



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XIV  
Issue 339

# Tongues: Israel's Sign Gift

by — D.L. McCroskey (1902-1991)

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father (John 14:12).*

This has long been a puzzling verse. It is sometimes explained as referring to “spiritual works,” that the Lord’s believers would convert more people than He did. Yet our Lord made no such intimation here. He had just said to Philip and any other skeptics,

*Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works sake.*

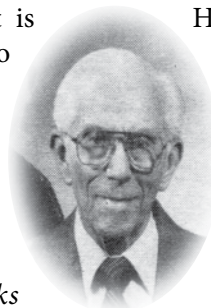
He was simply saying that in the coming Acts period His believing Jewish servants would perform even greater works in signs and miracles than He did. Not greater in quality or importance, but greater in quantity and scope. For one thing, the Lord never spoke in tongues, but His servants would do so to authenticate the coming of the holy Spirit, and three thousand people would be saved in one day as a result.

For further details on the prophecy in John 14:12, we must turn next to Mark 16:14-20. The risen Lord had appeared to the eleven and said,

*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

Then in :17 He said,

*These signs shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*



Here were five gifts of a miraculous nature. Remember, there was no condition of spirituality mentioned. It was just simply that these signs would follow “them that believe.” In :20 we read that

*They went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following.*

Now if you will look up all of the miracles worked by the Apostles in the Book of Acts, you will find every one of these Mark 16 promises fulfilled except drinking poison. Even this gift may well have been used at times. For these gifts were for a practical reason as well as for signs to the unbeliever. The Lord was sending them forth with the gospel of repentance (Mark 1:4; Acts 2:38; 11:18). Some of them would be traveling among dangers, poisonous snakes in desert places, murderous enemies in others. In those days poisoning was a favorite way of doing away with an enemy, but they were not to fear either of these perils.

Because some could not relate these Mark 16 signs to the church after the Acts period, and because these signs did not work after the first century, they long ago began to doubt the inspiration of this passage. Some Bible scholars still believe Mark 16:9-20 is not part of the inspired Word, but this view is now widely discredited. The Syriac and Latin versions all have it, and it is quoted by so many of the early writers. Positive proof that the passage is inspired lies in the fact that it was fulfilled in Acts.

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## **Bible Student's Notebook™**

*Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal*

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This free weekly electronic publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
  - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
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  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

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## Strictly Personal

Greetings again dear and precious saints!

It is always a joy to bring you another issue of the *BSN*.

### EXCITING DAYS AHEAD!

Last week I spoke of all of the attention that is being given to the year 2012. Some hold real concern and reservations about the months that lie ahead. However, for those of us who really know Father, these can be exciting days of opportunity and expectation. After all, Father uses times like these to *activate* the calling of His chosen – stirring in their hearts a desire to find and know the truth. We who have been made trustees of the revelation entrusted to Paul, the Apostle, can look forward to sharing the “*good news of the Happy God*” to those who are looking for real answers. We are poised and positioned for such an occasion.

In addition to our *Daily Email Goodies*, weekly *Bible Student's Notebook*, hundreds of online articles and audios, themed blogs, hundreds of books offered by dozens of trusted authors (including 19 of our own, and over 100 classic reprints), we are now in the BETA stage of our 24/7 internet streaming radio station (*BibleStudentsRadio.com*).

We receive daily calls on our toll-free number from those seeking truth, comfort and fellowship. My son Clyde III answers most of these calls – spending a significant amount of time responding to questions, introducing new truths, encouraging those who have no local fellowship, offering free packs of studies and BSNs, as well as taking book orders. My son Nathan faithfully packages nearly a hundred of our books a week

for shipment – literally all over the world.

Of course, none of this could be done alone. Special thanks go out to the handful of saints who steadfastly co-labor with us on a regular basis, allowing these avenues of access to truth, not only to continue, but grow and expand. Without Father's gracious financial gifts through you, we would be very limited in our outreach.

### VISIT FROM ANDRÉ SNEIDAR

As this BSN goes out to you, my editor, co-laborer and dear brother and friend, André Sneidar and his family are visiting for the week. He usually makes at least a semiannual trip from Virginia. Not only does it allow for sweet fellowship, but we use the time to tie up loose ends on our many publishing projects, as well as developing plans for our future ones.

### MY LATEST BOOK

I am thankful to announce the release of my newest book, *God's Holy Nation – Israel and Her Earthly Purpose*. This book is a collection of studies related to God's terrestrial plans – contrasted with our heavenly one. This is the first of our books dealing with the core theme of “*rightly dividing the Word of Truth*.” Christendom literally has consumed itself with its failure to correctly recognize God's distinct dealings with Israel. The truths of who Israel is, and what her purpose is, contrasted with that of the church, the Body of Christ, is essential to the walk of the believer today. Ordering details can be found on the back page of this issue.

