “full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” boldly testified to the Jews how they had crucified the Messiah because of their ignorance and stubbornness. So powerful was his exposition “they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake” (Acts 6:5-10). Even when stoned by his enemies, Stephen was so “full of the Holy Spirit” he asked that the Lord would “lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 8:54-60).

Acts 11:27-30 “And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”

Since the entire compilation of the Scriptures was not finished until the work of the apostles and prophets in the first century, the influence of the Holy Spirit was still evident at that time.

Ephesians 3:1-7 “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.”

Matthew 10:17-20 “But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.”

After the Lord was crucified, resurrected and raised to the right hand of the Heavenly Father, Jesus said the Holy Spirit would be given to the believers to lead them to complete Truth.

John 14:16-19; 26 “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he (Gk. “it”) may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him (Gk. “it”) not, neither knoweth him (Gk. “it”): but ye know him (Gk. “it”); for he (“it”)

dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also... {26} But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he (“it”) shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I

<p>27 But ^othe anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing ^steacheth you of all things, and ^uis truth, and is no lie, and <u>even as if</u> hath taught you, ^vye shall abide in ²him.</p> <p>28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, ^zwhen he shall appear, ^awe may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.</p> <p>29 If ye know that he is righteous, ^tye know that ^devery</p>	<p>^q John 2. 19. ^r Ps. 119. 3. ^s Mat. 23. 11. ^t 1 Pet. 1. 23. ^u John 14. 17. ^x John 3. 3. ^y John 14. 17. ²Or, it. ^z ch. 3. 2. ^a Col. 3. 4. ^b ch. 4. 17. ^c ch. 4. 8. ^d Heb. 13. 1. ^e ch. 1. 5. ³ Or, commandment. ⁴ Or, know ye. ^d ch. 3. 7, 10. ³ Rom. 2. 13. ³ John 11. ^c ver. 23. ¹ John 12. 24.</p>	<p>purpose ¹ manifeste stroy the ⁹ Who doth not seed rema cannot sir of God. ¹⁰ In thi are manif of the dev not righte neither ^b brother. ¹¹ For ^c that ye h</p>
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have said unto you.”

The Greek word “him” or “he” is also translated “it” and is recorded as such, regarding the Holy Spirit in Acts 8:16 (read) and 1John 2:27 (margin). Nevertheless, the point at hand refers to the Holy Spirit being provided for believers in the first century, after the Lord’s departure from their midst.

John 16:7, 12-13 “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him (it) unto you... I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he (it), the Spirit of truth, is come, he (it) will guide you into all truth: for he (it) shall not speak of himself (itself); but whatsoever he (it) shall hear, that shall he (it) speak: and he (it) will show you things to come.”

1John 5:6 “This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.”

The Holy Spirit, styled “the comforter” that would be given to some in the first century brought to completion the testimony of Truth revealed in their preaching, and subsequently the Word of God.

1Peter 1:9-12 “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.” (see: Rev. 2:7)

1Corinthians 2:12-14 “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

While the “spirit” of God is that which sustains life and the various cycles of nature (see: Gen. 1:1-3; Jer. 27:5; 51:15; Ecc. 12:7), the “holy spirit” is the set apart, miraculous power of God. The Bible establishes this definition quite clearly.

Luke 1:35 “And the angel answered and said unto her, *The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee:* therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

Acts 1:8 “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Acts 8:18-19 “And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands *the Holy Spirit was given*, he offered them money, Saying, *Give me also this power*, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit.”

The direct comparison between divine “power” and the “holy spirit” is evident.

Acts 10:38 “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth *with the Holy Spirit and with power*: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”

Hebrews 6:4-6 “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, *and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come*, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

THE HOLY SPIRIT—the power of God—was given to Christ and the apostles primarily to authenticate their teaching and stand as a witness to the Divine approval of their message.

Acts 2:22-23 “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, *a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you*, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain”

John 3:1-2 “There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, *we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*”

John 9:32-33 “Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. *If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*”

John 5:36 “*But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.*”

Hebrews 2:1-4 “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; *which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will?*”

The “miracles” of the “holy spirit” were a powerful and necessary “witness” of God’s authority to the gospel being preached by the apostles.

