

1 Corinthians 14:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

Analysis

He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God—the Greek simply has *glōssa* (γλῶσσα, "tongue/language"), with "unknown" supplied by translators. Paul's point: uninterpreted tongues are vertically directed (God-ward) but horizontally ineffective (man-ward). **No man understandeth him** (*oudeis akouei*, "no one hears/understands")—without interpretation, tongues lack communicative function in corporate worship.

In the spirit he speaketh mysteries (πνεύματι λαλεῖ μυστήρια)—*pneumati* could be "in spirit" (his spirit) or "by the Spirit" (Holy Spirit), likely the former given the context of private devotion. *Mystēria* are divine secrets, but here secrets that remain secret—unknown to hearers, thus failing to edify.

Historical Context

Corinthian worship likely included simultaneous uninterpreted tongues-speaking, creating confusion rather than worship. Paul doesn't deny tongues' validity but questions their public use without interpretation.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What distinguishes private devotional tongues from their misuse in public worship?
2. How does speaking 'mysteries' that no one understands fail to serve love?
3. Why does Paul emphasize that tongues are directed toward God rather than men?

Interlinear Text

ο	γὰρ	λαλεῖ	γλώσσῃ	οὐκ	ἀνθρώποις
G3588	For	he speaketh	in an unknown tongue	not	unto men
G1063		G2980	G1100	G3756	G444
λαλεῖ	ἀλλὰ	τῶ	θεῷ·	οὐδεὶς	γὰρ
he speaketh	but	G3588	unto God	no man	For
G2980			G2316	G3762	G1063
πνεύματι	δὲ	λαλεῖ	μυστήρια·		ἀκούει
in the spirit	him howbeit	he speaketh	mysteries		understandeth
G4151	G1161	G2980	G3466		G191

Additional Cross-References

Mark 16:17 (Parallel theme): And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

Acts 10:46 (References God): For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

Acts 19:6 (Spirit): And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

1 Corinthians 13:2 (Parallel theme): And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

1 Corinthians 2:10 (Spirit): But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

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