

required to lay down certain restrictions on its use. It was to be used only for edifying, only by two or three in a single meeting and then only if an interpreter were present, and never in preference to prophecy. The gift of interpretation is a corollary gift to the gift of tongues. The gift of tongues was given as a sign to unbelievers (I Cor. 14:22) and especially to unbelieving Jews (v. 21).

Edgar (pp. 121-122, 143) reports:

The New Testament uses the word GLOSSA in the normally accepted sense of the physical tongue, or human language. GLOSSA occurs fifty times. All of the passages using GLOSSA are clear and undisputed except those describing the gift of tongues. Of these passages, the one more seriously disputed is 1 Corinthians 14. No proof from the Greek language has been presented to demonstrate that GLOSSA was used to mean unintelligible ecstatic speech. A word must be interpreted according to its normal usage unless the context demands otherwise. This is a basic rule of interpretation. Those passages describing the gift of tongues cannot be interpreted as referring to other than known human languages unless it is impossible for this meaning to fit the passage and its context. Since many feel that language, in the sense of normal human languages, makes the best sense in these passages, certainly such an unsupported meaning for the word tongues as unintelligible ecstatic speech is not demanded by the passages. The disputed passages involved are Mark 16:17; Acts 2:4ff.; 10:46; 19:6; and 1 Corinthians 12-14.

The only sound exegetical procedure is to interpret GLOSSA, tongue, where it refers to the spiritual gift in 1 Corinthians as normal human language, since this is a valid use of the word, since it agrees with the only passage describing the gift, and since it cannot be proved that tongue is ever used of unintelligible ecstatic utterance. In order to set aside the view that languages are referred to in this passage, it must be definitely demonstrated that language does not fit in the passage. However, this is impossible. This not only cannot be demonstrated, but it can be demonstrated that language fits the passage very well.

Michael Green (pp. 161-163) writes:

This is the ability to speak in language that the speaker has not learnt, that he does not understand, and that is incomprehensible to the hearer. I say "language" with some hesitation, for whilst some charismatics claim that they speak in a definite human language, others do not, but regard the gift as a "Holy Spirit language" designed to enable them to worship God in greater depth and with greater release in their inner being -- rather like the love language of a happily married couple, which