Mark 16:19-20 “So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. *And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.*”

Acts 1:8-11 “*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*”

Acts 5:12-14 “*And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)*”

Acts 8:5-6 “*Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.*”

Acts 14:3 “*Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.*”

Acts 19:10-11 “*And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul.*”

Romans 15:19-20 “*Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.*”

1Corinthians 2:1-5 “*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*”

Consistent with the New Testament record, when Moses was sent into Egypt to deliver the children of Israel from bondage he was also given the ability to perform miraculous signs, as a testimony that his message came from the only true and living God.

Exodus 4:1-5, 17 “*And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee. And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from*

before it. And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: *That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee... And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.*"

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

In addition to the "signs" and "miracles" that accompanied the power of Holy Spirit was the "gift" of speaking in various languages in the first century. The Bible defines these "tongues" as the various languages spoken by the people.

Acts 10:44-48 "While Peter yet spake these words, *the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.*"

Acts 19:5-6 "When they heard this, *they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.*"

This ability to speak in tongues for those preaching the Gospel into all parts of the world was vital for the purpose of breaking down obvious language barriers. This is evident from the very first Scriptural example of speaking with "tongues."

Acts 2—

1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, *Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?*

8 *And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?*

9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.
 12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?
 13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.
 14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:
 15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.
 16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;
 17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:
 18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:
 19 And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:
 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:
 21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

On the Day of Pentecost—50 days after Jesus Christ was crucified and subsequently resurrected—the disciples were gathered at Jerusalem and, in fulfillment of the promise given them by the Lord, were given the “Holy Spirit” (see: Acts 1:4-8; John 7:39; 16:1-16).

The purpose was to preach the Gospel to all people in “other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance.” The Holy Spirit empowered them to speak a foreign “language” not previously learned by these “Galileans.” The result was “every man heard them speak in his own language” and in his native “tongue the wonderful works of God” (v. 6, 11). These “foreign languages,” as translated in other versions, were the legitimate dialects: “Parthians ... Medes... Elamites ... Mesopotamia... etc.” at least 15 different languages. These would be equivalent to Spanish, German, French or Russian in our times.

Though it is admitted Acts 2 represents legitimate languages, it is also claimed that the gift of “speaking tongues” includes “unknown tongues.” In other words, it is claimed there are “tongues” that cannot be deciphered. Let’s examine the Scriptures.

1Corinthians 14:1-2 “Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto

	Ver. 10. Ro. 12. 8; 1 Tim. 5. 17; 1 Pe. 5. 1-3.	
if	diversities: or, kinds.	
ll	workers...: or, powers?	
st	ch. 12. 31. 1. 30 ver. 10. 31 ch. 14. 1. 39.	
re	understandeth: Gr. heareth.	
es	Ro. 14. 19. 3	
re		
1-	ver. 17. 4	
of	2 ch. 12. 8, 9. Mt. 17. 20.	
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CHAPTER 14

FOLLOW after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.
 2 For he that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth *him*; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.
 3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men *to* edification, and exhortation, and comfort.
 4 He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.
 5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater *is* he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

God: for no man understandeth *him*; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.”

The word “*unknown*” appears in italics, which is note by the translators to indicate it does not appear in the original. In fact, the phrase “*unknown tongue*” only appears in this chapter, and in each instance the word is italicized; meaning it is not in the original Greek manuscript (v. 2, 4, 13, 14, 19, 27). Thus, the phrase “for no man understandeth” (v. 2) is to be correctly understood as it is in the margin: “heareth.”

The person speaking “mysteries” in a “tongue”—or legitimate language—does not refer to some sort of exclusive prayer language that only God understands. We must always be careful not to apply modern English definitions to words in the Bible. In fact, when we allow the Word of God to be its own dictionary we find the phrase refers to the Gospel revealed to men.

Mark 4:11 “And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the *mystery of the kingdom of God*: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables”

Romans 11:25-28 “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be *ignorant of this mystery*, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And

so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.”

