

Lesson 22

Mark 16:1-20

VIII. Resurrection of Christ [16:1-20]

1. Women and Angels Appear at the Empty Tomb [16:1-8]

Vv. 1-3

¹ *When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.* ² *Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb* ³ *and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"*

- a. According to the Jewish calendar, Sabbath officially ended Saturday at 6:00pm. The women bought spices that evening with the intent of anointing Jesus' body the next morning [i.e. Sunday morning]. This shows that they were not expecting Jesus to rise on the third day.
- b. As the women approached the tomb, their concern was of a practical nature. They were wondering how it would be possible to move the large stone that sealed the tomb.

Vv. 4-8

⁴ *But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.* ⁵ *As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.* ⁶ *"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.* ⁷ *But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'* ⁸ *Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*

- a. The women, upon reaching the tomb, observed the large stone having been rolled away [According to Matthew 28:2, an angel had rolled the stone]. As the women entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in white. According to Luke 24:3-4 and John 20:12, this was an angel. Infact, both of them mention the presence of two angels. Matthew [28:5] and Mark mention only one, perhaps their focus was on the one that did the talking.
- b. The angel assured the alarmed women that Christ had indeed risen from the dead. Further, they told them to tell the other disciples to go ahead into Galilee where they would see him just as Jesus had promised them before his death [Mk 14:28 "*But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee*"].

Appearances of Jesus from the time of his Resurrection to Ascension [period of 40 days]

No.	Individual[s]	Location	Time	Reference
1.	Mary Magdalene	Near Tomb	Resurrection Sunday Morning	John 20:11–18
2.	Other women	On the Road	Resurrection Sunday Morning	Matt 28:9–10
3.	Peter	Jerusalem	Resurrection Sunday Morning	Luke 24:34
4.	Two men	Emmaus Road	Resurrection Sunday Afternoon	Luke 24:13–32
5.	10 Disciples [no Thomas]	Jerusalem	Resurrection Sunday	Luke 24:36–43
6.	11 Disciples	Jerusalem	Next Sunday	John 20:26–31
7.	7 Disciples	Sea of Galilee	During 40 day period	John 21:1–25
8.	More than 500	Unknown	During 40 day period	1 Cor 15:6
9.	11 Disciples	Mountain in Galilee	During 40 day period	Matt 28:16–20
10.	Disciples	Mount of Olives	At Ascension	Acts 1:3–8
11.	James	Unknown	During 40 day period [cannot be certain, could have also been after Ascension]	1 Cor 15:7

Note 1: After his ascension, Jesus appeared to Paul when he was traveling to Damascus [Acts 9:1-6].

Note 2: There is a considerable debate concerning the last 12 verses in Mark, i.e. verses 9-20. These verses are missing in certain early and reliable manuscripts. In addition, the Greek words and vocabulary style found in these verses differ from the other parts of Mark's gospel. Despite these issues, it is better to consider them as being present and interpret them accordingly.

2. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene [9-11]

⁹ When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. ¹⁰ She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. ¹¹ When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.

See above chart No. 1.

3. Jesus Appears to Two in the Country [16:12-13]

¹² Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. ¹³ These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either.

See above chart No. 4.

4. Jesus Commissions the Eleven Disciples [16:14-18]

Vv. 14-16

¹⁴ Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. ¹⁵ He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

- a. The disciples were not convinced of the resurrection and thus were unwilling to believe the testimony of the earlier witnesses of the resurrection. Jesus rebukes them for such a heart of unbelief. This reaction from the disciples is another testimony to the truthfulness of the resurrection account. The disciples did not invent the resurrection, but preached it because they were convinced of its reality.
- b. While Matthew [28:18-20] and Mark give Jesus’ command to proclaim the gospel [“good news”] to everyone, Luke gives the content of the gospel message.

Luke 24:46-48 ⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.”

- c. Jesus, by stating that “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” is not implying that salvation is by good works. That will contradict the numerous passages that speak about salvation as solely being the result of God’s grace through faith in Christ [John 6:47; Rom 4:5; Eph 2:8-9; Tit 3:5].

