

## Charismatics, the Book of Acts, and Sign Gifts

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Should we expect miracles to be performed today as in the days of the apostles? Should Christians expect to receive dreams and visions from God today? Can we claim the promise of healing for every disease or malady that afflicts us? Are there apostles in the church today which are receiving new revelation from God? What about faith healers? When do we receive the Holy Spirit? What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Is the experience of Acts chapter 2 to be the same experience that we are to have today? I want to answers these types of questions in this study. My desire is that you would approach this study with an open heart and an eager spirit that is ready to learn what God's Word teaches (Acts 17:11) regarding some of the present-day doctrinal issues linked to the Pentecostal or Charismatic Churches. The purpose of this summary is to provide instruction for those who want to be led in truth (John 16:13) and not fall prey to mystical and extra-biblical experiences which are not supported by sound doctrine (1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 2:1; Titus 1:9; 2:1) and which do not aid a Christian in their spiritual growth and walk in grace (2 Pet. 3:18) that is related to the sufficiency of Christ (2 Cor. 3:5; Phil. 4:13).

Why are many Christians following experiences that do not align with the Biblical teaching of the Bible? I think John Miles, former president of the Grand Rapids School of the Bible and Music, gives a good answer to this. After examining an abundance of charismatic literature, he concluded the following about how charismatics use the Bible: 1) Verses were examined without ANY consideration of context; 2) There was a complete disregard for ANY systematic approach to the Bible; 3) There was a continual appeal to one's own EXPERIENCE rather than to God's own Word. I fully agree with this conclusion.

This is the main problem with the present-day Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement. They do not examine and declare "unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) or all of God's revelation as found in Scripture. They have a faulty understanding of hermeneutics (how to properly interpret the Bible) and their experiences trump the truth.

## Putting God in a Box

Some charismatics will place a guilt trip on you if you reject that the sign gifts (speaking in tongues, miracles, etc.) of early apostolic Christianity are for today. They claim that if you deny the supernatural gifts are no longer being experienced by the church that you are limiting God and His power. You are putting God in a box. However, “putting God in a box” and limiting His power, as many conclude, is a smokescreen that is used to endorse all kinds of wild and crazy experiences which the Bible does not support.



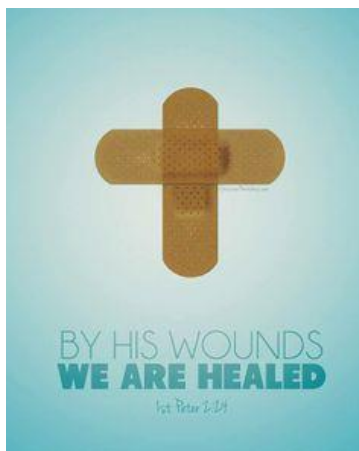
The cessation of the early apostolic miraculous gifts has nothing to do with doubting God’s power (Gen. 18:4). Instead, it involves believing in what God has revealed in the Bible about the temporary nature of the miraculous sign gifts and allowing God to work as He sees fit. It’s not a matter of “if” God can do something (bring back all the supernatural gifts of early New Testament Christianity after 1900 years of total absence from church history); it’s a matter if God *chooses* to do this. Where is the Biblical proof that teaches the sign gifts would once again start and become part of church life and ministry? Sometimes God chooses to put Himself in a box to accomplish His purposes whether it’s promising to never destroy the earth again with a Flood or to no longer use a sacrificial system of animals for atonement. To say that since all the spiritual gifts were operative in the first century, they therefore must be operative today, simply is not the case. God changes His programs and purposes and He has every right to do so. God can do whatever He wants to do, whenever He wants to do it, with whomsoever He wants to do it.

Some suggest it’s a matter of discerning the counterfeit experiences versus true Charismatic experiences and revivals that are occurring in the church today such as prophecies, speaking in tongues, visions, etc. However, this is not the case. What we must conclude is that all the experiences and confirming signs of the apostles were designed to be part of the foundational days of the church (Eph. 2:20) and have long passed away with the coming of the completed revelation of the Bible (1 Cor. 13:8-10; Heb. 2:1-2; Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19). Therefore, all of the alleged resurrection and reoccurring experiences of the miraculous sign gifts of the apostles and early church can be tested and proven to be fraudulent (1 Thess. 5:21).