Romans 16:25-26 “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, *according to the revelation of the mystery*, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith”

1Corinthians 2:6-10 “Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory*: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared

ye may excel to the edifying of the church.		O I :
13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an <i>unknown</i> tongue pray that he may interpret.	Eph. 5.19, 26 Ver. 6. Ch. 12. 10. 2 Co. 12. 19 & 13. 10.	26] cor a] ton int doi 27] ton mo anc 28] hin let]
14 For if I pray in an <i>unknown</i> tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.		29] thr 30] tha pea 31] one be 32] sub
15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.	15 Eph. 5. 19: Col. 3. 16. Ps. 47. 7.	33] COR chu 34]
16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?	16 ver. 23. 24. Ne. 5. 13; Rev. 5. 14. Ch. 11. 24. Ac. 11. 27; 29 ver. 32, 37. Ch. 12. 10. 1 Th. 5. 30 19, 20.	
17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.		
18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:		
19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that <i>by my voice</i> I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an <i>unknown</i> tongue.	con- 33 fusion: Gr. tumult, or, unquietness. Ch. 7. 17. 1 Tim. 2. 34 11, 12.	

for them that love him. *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*”

1Corinthians 15:50-54 “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. *Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*”

Ephesians 1:8-11 “Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*”

Ephesians 3:1-6 “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: *How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)* Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel”

Ephesians 6:19-20 “And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

Colossians 1:25-28 “Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; *Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*” (1Tim 3:8-9)

Thus, the person speaking in “tongues” was teaching the revealed mystery of the Gospel in a foreign language. Not in one single instance is the context of “mysteries” ever referring to an unintelligible prayer language between God and man.

To further prove the point that 1 Corinthians 14 is consistent with Acts 2, and the purpose of the giving of the gift of “speaking in tongues,” note the following:

1Corinthians 14:22 “Wherefore *tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.*”

While the gift of “prophesying” was for spiritual growth for those who knew the gospel, the Holy Spirit gift of “speaking in tongues” was for the preaching of the gospel to those who were unenlightened. Thus, the apostle urges that when using this gift of speaking in various languages the greatest caution was to be maintained.

1Corinthians 14:23 “If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and *all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?*”

1Corinthians 14:27-35 “If any man speak in an *unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.*”

From the above we learn:

1. To eliminate any confusion, those with the ability to preach the Gospel in a foreign language were to do so “by course,” or one at a time.
2. If there was no one in audience to interpret the particular language, the one with the gift of speaking in a foreign tongue was to keep silence.
3. The silence of women in the assembly was to be maintained.

1Corinthians 14:18-19 “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all,” wrote Paul, “Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an *unknown tongue.*”

Though the apostle Paul evidently had the gift of speaking in a variety of foreign languages he emphasized that speaking “five words with my understanding” was more important to “teach others” than “ten thousands words” in a foreign “tongue.” Paul uses another analogy to stress his point:

1Corinthians 14:6-11 “Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices (RSV “languages”) in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.”

And so, the chapter concludes with this exhortation:

1Corinthians 14:40 “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

SPIRIT GIFTS LIMITED IN THEIR SCOPE

That the miraculous events that accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the first century are no longer in evidence today is widely acknowledged. These included the “immediate” cure of leprosy (Mat. 8:3); the “immediate” cure of blindness (Mat. 20:34); the “immediate” restoration of the paralyzed (Mark 2:10-12; Acts 9:34); the “straightway” curing of one with internal bleeding for many years (Mark 5:25-29); and many others, without the aid of physicians or man. The miracles of the first century also witnessed the earthquake and release of Paul and Silas from prison (Acts 16); Peter from prison (Acts 12); the smiting of an evil man with blindness (Acts 13); the raising to life of those that were dead (Acts 9); and the immediate transportation of Philip from one place to another (Acts 8). In fact, the miracles were so astonishing when performed by Christ and the apostles that many, through misunderstanding, sought to exalt them inappropriately (Acts 14:12; 28:6; Mark 3:7-12). Even their enemies could not deny the miracles (John 11:47; Acts 4:16).

Therefore, it is obvious the “holy spirit gifts” are not with us today, as common sense demands. However, the proof is this fact is stated plainly in the Scriptures. When the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Jews in Acts 2 we find that the promise of this gift was only for a limited time.

Acts 2:38-41 “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

In the reference above Peter told the Jews gathered that the “gift of the Holy Spirit” was only temporary in nature: “For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off.” We again caution that it can be very misleading if we apply modern English definitions to Bible words and phrases. Such is the expression “afar off.”