The New Testament always links true faith as being evidenced by obedience [John 14:15; Lk 6:46; Eph 2:8-10; Jas 2:17]. The very first command after one becomes a Christian is to outwardly proclaim his conversion through the waters of baptism. Water baptism is an outward picture of an inward reality [Rom 6:3-5]. Jesus links obedience to his commands as the evidence of true faith.

In addition, Jesus in the second half of verse 16 said “but whoever **does not believe** will be condemned.” Notice, **Jesus says that the reason for condemnation is unbelief**, not a lack of baptism [or any other religious ceremony].

Vv. 17-18

¹⁷ And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ 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.”

- a. Considerable controversy exists over the interpretation of these verses. The key question is “Do these signs exist even today or did they cease with the time of the apostles?” Some view all of these signs as existing even today, while others view these as ceasing after the time of the apostles. This material takes the second view.

While broad details of these two views and other related views concerning signs and miracles cannot be addressed in this material, see Appendix A for a brief overview of these verses.

5. Jesus Ascends to Heaven [16:19-20]

¹⁹ After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. ²⁰ Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

- a. As the disciples saw Jesus physically ascend to heaven, they were also given the privilege of seeing Jesus seated at the right hand of God. A picture of his completed work on earth and his equal status with God [Acts 7:56; Heb 1:3, 8:1, 10:12]. Acts 1:9-11 records the promise by an angel of the physical return of the Lord Jesus in the future.
- b. The disciples obediently followed the words of Jesus by going into the world and preaching the gospel. The Lord confirmed the message spoken by them through signs. The book of Acts confirms the spreading of the gospel by the disciples and the accompanying signs that authenticated the message spoken by the apostles.

Application

1. Every Christian is called to be a witness for Jesus Christ.

Mark ends his gospel with Jesus' command to all of his disciples in being a witness for him. While the response of the hearers is not in the Christian's hand, what he or she is responsible is to take the good news to all people.

While Scriptures clearly say that salvation is the work of the Lord [John 6:44, 15:16; Eph 1:3-6], they also clearly indicate that God saves people through the preaching of the gospel. In other words, the message proclaimed by his messengers is the **means** through which God saves people.

Romans 10:14-15, 17 ¹⁴ *How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And **how can they hear without someone preaching to them?*** ¹⁵ *And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"* ¹⁷ *Consequently, **faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.***

One needs to hear the message in order to be saved. 1 Peter 1:23 says *"For you have been **born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.**"* And the message that we are to preach is clear: *"Repent and Believe the good news"* [Mk 1:15]. We cannot and dare not tamper with the message. While preaching the whole message is crucial, our heart condition must also reflect a genuine love for the lost while preaching the good news.

Statistics point out that 95% of professing Christians have never led another person to Christ. In addition to this statistic, another statistic points out that 90% of professing Christians share the gospel to less than 5 people in a given year. Whether one accepts or denies these numbers, it is easily observable that the average Christian today is not actively involved in **personal evangelism**. While bringing an unbeliever to Church and having them hear the gospel is a part of evangelism, that is not all of evangelism. Jesus **calls every Christian to personally** *"Go...preach the good news to all creation."* If you are a Christian, this command applies personally to you!

Christians spend way too much time in reaching out to other Christians and totally neglect lost people around them. While fellowship for mutual encouragement and growth is essential, there ought to be a healthy balance. In addition, there is more time spending in attending bible studies, prayer meetings, various church programs and a total neglecting of witnessing to the lost. Again, a healthy balance is needed in these areas too.

Fear of rejection, fear of not having answers to questions that unbelievers pose, etc., should not discourage us from witnessing for Christ. As we faithfully proclaim what we do know, God's presence will be with us and enable us to be effective witnesses for him. We must not fear appearing as fools before an unbelieving world because we believe in the gospel. The message of the cross is foolishness to the world – *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God”* [1 Cor 1:18]. Yet, it is through this message that God saves people *“God was pleased **through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe**”* [1 Cor 1:21]. We must remember that in the ultimate analysis, it is not the world's evaluation of us that will matter – only God's evaluation of us will matter!

As we end Mark's gospel, may we remember the words of the Lord himself, *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, **but to serve**, and to give his life as a ransom for many”* [10:45]. If the Lord himself came to serve, are we any different? Should we not aim our lives in a way so as to serve him? And serving him starts with the willingness to be a witness for him – both in word and in deed.