Yes, someone might share with you their experiences, but if these experiences are not founded upon the truth, then the experiences did not originate from God. In short, the Charismatic experiences of speaking in tongues, prophecies, and seeing visions are not based on the facts of Scripture, but a failed understanding of the cessation of the miraculous gifts, and for the most part are nothing more than learned patterns and mere psychosomatic (self-produced, mental and emotional experiences) which are created by people to convince themselves that they have passed through certain experiences and possess certain sign gifts of early New Testament Christianity.

Does failing to acknowledge the continuance of the miraculous gifts limit God and His power? Absolutely not. We are given great power to live victoriously for God today (Acts 1:8; Gal. 5:28). Also, we know that God can and does still heal today (Phil. 2:27), but it's not through would-be faith healers trying to act like the apostles of early Christianity. God heals whenever He wants to heal a person in accordance with His own sovereign will (2 Cor. 12:8-9). But some will argue that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). The reasoning goes like this: since God healed in the past and never changes, He must also heal in the same way today. Of course, this is illogical reasoning. Yes, Jesus is always the same in relation to His unchanging nature but Jesus does not always do the same things throughout history. For example, Jesus for the first 30 years of His life chose to not heal anyone. It was only during the last three years that He began healing people. Hebrews 13:8 is talking about the unchanging character of Christ – not the unchanging programs of Christ.

### Healing in the Atonement?



We must clearly understand that the promise of physical healing from all our diseases is not in the atonement or death of Christ on the cross.

1 Peter 2:24 says:

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”

The healing in this context is strictly dealing with *spiritual* healing from our “sins” – not physical healing. We were completely healed of all our sins (spiritual malady) through the death of Christ. The death of Christ’s provided spiritually healing of the sin-sick soul (Matt. 11:28). If we receive physical healing in the same manner of our spiritual healing (the complete forgiveness of our sins) then we would NEVER get sick and NEVER die. Since our spiritual healing (the forgiveness of all our sins) occurs once in conjunction with our faith in Christ and lasts forever (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; John 6:47) the same would also have to be true regarding our physical healing (we would be healed of all our diseases forever).

Of course, this is not the case. Nether physical healing or physical death is covered in the atonement or death of Christ. Freedom from disease and death is promised through the *resurrection* of Christ – not the death of Jesus Christ. The complete removal of both sin and disease will be experienced at the Rapture or through the resurrection of our human bodies (Rom. 8:22-23; 1 Cor. 15:51-57; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2).

Matthew 8:16-17 is often misunderstood by the Charismatics:

“When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.”

This passage is many times mistaken to teach that healing is in the atonement. Jesus quoted Isaiah’s prophecy (Isaiah 53:4) and was claiming that His healing ministry was done on the basis of what the prophecy of Isaiah promised He would accomplish as the Messiah. “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” The closing words of this verse in Matthew 8:17 are particularly important to faith healers and are said to teach that Jesus provided healing in the atonement (“took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses”). When linked to the Isaiah passage it is assumed that Jesus bore our diseases upon the cross and was offering healing to the people on the basis of His death. This conclusion might sound very good on the surface. But when we look at Matthew’s words in their context we can determine that Jesus was not teaching about His death upon the cross in this verse but His earthly healing ministry among the children of Israel. The previous verses speak to us about the earthly healing ministry of Jesus.

Matthew 8:14-16

“And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them. When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick.”

When did Jesus fulfill Isaiah's' prophecy? It was not upon the cross! How could it be? Christ's body was not yet offered upon the cross, His blood was not yet shed. What is recorded in Matthew eight takes place prior to His death on the cross. Therefore, Isaiah 53:4 could not have been fulfilled in Christ's death.

Richard Mayhue confirms:

“What Christ did at Calvary occurred several years after His healing ministry at Capernaum as reported in Matthew 8. There is absolutely no effectual relationship between what Christ did in Capernaum and His atonement on the cross at Calvary.”