Until next week, my love to each of you.

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.



TONGUES (continued from front page)

**Before and After the Cross**

During His earthly ministry, our Lord's miracles were signs to the unbelieving Jews that they might believe that He was the Son of God.

*Many other signs truly did Jesus ... but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30-31).*

After the cross, the risen Lord gave this power to work miracles to His Apostles, again for signs to the unbelieving Jews to give divine authority to the message of the Apostles (II Corinthians 12:12).

**Israel – the Sign People**

*The Jews require a sign (I Corinthians 1:22).*

*An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign (Matthew 12:39).*

*They said therefore unto Him, "What sign shewest Thou then, that we may see, and believe Thee?" (John 6:30).*

*Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe (John 4:48).*

In His dealings with His earthly people, Israel, God gave them three notable signs:

1. The sign of the virgin birth of His Son (Isaiah 7:14).

2. The sign of the resurrection of Christ (Matthew 12:39).

3. The sign of speaking in tongues during the period from Pentecost to 70 A.D. This was a sign, not to believers, but to unbelieving Jews (I Corinthians 14:22; *"this people"* Isaiah 28:11; I Corinthians 14:21).

**End of the Sign Era**

Sign gifts had two purposes:

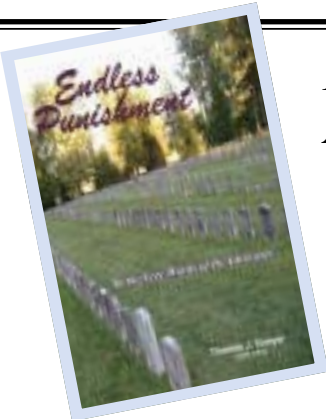
1. To authenticate the inspired revelations of the Apostles.
2. To prove to unbelieving Jews that *"that same Jesus whom ye have crucified"* is the true Messiah.

God does not continue to give signs when their message is rejected – as Isaiah said, *"yet they would not hear"* (28:12). When Israel as a nation was cast off at Acts 28:28, the sign gifts discontinued, not to return during the present age of grace.

These temporary gifts were to cease (I Corinthians 13:8). The total absence of tongues, healings and other signs gifts in Paul's later, or Prison Epistles shows that they had all passed off the scene. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 13:9-10,

*For we know in part, and we prophecy in part. But when that which is perfect is come then that which is in part shall be done away.*

That expression, *"that which is perfect,"* does not refer to



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when we get to heaven, as so many think. It means that when Paul's full revelations are all given, when the "New Testament" is finished, then there would be no more use of the temporary gifts. The "New Testament" was finished, and the temporary gifts *did* cease.

### THE PURPOSE OF TONGUES

*With stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to this people. To whom He said, "This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear" (Isaiah 28:11-12).*

*In the law it is written, "With men of other tongues will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear Me," saith the Lord (I Corinthians 14:21).*

*Wherefore tongues are for a sign not to them that believe, but to them that believe not (I Corinthians 14:22).*

In these Scriptures there are three important points that we should carefully note. They are:

1. "Tongues are for a sign" (I Corinthians 14:22). In general, signs were temporary; they were to show God's approval of a message or the messenger.

*The Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following (Mark 16:20).*

*Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs (Acts 2:22).*

*God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders (Hebrews 2:4).*

2. A sign to the Jewish nation. "This people" (Isaiah 28:11) is a phrase that always refers to the Jewish nation, especially when it is connected with the statement that "they will not hear Me." In spite of the signs, Israel refused to hear.

3. Tongues were a sign to unbelievers, not to believers.

*Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not (I Corinthians 14:22).*

These unbelievers were the unbelieving Jews of that time, not the Gentiles – and certainly not the church of today.

### THE HISTORY OF TONGUES

The Greek word *glossolalia* (tongues, or speaking in tongues) is found only in five passages in the New Testament. It is used only once in the Four Gospels, in Mark 16:17. Here it is among the prophesied charismatic gifts to be fulfilled during the apostolic era, or the Acts period, after which sign gifts all went off the scene. Speaking in tongues is found only in three passages in Acts, in Chapter 2, 10 and 19. It is found for the last time in I Corinthians 12-14; of the 21 epistles in the New Testament, tongues are in this one only. Let us now look at the gift of tongues in the following passages:

#### 1. Acts 2

Pentecost means fifty. In fulfillment of the type in the Wave Loaves in Leviticus 23:15-22, holy Spirit descended on the fiftieth day after the resurrection of Christ. How were the people of Israel to know this? God gave them *three signs* to show that this great event was taking place, right on schedule!

