

Text: 1 Cor 14.1-2, et al

Summarizing 1 Cor 12-14 so far

- **The context:** In the mystery religions of the ancient world, ecstatic practices resembling the gift of tongues *confused* the Corinthians
- **The issue:** Some Christians in Corinth equated tongues-speaking as the mark of true spirituality, skewing their focus from serving others to exalting self
- **Biblical gifts:**
 - Comprise a variety of equally valued gifts from the Triune God
 - Given for the benefit of the church as a whole: “the common good” (7), “just as He wills” (11)
 - Differing in nature according to the times:
 1. At-will miracle supernatural gifts in apostolic times
 2. Day-to-day ordinary gifts in all times and all places
- **The importance of the Body** for contextualizing the use of gifts
- **The Ranking of Gifts** (1 Cor 12.27-31a)
- **Spiritual Fruit: superior to Spiritual Gifts** (12.31b-13.13)

Today: A pause for definitions

The focus of 1 Cor 12-14: see 1 Cor 14.1-2. Which gifts are mentioned here?

1. **Prophecy**
2. **Tongues**

Primary focus of definitions: tongues (because so much confusion)

However, a few quick definitions (from 1 Cor 12.8-10 list):

1. Word of wisdom
2. Word of knowledge

1 Cor 13.2: “know all mysteries and all knowledge”

1 Cor 13.9: “we know in part”

3. Faith

Cannot be saving faith: since “not all have this gift,” whereas all Christians have saving faith

1 Cor 13.3: “if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains”

4. Healing
5. Miracles
6. Prophecy
7. Distinguishing Spirits
8. Tongues / Interpretation of Tongues

The primary concern is tongues: but what are tongues?

And secondarily, what is prophecy?

Context: What was the cultural context concerning tongues at Corinth?

They witnessed pagan ecstatic speech in pagan experiences before conversion

“One common view is to see Paul’s use of the word ‘tongue’ (*glōssa*) against the background of first-century pagan religions and thus define it as ecstatic speech similar to that expressed by the sibylla, or female prophetesses. The Cumaen sibyl (cf. Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 77–102) was the most famous of the 10 female prophetesses claimed by various regions. Others see the tongues-speaking in 1 Corinthians as ecstatic speech similar to that of Pythia, the female oracle at Delphi (Plutarch *Moralia* 5. 409e) or similar to the maenads of Dionysus in their ecstatic frenzy (Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 534, 710–30; cf. Euripides *Bacchae*). That the Corinthians may have thought of this gift as analogous to the pagan ecstatics is certainly possible, but to suggest that Paul used the term with reference to this pagan background is hardly enlightened scholarship. In fact the seedbed for most of Paul’s theological concepts and the usual source of his terms was the Old Testament.”¹

¹ David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 537.

Biblical use of the word γλῶσσα (*glossa*) “tongue”

Mk 7.33 Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue *with the saliva*;

physical organ

See also: Mk 7.35; Lk 1.64, 16.24; Ac 2.26; Jas 1.26, 3.5, 6, 8; Rev 16.10

Ac 2.3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

appearance / similarity

Rm 3.13 “THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,” “THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS”;

voice

See also: Rm 14.11; Phil 2.11; 1 Pt 3.10; 1 Jn 3.18;

Mk 16.17 “These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues;

other languages

Many other references including 21 uses in 1 Cor 12-14 by Paul.

What do the **plurals** imply in these references:

“new tongues” Mk 16.17

“other tongues” Ac 2.4

“tongues” Ac 10.46, 19.6

More than one language**Consider the testimony of Acts 2:4-11**

What were the Christians doing in v. 4? **speaking in tongues**

What was the audience hearing in vv. 6, 8? **their own language**

The word here is *dialektos* — root of English *dialect*.

How many languages are represented? (9-11) **sixteen**

What about “interpretation of tongues” 1 Cor 12.10 (see also 12.30)?

The word translated “interpretation” in 1 Cor 12. 10 is *hermeneia*, with *diermeneuo* (a related verb) in 1 Cor 12.30.

The primary meaning of these words is “translation”

Ac 9.36 ¶ Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which **translated** in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did.

What is translation? **Giving the meaning in another language**

Lk 24.27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He **explained** to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

What does the word mean here? **Giving the sense, teaching**

Both concepts require that the hearer **understand** his source

There is more to this definition in 1 Cor 14, but I will leave that until we go through those passages directly.

1. Tongues are **human languages**
2. Tongues can be **understood** by an interpreter

Defining Prophecy

It is the one gift mentioned in all the lists:

Rm 12.6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if **prophecy**, according to the proportion of his faith;

1 Cor 12.10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another **prophecy**, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another *various* kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

1 Cor 12.28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second **prophets**, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues.

1 Cor 12.29 All are not apostles, are they? All are not **prophets**, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not *workers of miracles*, are they?

Ep 4.11 And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* **prophets**, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

Most reference to prophets in the NT refer to OT prophets.

Ac 11.27-28 ¶ Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ One of them named Agabus stood up and *began* to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the *reign* of Claudius.

Ac 21.10-11 As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

What do these uses of the word "prophet" indicate about the gift of prophecy? **A gift of insight into future events**

Ac 13.1 ¶ Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Ac 15.32 Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message.

What do these uses of the word "prophet" indicate about the gift of prophecy? **It appears to be the gift of preaching/teaching**

Remember our distinction between "sensational" gifts and "day-to-day" ministry gifts.

Recall that *all* the gifts in Rm 12 are day-to-day ministry gifts (except perhaps prophecy) while the gifts in 1 Cor 12-14 include both sorts of gifts.

What does this tell us about the gift of prophecy?

It seems to have two functions, sensational and day-to-day.

Next time we will start working step by step through 1 Cor 14.