Clear Scripture revelation teaches that Jesus fulfilled His healing ministry to His own people, national Israel, while He was here upon earth. Isaiah 53:4 is actually a direct reference to the healing ministry that Jesus would have toward His own people during the days of His public ministry upon earth. Jesus verifies this by saying that Isaiah 53:4 was fulfilled while He healed His people upon the earth during His earthly messianic ministry. Nothing could be clearer. Why is there so much confusion on what Jesus said? When did Jesus fulfill Isaiah's prophecy? The answer is clearly given: “When Jesus was come into Peter's house” (vs. 14) and “when even was come” (vs. 16). In other words, it was during His earthly ministry that the portion of Isaiah 53:4 was fulfilled. Jesus is saying that His healing ministry upon earth was prophesied about in Isaiah 53:4 and was now being fulfilled while He was upon earth performing miracles to prove He was the Messiah. It was during the earthly ministry of Jesus that He passionately would “bare” (Matt. 8:17) the people's diseases and suffering by expressing great sympathy toward them and healing them wherever He went.

The gospel records primarily cover the earthly ministry of Jesus to His own nation people of Israel (see Matt. 10:5-6). Chapters eight and nine in Matthew inform us that Jesus was presenting Himself to His own people, national Israel, and the miracles of healing He performed became credential signs to the nation that He

was the Messiah (John 20:30-31). Jesus performed all of His miracles out of loving sacrifice and help for His earthly people (“took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses”) but the real reason behind these credential signs was to prove that He was the true Messiah.

It all fits. Isaiah 53:4 was a prophecy about the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ and how He would come into this world to heal His own people and present Himself, as the long awaited Messiah, to His beloved people of Israel. And Jesus verifies this by saying in Matthew 8:17, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.” Where did Jesus take upon Himself the people’s infirmities and bare the people’s sicknesses? Was it in His crucifixion? No! It was during His earthly ministry to Israel that He would bare their infirmities and sicknesses by healing them and curing them of their earthly diseases and pains. It was *not* upon the cross that Jesus bore their sicknesses and carried their pains. If it had been, the Lord Jesus would have never said in Matthew 8:17, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah ...” This is because Isaiah 53:4 was referring to the earthly ministry of Christ.



Let us remember that God does not always choose to heal His people. Paul the apostle was not healed of his sickness or malady (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Paul had to leave Trophimus behind because God did not heal him (2 Tim. 4:20). Charismatics look down upon human sickness but Jesus taught that sickness can ultimately be for the glory of God. John 11:4 states: “When Jesus heard that, he

said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” God can get the glory through sickness by the way He changes your life. You can grow in your faith, patience, and experience God’s inner rest and peace through trials and you can come out of a time of illness or suffering a better and stronger Christian. As a result, God will get the glory.

Job 23:10 reminds us: “But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” God knows the way that you have taken for He has in His providence and sovereignty ordained it to be so. Furthermore, God wants you to pass through illness, so that you might be purified as gold is purified in the fire. In other words, when we grow through trial (including sickness), we become more developed in our Christian virtues. In fact, we develop the fruit of the Spirit in our

lives in a new and meaningful way (Gal. 5:22-23) and can find ourselves closer to the Lord as we pass through the fiery trial. Remember that it's ultimately God in His sovereignty who tries us with sickness – not the devil (“when he hath tried me”).

Exodus 4:11

“And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?”

This has always been in the Bible! And yet many ignore it. The devil is not behind deformities, deafness, and blindness. God is! He allows these things to serve His own purposes. Here we see that God sometimes chooses to make people this way. In other words, God is *directly* responsible for these illnesses.

We have no idea or understanding what is going on behind the curtain or veil in the unseen world as we live out our day-to-day lives. However, we do know God can and does directly inflict us with trials (which include sickness) to accomplish His sanctifying purposes for our lives (1 Peter 5:10). Also, God is completely sovereign or in control of our sicknesses. Of course, God can also at times allow Satan to inflict us with an illness, as was the case with Paul (2 Cor. 12:7-9) and Job (Job 2:6-7). However, in Paul's case God chose NOT to heal him (something the Charismatic's don't tell you!) and in Job's case he recovered. All suffering is according to God's will and purpose – not the devil's purpose to keep us bound to sickness and death.