If our lifestyle reflects a continual pattern of not witnessing for Christ, may we also remember the serious words of Christ, *“**Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven**”* [Matt 7:21]. And the will of the Father is that all should repent of their sins and put their trust in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In order for people to trust in Christ, we must take the message to them. Let us do what the Lord commands us to do – be a faithful and bold witness for him.

May our hearts cry out to him in true repentance for our failure in being faithful witnesses for him. May we through his grace live out the rest of our lives as true servants of Jesus Christ. May our hearts echo with Paul *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes”* [Rom 1:16].

For Reflection

- How many times in the last 6 months have I shared the gospel to unbelievers?
- Do I constantly talk about witnessing and hardly do any witnessing?
- Is evangelizing the lost an integral part of my prayers?

Quiz 22

1. **Jesus first appeared to _____.**
 - a. Peter
 - b. Mary, his mother
 - c. Mary Magdalene
2. **Which of the following statements is true? _____**
 - a. Baptism is needed for salvation
 - b. Baptism is the outward testimony of one's salvation
3. **A continual pattern of not witnessing may indicate that one is not even a Christian. T F**

Appendix A – Brief Overview of Mark 16:17-18

¹⁷ *And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ 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.*”

In Mark 16:17-18, Jesus gave 5 signs as accompanying *those who believe*: 1. Drive out demons [Acts 16:18]; 2. Speak in new tongues [Acts 2:4-11]; 3. Unharmed by snakes [Acts 28:3-6]; 4. Unharmed by Deadly Poison; and 5. Healing people by laying hands [Acts 28:8].

All of these events, with the exception of drinking deadly poison, are recorded as having occurred in the early church [reference passages cited above].

Definition of Apostle. The word apostle means “one who is sent on a mission.” While, in a broader sense, every Christian is one sent on a mission [i.e. mission to proclaim the gospel], the New Testament seems to make it clear that in a specific sense, this word refers to those called to the office of apostleship.

It primarily referred to the twelve. Scripture makes it clear that these twelve will also have special privileges in the coming kingdom. They will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel in the coming kingdom [Lk 22:39-40] and will also have their names written on the twelve foundations of the walls of the new Jerusalem which will be created after the 1000-year kingdom [Rev 21:14].

In a secondary sense, it also referred to others chosen by God in the early church for this office. **The key requirement was for these individuals to have personally seen the resurrected Lord.**

In 1 Corinthians 9:1, Paul in the context of defending his apostleship says, “*Am I not an apostle? **Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?**” Even when there was an effort to choose an apostle to replace Judas, the requirement was that he be a witness of the resurrected Lord “²¹ *Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,* ²² *beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us For one of these must become a **witness with us of his resurrection**” [Acts 1:21-22].**

Thus, we can see that an apostle was required to be an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ.

Role of Apostles. The apostles were instrumental in the **founding of the Church [Eph 2:20] and in the writing of the New Testament [Matthew – Revelation]**. They played a special role in God’s plan that cannot be duplicated by others. All the books in the New Testament were either written by an apostle or by a close associate of an apostle [e.g. Mark, a close associate of Peter and Luke, a close associate of Paul].

God gave the apostles various signs in order to authenticate the message they were speaking.

2 Corinthians 12:12 “*The **things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance.**”*

Hebrews 2:3-4 “*...**This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.** ⁴ **God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.**”*

Those that view these signs as being present today **miss the purpose** of these signs being given. They were given for the authentication of the messengers and their message. Once the message was completed [i.e. when the New Testament was completed] and the messengers [i.e. the apostles] died, the purpose of these signs was fulfilled. Thus, there is no need for further authentication.

Miracles in the Early Church. Some say that every believer in the early church was performing miracles. However, this does not find support in the Bible.

Acts 2:43 *“Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.”*

Acts 4:33 *“With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.”*

As seen above, not every believer was doing miracles, but the Lord was confirming the message spoken by the apostles.

Sign Gifts Today. Many who believe that sign gifts should operate today in the **life of every believer** say that a Christian must ask the Lord for these gifts (and must ask in faith). Again, such a view contradicts Scripture.