The phrase “afar off” represents the Gentiles and not a people in some distant generation. This is easily clarified by the cross-references supplied in the margin of most Bibles (Acts 10:45; 11:15, 18; 22:21; Deu. 29:15; Eph. 2:13, 17; Luke 15:20). The translators of the Bible knew this to

39 For the promise is unto you, and ⁱ to your children, and to all that are ^h afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.	^{&} 22. 16. Mark 16. 16. ^g John 9. 8. ^h Mat. 26. 23. ⁱ ch. 3. 25. Is. 54. 13. Joel 2. 28.	asked a1
40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this ^m untoward generation.	^h ch. 10. 45 & 11. 15, 18 & 22. 21. Deut. 29. 15. Eph. 2. 13, 17. Luke 15. 20.	4 And I upon him on us.
41 ¶ Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there	ⁱ Luke 14. 7. ^m Deut. 32. 5. Phil. 2. 15. ⁿ ch. 4. 10.	5 And them, ex thing of 6 Then gold hav I have ; name of zareth ri

refer to Gentiles and noted it in the margin. We must let the Bible interpret itself.

Acts 10:44-45 “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, *because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” (Acts 11:15, 18).

Acts 22:20-21 “And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee *far hence unto the Gentiles.*”

The phrase “far hence” is the same Greek word translated “afar off” in Acts 2:39.

Ephesians 2:11-18 “Wherefore remember, that ye being *in time past Gentiles in the flesh*, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye *who sometimes were far off* are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one (Jew and Gentile), and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: *And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh* (Jew and Gentile). For through him we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

A reading of Ephesians 4 will reveal that the diversities of “gifts” given to believers in the first century were for the development of the community of faithful under the New Covenant—

Ephesians 4:4-14 “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and *gave gifts unto men...* And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*”

Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians follows the same reasoning as Ephesians; that the diversities of gifts was for the development of the entire body. 1Cor. 12-13 specify that after this purpose was accomplished the gifts would be withdrawn.

1Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-31 “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the

Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will... And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: *and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.*”

The diversity of gifts given in the first century included apostles, prophets, miracles, and the ability to heal... etc. Yet, the apostle says there is a “more excellent way.” In the next chapter Paul explains what this means.

1Corinthians 13:1-13 “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: *but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*”

In keeping with Acts 2 the apostle foretold that when “faith, hope, charity” would abide, the partial gifts of “prophesying, tongues, knowledge” would be “done away.” This is described as the time between the “former and latter rain” (Acts 2:16 cf. Joel 2:23-32); a period before the “powers of the world to come” will be poured out at the second advent of Jesus Christ (Heb. 6:1-5). Paul says this would happen “when that which is perfect is come.” The word “perfect” means *mature*. Rotherham has “as soon as that which is complete is come” (1Cor. 13:10); and NEB has “when wholesome comes.” Note how the word “perfect” (Greek *teleios*) and related words are translated elsewhere:

1 Corinthians 2:6 “Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are *perfect* (*teleioi*): yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:” RV “mature”

Philippians 3:15 “Let us therefore, as many as be *perfect (teleioi)*, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.” RSV, Weymouth “mature”

1 Corinthians 14:20 “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be *men (teleioi)*.” RV “full grown”

Hebrews 5:13-14 “For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of *full age (teleion)*, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

Hebrews 6:1-3 “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto *perfection (teliotees)*; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.”

Matthew 19:20-21 “The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be *perfect (teleios)*, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.”

James 3:1-2 “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a *perfect man (teleios)*, and able also to bridle the whole body.”

These references prove that the gifts of the Holy Spirit would be withdrawn when the brethren of Christ were brought to “maturity.” Believers in the first century did not possess the completed Bible as we have it today. Thus, as Paul says, they developed from a child to maturity.

In conclusion, we submit that any claim that there is a modern-day possession of the “Holy Spirit gifts” is not valid. While we do not question the sincerity of any individual, our conclusion is based upon the Word of God and not human emotion.

Many Charismatic groups claim to possess the power of the Holy Spirit and the ability to speak in tongues or perform miracles. Other groups claim their leaders or hierarchy are guided by the Holy Spirit. However, the Bible determines both positions are false.

We leave the subject with one final consideration, which becomes a question of “credibility.” If all of these denominations believe that God’s Holy Spirit is active in their midst, how can they justify being separate and distinct from one another? Furthermore, if they all claim to have the “Holy Spirit,” yet disagree so widely in doctrine and practice it is only reasonable to deduce that they cannot all possibly possess the same “Holy Spirit.” Most, if not all must be making false claims. Basic Bible reasoning makes this conclusion unavoidable.