

## PNEUMATOLOGY (134)

Tongues was connected to Spirit baptism as a sign that both Jews and Gentiles could be baptized by the Spirit by believing on Jesus Christ.

**(Question #7)** - What is the proper interpretation of Mark 16:15-20?

With as much emphasis as some people put on tongues, it is important for the true student of the Bible to realize 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); 3) I Corinthians (12, 13, 14). We have already spent much time discussing these other passages, so we think it is fitting and important to discuss this one in Mark.

From this one passage in Mark, some people bring rattlesnakes into their church and dance with them in some glazed-eyed frenzy while listening to blaring and thumping music from electric guitars. From this one passage in Mark, some people bring out the poison strychnine and drink it, claiming they are worshipping God. And of course from this passage in Mark, others speak in tongues. What is very sad is that those people who do these things **never** take the time to sit down with their Bibles and carefully study the context of Mark 16 with the objective of “rightly dividing” what is really there. We believe that a careful analysis will reveal truth that is perfectly consistent and accurate in view of what we have already learned. To discuss this text, I would like to do it in question and answer form:

**Question #1** - To whom was this message addressed? Mark 16:14

This is not difficult to discover; the object of this post-resurrection appearance of Jesus Christ, the object of this commission and communication were the eleven apostles !

It is specifically stated that this even occurred to “the eleven themselves” (16:14) and these eleven are specifically named in **one** verse (Acts 1:13). Now any surface level reading of the New Testament will quickly reveal that there are some major differences between the apostles and any other believer. The gift of apostle was the **highest** ranked gift one could have (I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). The gift was so highly ranked that God will have those who had it evidenced for **all** eternity (Rev. 21:14). When Jesus Christ appeared in Mark’s account, there were only eleven apostles because Judas had been eliminated and Matthias, Judas’ replacement, had not been selected (Acts 1:26). There were many things that happened to, for and with the apostles that will not ever happen to us and to superimpose ourselves into a passage that is specifically for them is not an accurate handling of God’s Word.

**Question #2** - What was the struggle of the eleven apostles? Mark 16:11, 13, 14

It is very clear that the problem with these eleven apostles was that they **did not** believe that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, which is something He had specifically told them He would do. Their problem was unbelief ! These eleven had not believed what Christ told them and their hearts were hard (16:14).

## PNEUMATOLOGY (135)

This is a critical point, for these **apostolic sign gifts** mentioned in this context of Mark are specifically sign gifts given in the context of the **apostle's unbelief**. This completely coincides with Paul's statement that tongues was a sign for unbelievers (I Cor. 14:22).

**Question #3** - What was the assignment given to these eleven apostles? Mark 16:15-16

The specific assignment given to these eleven was one of taking "the gospel" into "all" the world and preaching it to all people God had created, regardless of ethnic background. We learn from the book of Acts that these eleven viewed this as **their own** responsibility (Acts 10:34, 39-43).

Now there are many who take this apostolic assignment as one given to every believer. We would suggest that if this is one's perspective, two points must be acknowledged:

1) Most believers of all ages have not done this in their own lives.

In fact, some of the greatest names in the history of the Church are people who were known for being in one location: Martin Luther—Germany; John Calvin—Switzerland; Charles Spurgeon—England; Lewis Sperry Chafer—Dallas, Texas.

2) The apostles who wrote truth for the Church Age neglected to demand this in their writings.

For example, neither Paul nor John demand that Church Age believers pack up and move to take the Gospel to every living ethnic group. Furthermore, Paul specifically identifies a man's job as being a ministry entrustment from God (Eph. 6:5-8). The Apostle Peter taught the same thing (I Pet. 2:18-20). In fact, Peter says that we are to be ready to make a defense for what we believe to any who ask us, seemingly implying there are times when we wait to be asked and do not force the issue (I Pet. 3:15). Those who want to apply Mark 16:17-18 should begin with Mark 16:15!

**Question #4** - What are the key grammatical points to consider when forming an interpretation of Mark 16:15ff.?

God put His Word in writing. He selected Greek as His choice of language for the New Testament. The Greek language has a grammar and syntax that is quite precise, which is probably one reason why God chose this language. When it comes to examining any text God has put in writing, grammatical matters must be carefully considered by the one teaching because he is accountable to God to "rightly divide" God's Word. When it comes to Mark 16:15ff., this careful analysis has been neglected and frankly those who try to apply this without a careful analysis are an offense to God, who is so systematic, so organized, and so structured. Three grammatical matters help give us insight into this passage:

**(Grammatical Matter #1)** - There is an article before the word "gospel" in Mark 16:15.

The fact that Mark puts an article, by decree of the Holy Spirit, before Gospel, indicates that Jesus Christ was speaking of a specific Gospel which obviously the disciples and Mark were aware.

## PNEUMATOLOGY (136)

The specific Gospel which Mark presented in the Gospel of Mark 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 presented in the opening chapter of Mark (Mark 1:4-8, 14-15).

When Christ told these disciples to preach the Gospel, they certainly had no concept of the Pauline Gospel of Romans, which would be written several years later. The good news these disciples thought of was that just mentioned.

**(Grammatical Matter #2)** - The participle “believed” is an active participle. 16:16a

What this means is that the individual is actively involved in the act of believing on Jesus Christ. The individual, from his perspective, participates in the action of placing his or her faith in Jesus Christ.

**(Grammatical Matter #3)** - The participle “baptized” is a passive participle. 16:16b

What this means is that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an action which the person receives. He is the recipient of the action, not the source of it. Notice the issue of action for the individual is in believing or not believing. Upon this very issue hinges salvation or condemnation. When a person chooses to believe on Jesus Christ, he is the recipient of a baptism that saves, which is Spirit baptism and it is this baptism that guarantees one shall not be condemned.

Now Christ is challenging His eleven to preach and teach this good news to all creation, not just to Jews. In other words, any who will believe on Christ will be baptized with the Holy Spirit and eternally saved. These disciples were given this directive from Jesus Christ.

**Question #5** - What would be the proof or evidence that this apostolic message was true?  
Mark 16:17-18

At this time, **only** Jews believed they had a true relationship with God. Christ was now telling His apostles that they were to take this message of faith and Spirit baptism to everyone. By faith, any who would believe on Christ, will share in the Kingdom of God (John 1:12; 3:3-6). Christ was fully aware that 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 these eleven that certain signs would accompany them as they carried out this assignment.

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

This was a special apostolic ability to be able to recognize who was demon-possessed and in recognizing it to be able to cast out the demon. This was a special apostolic power given by Jesus Christ to the apostles (Luke 9:1-2). It was this very sign that helped substantiate the apostolic ministry of Paul, soon after taking the Gospel to Europe (Acts 16:16-18).