Mark in these verses [16:17-18] does not say anything about **asking** for these gifts. The only condition in those verses is *“those who believe.”* It does not say “Believe extra hard or beg for these gifts.” In addition, if these signs were to be present in the life of every Christian, that poses serious problems with many other texts.

For example, in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul writing in the context of spiritual gifts has these words to say:

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 *“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 12:29-31 *“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?”*

Unbiased interpretations of these verse [when read in the context of the entire chapter and chapters 13 and 14] clearly indicate that believers **are given** spiritual gifts **according to God’s purposes**. Not every believer is given every gift or gifts that they would desire to possess. **How then can one argue that every believer should be possessed with certain gifts [e.g., speaking in tongues]?**

Furthermore, if **all these signs as written by Mark must be present today and cannot be limited only to apostles, then all 5 signs must be present in the life of every Christian, not just one or two signs.** The only condition is that one has to believe in Christ. However, that is not the case. There have been countless number of godly Christians who have not had even one of these signs present in them. Does that mean that they were unspiritual? Not at all! It does no justice to Scripture in seeing these signs as being present in the life of every believer.

It is best to see these as signs that were present in the lives of the apostles that were instrumental in the founding of the New Testament Church and in the writing of the New Testament books.

Appendix B - Brief Overview Concerning Tongues

Brief History of Tongues Movement. For almost 2000 years after the Bible was written, there were no legitimate records of tongues speaking in the Christian church. Early church fathers and later giants of the faith – men such as Augustine, Chrysostom, Calvin, Luther, Whitfield, Wesley, Spurgeon, Moody, etc., did not speak in tongues nor did they advocate this as a biblical procedure.

The modern charismatic Pentecostal movement may be traced back to about 1900. From the beginning of the Holiness movement in eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina in 1886, tongues and other ecstatic phenomena were common. But it was in 1901 at Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, that specific tongues activity led to the birth of Pentecostalism.

Charles Parham, founder of that college and often-called “the father of the modern Pentecostal movement” left town in December of 1900 for a preaching engagement after assigning his students the task of answering the question, “What is the Bible evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost?”

They concluded that speaking in tongues was the evidence and began to pray fervently for this experience. On January 1, 1901, student Agnes Ozman “received the baptism.” Because this was the first occasion in modern times when this experience was followed with intense and fervent efforts to receive such a “baptism,” this has been called the birthday of Pentecostalism. The modern tongues movement may be traced to Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901.

A few years later, in 1905, the Azusa Street Mission was established in Los Angeles under student W.J. Seymour. This became the headquarters of Pentecostalism in that day with many holiness pastors flocking to this center.

Until 1960, tongues speaking, at least outwardly was limited almost entirely to Pentecostal churches. Then on April 3, 1960, Father Dennis Bennett, rector of a large Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California, announced to his congregation that he had spoken in tongues. This has been acclaimed as the beginning of “charismatic revival” within the historic, or “mainline” denominations. Since that date, all of the major denominations have been affected, and in recent years the greatest growth in tongues speaking has been seen among Roman Catholics.

Explanation of Tongues. The English word translated “tongue” or “tongues” is from the Greek word “glossa” and it refers to human languages or dialects. Even when Paul uses the phrase “*tongues of...angels*” [1 Cor 13:1], he is not referring to some unknown languages. “Tongues of angels” is a symbolic way of stressing eloquence. Paul’s point in context was that even if one speaks eloquently, but does not have love, his speech is nothing but a “*resounding gong or a clanging cymbal*” [1 Cor 13:1].

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul stresses the need for love in all of our actions. In addition, another point to remember, whenever angels spoke to humans as recorded in Scripture, they did not use any unknown languages. They always spoke in a manner that the hearer could understand.

Explanation of the Gift of Tongues. The gift of tongues were real human languages **previously unknown to the speakers**. On the Day of Pentecost, when the gift of tongues was present, it is clear that these were human languages because they were understood by the hearers.

Acts 2:5-11 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* ¹¹ *(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—**we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!*** ¹² *Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”*

An unbiased interpretation of these verses clearly indicate that people understood what was being spoken. In addition, it is good to remember that the **miracle was in the speaking and not in the hearing**.