#### Sign Number 1

*Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind (:2).*

This sound "filled all the house." We are reminded of the time when Solomon had finished building the first temple (II Chronicles 7:1-3). "Fire came down from heaven," and holy Spirit, in the form of the Shekinah glory cloud (Exodus 40:34), filled the Lord's house.

#### Sign Number 2

The appearance of "clove tongues like as of fire" (Acts 2:3). Some strange doctrines have been built on the supposition that this was literal fire. It was not. It was "like as" of fire, another sign to signify the presence of holy Spirit.

#### Sign Number 3

*They were all filled with holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (:4).*

What were these tongues? Just what the text says: "other tongues," or other languages. Jews from many nations ►

*YAHWEH (continued from page 3078)*

were there for the feasts of Jehovah (:9-11). These were all known, national languages. The Scriptures know nothing of an “unknown” tongue. The word “unknown” is used in the *Authorized Version (KJV)* in several places (i.e., I Corinthians 14), but always in *italics*. That means that it was *not* in the original, but supplied by the translators.

Speaking in tongues, then, on the day of Pentecost, was for a sign to the *unbelieving* Jews. It was to be of short duration. Had it been something permanent, to run through the whole dispensation of grace, every believer could have had it. Instead, only a few had it, mainly the Apostles. God knew that the authority of the Apostles, and their message of the coming of holy Spirit, would be challenged. So He backed them up with mighty signs.

There is no mention of any Gentile at Pentecost. They were all “*Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven*” (:5). The tongues were for the benefit of the unbelieving Jews who looked on.

They were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, “*What meaneth this?*” (:12).

## 2. Acts Chapter 10

This was in the house of Cornelius, the Gentile army cap-

tain. Peter was preaching the risen Lord to them. All of a sudden, he was interrupted.

*While Peter yet spake these words, holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the Word (Acts 10:44).*

Peter had six Jewish brethren with him (:45; 11:12). How were these six Jews to know that holy Spirit had come on the Gentile converts? By the fact that the latter began to speak in other languages or tongues. (10:46).

The tongues were not for the benefit of the Gentile converts who did the speaking. They didn’t need this sign; they already believed, just as many a Gentile has done since, without any sign.

*They of the circumcision [the six Jews] which believed were astonished (:45).*

The sign was working. These Jews were professed believers in Christ. They were “unbelieving” only in the sense that, up to this point, practically all Jews had refused to believe that the Gentiles were to be saved and receive the gift of holy Spirit. Even Peter had his apprehensions at first (:14-15, 28). Thanks to the sign of tongues, Peter now had six Jewish brethren to back him up when he tried to explain these Gentile converts to the Jewish assembly back home in Jerusalem.

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### 3. Acts Chapter 19

At Ephesus Paul had met 12 men (either Jews, or Jewish proselytes). They had received John's baptism, but seemed to know nothing of Christ's redemptive work on the cross, nor of the coming of holy Spirit. Paul spoke to them of believing on Christ (:4.) They believed, and when Paul laid his hands on them (another gift for the apostolic era only, from Deuteronomy 34:9), holy Spirit came on them and they spoke with tongues.

We see, then, that speaking in tongues was again a sign to the Jews. Not only a sign to the twelve Jews whom Paul had met, but also to all of the Jews in the synagogue at Ephesus, where Paul next takes his ministry (:8).

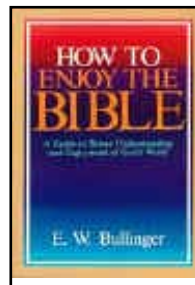
### 4. I Corinthians Chapters 12-14

To get the background here we must go back to Acts 18, the founding of the church at Corinth. Paul reasoned in the synagogue at Corinth (:4), and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. He "testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ." The result was that they (the Jews) "opposed themselves, and blasphemed," and Paul said, "from henceforth I will go to the Gentiles" (:5-6).

Corinth was a center of world commerce. Many Jews resided there, and many languages were spoken in the city. Among the believers, no doubt there were both Jews and Gentiles who could speak in other languages besides their own. Paul continued his work in Corinth for a year and six months (18:11). Meanwhile, the Jews refused and opposed the message that Paul brought, and he left the synagogue and began holding meetings in a house right next door to the synagogue! (18:7). Although Paul could no longer speak directly to the Jews in the synagogue, his message next door did somehow filter into the synagogue – so much that Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, heard the Word and was saved, and some others with him (18:8)!

