

Message #51

Mark 16:9-20

“The Gift of Tongues”
(Part 5)

Snake handling, poison drinking, casting out demons, laying hands on the sick and, of course, “speaking in tongues” are all things that some churches do as a form of worship; and eventually, all will appeal to **Mark 16:17-18** as a basis for their actions.

Forget about the fact that **verses 9-20** ARE NOT even found in two of the most ancient manuscripts. Forget about the fact that the context of **verses 9-20** is totally disregarded. There are many people, who this very day, are involved in bizarre forms of worship because they have never really studied nor do they understand **Mark 16:9-20**.

IN ORDER TO CONFIRM THE WORD OF GOD FOR FAITH DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES, CERTAIN SUPERNATURAL CONFIRMATORY SIGNS WERE ADMINISTERED BY THE APOSTLES SHORTLY AFTER CHRIST ASCENDED.

Sign gifts are clearly apostolic. They required that an apostle be present. This Biblical fact is stressed in many N.T. passages: Mark 16:14, 20; Acts 2:43; 4:13, 16, 33; 5:12; II Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4. There are ONLY three N.T. books in which the gift of being able to speak in a foreign language, “the gift of tongues,” is mentioned: 1) Mark (16:17); 2) Acts (2:4, 11; 10:46; 19:6); and 3) I Corinthians (12, 13, 14).

It becomes absolutely imperative to examine the context in order to make proper application and unfortunately, snake handlers, strychnine drinkers and tongues speakers have neglected to do this and, as a result, participate in bizarre rituals which God does not accept as true worship.

QUESTION #1 – To whom is this passage addressed? **16:14**

It is very clear from this verse that the primary object of this appearance, this commission and this communication were the eleven apostles. It is specifically stated that this event took place for the “eleven themselves.” These eleven are specifically named in Acts 1:13. This text, then, was not addressed to every believer; it was specifically aimed at the eleven apostles.

In the N.T. age, and even in eternity, there is a major distinction between the apostles and every other believer. In the infant days of the Church Age, the highest ranked gift that one could have was the gift of apostle (I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). This gift is so highly ranked by God that it will be evidenced throughout all eternity (Rev. 21:14).

QUESTION #2 – What was the struggle of the eleven? **16:11, 13, 14**

The problem of this passage is that the apostles DID NOT believe that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, which is something He said He would do.

In other words, the problem of the eleven apostles was one of unbelief. These eleven DID NOT believe the Word spoken to them and they DID have hard hearts (16:14). These apostolic sign gifts, then, were specifically gifts given in the context of their unbelief, which completely coincides with the Word of God, which says tongues is a sign of unbelief (I Cor. 14:22).

QUESTION #3 – What was the assignment given to the eleven? **16:15-16**

The specific assignment given to these eleven was one of taking “the gospel” into all of the world and preach it to all those created by God. These eleven viewed this as their specific assignment (Acts 10:34, 39-43).

The Gospel that Mark presented in his Gospel was the good news that any Jew, who would be baptized first in water by John and then baptized later by the Spirit of God, would be able to enter the kingdom. This message is clearly stressed from the opening chapter of the book (1:4-8, 14-15).

Two very significant grammatical points are the participles “believed” and “baptized” (16:16). The participle believed is active, whereas the participle baptized is passive. What this means is that believing on Jesus Christ is an action in which the person participates in being saved, whereas the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an action the person receives.

Keep in mind at the time Christ said the words of Mark 16:15-16, the baptism of the Holy Spirit had not yet occurred.

QUESTION #4 – What was the proof of the truth of this apostolic message? **16:17-18**

Keep in mind at this time ONLY Jews believed they had a true relationship with God. Christ was now telling His apostles to take this message of faith and Spirit baptism to everyone. By faith, any who believe on Christ can share in the kingdom of God (John 1:12; 3:3-6).

Christ knew He was sending these unbelieving apostles into an unbelieving world. They were proclaiming a new message concerning God’s new international program and, as a result, He promised that certain signs would accompany them as they went on this mission.

Sign #1 - The demonic sign. **16:17a**

This was a special apostolic ability to be able to recognize who was demon-possessed and, in recognizing it, be able to cast out the demon. This was a special apostolic power given by Jesus Christ to the apostles (Luke 9:1-2).

Sign #2 - The language sign. **16:17b**

Tongues was also an apostolic sign gift, which demonstrated that God’s Gospel was, in fact, reaching out to people of other languages.

Tongues is also seen in the Bible in connection with the apostles and when the apostles weren't present, there was great confusion concerning the gift, as seen in Corinth.

Obviously if the assignment given to these apostles is to present the Gospel to all of God's creation (**16:15**), they needed some way to communicate the Gospel into the foreign languages of the people. Since there were no Bibles that were written that could be translated, these apostles needed a supernatural way of presenting the Gospel in the various languages and the "gift of tongues" was exactly the gift that was needed.

Sign #3 - The protective sign. **16:18a**

During the infant days of the Church Age, Satan and his forces literally wanted the apostles dead. It is very clear that when the apostles began presenting the truth of God, Satan raised up religious leaders and political leaders in an attempt to destroy them (i.e. Acts 5:29-34). Many times the Scriptures indicate that the apostles were protected from death (Acts 5:17-26; 9:20-29; 12:1-11; 14:19-20).

Although we have no record of poison being given to an apostle, we do have a record of a deadly viper biting an apostle and the poison from the snake's bite did absolutely no harm to him (Acts 28:1-6). Clearly God protected these apostles until their mission was complete and then He took them home.

The Lord knew the apostles would face great satanic, hostile hatred and He divinely protected them so that they might fulfill their mission. Satan could not stop them (Luke 10:18-20). It is comforting to know that Satan cannot "touch" one born of God (I John 5:18).

Sign #4 - The healing sign. **16:18b**

The apostles were given a special ability to heal people (Acts 3:1-8; 5:12, 15-16) and even raise people from the dead (Acts 9:36-43). It is clear from the fact that even Christ's disciples summoned the Apostle Peter, that these abilities were uniquely apostolic abilities (Acts 9:38).

QUESTION #5 – What was the response of the eleven? **16:19-20**

After the Lord was received into heaven, and after they had been baptized with the Spirit, they got busy and preached everywhere and did the Lord's work, and all of the signs that He said would follow them, did follow them. Through these signs, Jews realized Gentiles could now be in God's kingdom and Gentiles realized they could have a relationship with God. Through these signs the Word of God was confirmed that by believing on Christ, one could be saved and did have a right to enter the kingdom of God.

These signs went with the apostles. However, their message remains: Believe on Jesus Christ and you, too, can share in the kingdom of God. The apostolic signs prove He is the only way to salvation. Will you accept Him today?