Purpose of Tongues. One of the basic questions that many fail to ask is the purpose behind God giving this particular sign.

1 Corinthians 14:21-22 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.***

Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:21 by quoting Isaiah 28:11-12 gives us the reason for tongues. **It was a sign of God’s coming judgment toward unbelieving Israel.** In Isaiah, God had given this message as a warning of the coming judgment to unbelieving Israel through the hands of the Assyrians.

God had also warned unbelieving Israel through the mouth of Jeremiah that judgment was coming to them through the hands of the Babylonians as well. Jeremiah 5:15 says, “*O house of Israel,*” *declares the LORD, “I am bringing a distant nation against you—an ancient and enduring nation, **a people whose language you do not know, whose speech you do not understand.***”

Both Assyria and Babylon were nations whose language the Jewish people did not understand. And God did fulfill his warning by using these nations to punish unbelieving Israel.

Similarly, due to Israel’s rejection of the Messiah and the gospel message, judgment was now coming through the hands of the Romans. Paul uses similar language as Isaiah did in warning Israel of the coming judgment. That is why he says in 1 Corinthians 14:22 that tongues were “*a sign...for unbelievers.*” The unbelievers in context was Israel. That is why even when the gift of tongues was first given, it was given on the Day of Pentecost, when the crowd was predominantly Jewish. Some of these Jews would have come from different countries for the Feast of Pentecost.

1 Corinthians was written sometime around A.D. 55 from Ephesus. This prophesied judgment of Israel occurred a few years later in A.D. 70., when Rome under General Titus destroyed Jerusalem. After A.D. 70, there is no biblical record of speaking in tongues. Gospel of John, 1-2-3 John and Revelation were all written after A.D. 70 and they do not mention about tongues. Tongues ceased when its purpose was fulfilled.

Speaking in Tongues. Even when this gift was in legitimate use during Paul’s time, he stated clearly that it was to be done in a regulated manner.

1 Corinthians 14:23-33 “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?* ²⁴ *But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all,* ²⁵ *and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”* 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.”*

To summarize these verses, Paul says:

- (1) If tongues are not understood by the hearers, the speakers will be considered as being out of their mind [14:23];
- (2) At the most only two or three should speak and that too in turns [14:27];
- (3) Unless there is an interpreter, one should remain silent [14:27-28];
- (4) What is being spoken and interpreted must be verified by others according to Scripture [14:29];
- (5) It should build others up [14:31]; and
- (6) Everything should be done in an orderly manner [14:32-33].

The key phrase to remember is that “God is not a God of disorder, but of peace” [14:33].

Praying in Tongues. Some advocate that the Bible sanctions private praying in tongues even if one does not understand what he is praying. The verse that is often quoted as a support is 1 Corinthians 14:4 “*He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.*”

However, note what Paul would later say in the very same chapter, “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” [1 Cor 14:14-17].**

The main point of this passage is that one should pray with understanding [“with my mind”] and not in a manner that he does not understand. At best, praying in tongues without the involvement of the mind is a form of a temporary emotional fulfillment [1 Cor 14:4]. It has no real and lasting value since the mind is uninvolved in the process.

Here are some points that support the need for praying with understanding:

- How can one say “Amen” to prayers that he cannot understand?
- Since Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 12:7 that a spiritual gift is for the profit of all [*“manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good”*], will he not be contradicting himself if he sanctions praying in an unknown language that does not profit others?
- Since we are commanded to pray according to the will of God, if one cannot understand what he is praying, how can he know if he is or isn’t praying according to the will of God?
- Since, prayer is a form of our communication with God, why would God want us to communicate with him in a language that we cannot understand? It is also interesting to note that there is **no evidence in the Bible of anyone praying to God in a language that they did not understand.**

It is also interesting to note that people who believe one can ask God for certain gifts usually focus in asking for the gift of tongues. Rarely does one find people in this category ask for the gift of giving, gift of mercy, etc.

One must always guard against the tendency to interpret scriptures based on outward experiences. Rather, Scripture must always be used to rightly interpret every experience.

Note: Details concerning spiritual gifts and their use will be covered in detail during the study of the book of 1 Corinthians.