For the benefit of those unbelieving Jews in the synagogue at Corinth, God confirmed His Apostle's message with a sign. What sign? The gift of tongues given to the believers in the new Corinthian assembly. At first, no doubt, this was the pure gift from holy Spirit bestowed on certain men in the Corinthian assembly for the purpose of authenticating the Apostle and his message to the unbelieving Jews next door, and throughout the city.

However, the Corinthians began to misuse this gift, and perhaps confused it with the ability of some of their numbers to speak in some of the foreign languages that they had learned down at the docks, or in some other



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way. The ability to speak in another language has always had a prideful appeal, and the Corinthians were carnal! (I Corinthians 3:3).

In any case, Paul wrote chapter 12, 13 and 14 to them to de-emphasize the tongues gift, and to increase emphasis on what he called "a more excellent way." That was the way of love, as described in chapter 13.

#### **DOWN-GRADED 2,000 TO 1**

Paul down-graded the importance of the gift of tongues 2,000 to one. He would rather speak meaningfully in "five words" than use "ten thousand words" that others could not understand (I Corinthians 14:19).

#### **"THAT WHICH IS PERFECT"**

*Love 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 prophecy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away (I Corinthians 13:8-10).*

Three things are mentioned that were to disappear from the scene – prophecies, tongues and divine knowledge.

#### **Prophecies**

These prophecies were not what we usually think of as Bible prophecies. They were given by the Acts period prophets (as in Acts 11:27; 13:1; 21:10) through whom God gave early believers temporary oral instructions while the New Testament was in the making. Remember that they had only the Old Testament Scriptures then.

Knowledge is in the same category: temporary knowledge from God until the New Testament was finished. These two gifts obviously would be discontinued when they were no longer needed.

### Tongues

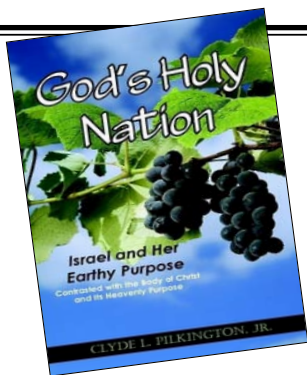
Tongues were temporary demonstrations to the nation of Israel during the Acts period. Their purpose was to authenticate the apostles and their message.

Speaking in tongues would also cease when God stopped dealing with the nation Israel at Acts 28:28. This gift went off the scene at the close of the Acts period, when God set the rebellious nation aside for the duration of the present age, and turned to the Gentiles (Acts 28:28).

Until the whole Bible was completed, even Paul had to say, "We know in part." Yet all of these temporary gifts would cease "when that which is perfect is come."

What is "that which is perfect" here? It is not "when we get to heaven," as so many think. Nor does it refer to the coming of the Lord. "That which is perfect" is the completed, Spirit-breathed, flawless Word of God (Colossians 1:25)!

1. Tongues in the Bible were known languages.
2. Tongues were a sign to unbelieving Jews, never to convince Gentiles or the Church. The Jews are a sign people (I Corinthians 1:22).
3. Tongues were to cease when their need as a sign was fulfilled (I Corinthians 13:8).
4. Not every believer spoke in tongues, only specially gifted ones (I Corinthians 12:30).
5. Tongues were never a sign of spirituality, but rather lack of it.
6. In the Bible, we learn of no woman who ever spoke in tongues. In Acts 1:14, "These all" is in the masculine gender in the Greek, showing that only the men prayed, although women were present. In the big chapter on tongues, I Corinthians 14, the women are explicitly forbidden to speak (:34).
7. Our Lord Jesus Christ never spoke in tongues! Nor did the Apostle Paul at the time of his conversion. Tongues had nothing to do with salvation.



## *God's Holy Nation – Israel and Her Earthly Purpose* Contrasted with the Body of Christ and Its Heavenly Purpose

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Israel plays a key role in God's plan of the ages. Though currently she has been set aside "until the times of the nations be fulfilled," He is by no means done with her.

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Today, God is operating His purpose in the ecclesia – the Church, the Body of Christ. The Scriptures provide us with the clear, critical distinction between God's *earthly* nation and Christ's *celestial* body.

Christendom, however, has diminished Israel's divine significance in an attempt to advance their artificial homogenization of Scripture's grand theme, thus obscuring the glorious evangel of our day – "the Good News of the Happy God" committed to the trust of Paul, our Apostle.

This work highlights some of the more prominent distinctions which belong to God's literal, physical, earthly nation. In so doing, it is our desire to allow the reader to see more clearly God's dealings with God's favored nation, so that they may in turn embrace a *far greater* calling and purpose.

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