

# 1 Corinthians 14:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

## Analysis

**Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not**—Greek *hōste hai glōssai eis sēmeion eisin* (ώστε αἱ γλῶσσαι εἰς σημεῖον εἰσιν, "so tongues are for a sign"), but for *tois apistois* (τοῖς ἀπίστοις, "the unbelieving"), not *tois pisteuousin* (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν, "the believing"). **But prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe**—the chiastic reversal.

The "sign" is ambiguous (see v. 21's judgment context): tongues serve as a sign to unbelievers—but what kind? Verse 23 clarifies: unbelievers hearing tongues think Christians are mad, hardly a positive witness. Paul's point: tongues don't convert unbelievers (they confuse them), while prophecy edifies believers. The Corinthians had it backwards, prizing tongues in believer-gatherings where prophecy should dominate.

## Historical Context

The Corinthians apparently thought tongues would impress unbelievers, demonstrating the Spirit's presence. Paul argues the opposite: tongues confuse outsiders, while prophecy convicts them (v. 24-25).

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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1. In what sense are tongues a 'sign' for unbelievers?
2. Why don't tongues serve evangelistic purposes according to Paul?
3. How should the distinction between believers and unbelievers shape our corporate worship?

## Interlinear Text

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ὅστε	αὶ	γλῶσσαι	εἰς	σημεῖόν	εἰσιν	οὐ	τοῖς
<b>Wherefore</b>	G3588	<b>tongues</b>	for	a sign	are	<b>not</b>	G3588
G5620		G1100	G1519	G4592	G1526	G3756	
πιστεύουσιν	ἀλλὰ	τοῖς	ἀπίστοις		ἢ	δὲ	
<b>for them which believe</b>	<b>but</b>	G3588	<b>for them that believe not</b>	G571	G3588	<b>but</b>	
G4100	G235					G1161	
προφητεία	οὐ	τοῖς	ἀπίστοις	ἀλλὰ	τοῖς		
<b>prophesying</b>	<b>not</b>	G3588	<b>for them that believe not</b>	<b>but</b>	G3588		
G4394	G3756		G571	G235			
πιστεύουσιν							
<b>for them which believe</b>							
G4100							

## Additional Cross-References

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