1 Peter 4:19

“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”

These Christians were suffering physically at the hands of a madman called Nero but they were told to take their suffering as ultimately the expression of God's will and purpose for their lives. The same is true regarding sickness and disease. We must also remember that the natural course of our bodies is one of corruption because of the sin we all inherited from Adam (II Corinthians 4:16). There is a normal process of sickness related to the consequences of the curse (Romans 5:12; Genesis 3:19). Sometimes we suffer simply because we are human. Our bodies grow older and we are susceptible to the normal problems of life. Most of the ailments of older people, for example, are part of the normal process of

deterioration due to age. This means that the devil and demons are not always lurking behind all of our diseases and illnesses.

Here is something else that is important to remember. Jesus never taught that all sickness is the result of sin in our life and the sign that the devil is overtaking our life. Many people assume this is the case but Jesus never said or taught this errant Charismatic doctrine. It's true that some sickness may be the direct result of sin and God's chastening hand upon our life (Ps. 41:4; 119:65-67, 75; James 5:15). It's also true that God may allow Satan and the intrusion of the evil world to inflict a disease upon our life (2 Cor. 12:7). However, many times God's saints are sick without being chastised for their sin or because of a demon or devil-related reason. They are simply sick for God's glory and purposes unrelated to sin and the devil (John 11:4; 2 Cor. 12:7).

John 9:2-3 records this incident:

"And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

There was no mention of sin in Paul's or Job's lives, as though God was allowing Satan to judge them because of some specific sin they had committed against Him. Paul was a servant of the Lord and God said his particular ailment would keep him humble (2 Cor. 12:7). Job 1:1 reveals that Job was a man that was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." This does not sound like a person who had sin in his life and that God was judging him for his sin. We must stop thinking wrongly about God. God does not always send sickness and trials into our life to judge us because of our sin; He allows sickness to happen to us to make us a better, stronger, and a more mature Christian. Epaphroditus suffered an illness and it was serious because he almost died (Phil. 2:27, 30), but there is no indication that Paul had the ability to heal him or that he even tried to do so. Neither is there any hint that Epaphroditus was sick because of being out of God's will. God was simply bringing His purpose to pass for this man. Ultimately, God chose to show mercy upon Epaphroditus and he was healed.

What are the works of God (John 9:3) that He wants to do in your life when you pass through illness? This is what we must ask ourselves. What does God want to do in your heart and life? He certainly wants to mold and make you into a stronger



and more mature Christian. He wants you to grow in your faith and dependence upon His purpose and power for your life. He truly wants to prune you to bring forth more fruit (“every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” - John 15:2). God still wants you to bring forth more fruit (Christian character and virtues) through the whole ordeal of your illness. This is the key reason why God allows sickness to come into our life.

### Using Oil for Healing?

James 5:14-15

“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”



This passage is often misunderstood by the Charismatics/Pentecostals and some other well-meaning Christians. The claim is made that the elders of the church possessed the gifts of healing and they went about healing people by using oil, as the apostles did on rare occasions. However, in the entire book of Acts there is no mention of any magical oil. Only in Mark 6:13 do we find the apostles anointing someone with oil to create miraculous responses such as healing. However, the oil did not possess any magical power to heal them. It was actually the Lord, who did the healing, as the apostles used their gift of healing in that day. To conclude that oil is needed for physical healing is simply false. In fact, even during the days of apostolic Christianity there are multitudes of Biblical passages where there was NO oil involved in the person’s healing (Acts 8:6-7, 9:36, 28:8-9).

In addition, to claim that the elders were doing the same thing as the apostles is simply false. The elders did not have the gifts of healing like the apostles during the infant days of the Church and this is why they were praying for this man – not healing this man (James 5:14). Many people believe that we are to use anointing oil on people today so they can be healed physically and they base their finding on this one verse in James. They claim that God has given a mandate for elders to always pour oil on people in order to see them healed physically from all their diseases.

Some suggest there is magical power in oil, others suggest that the oil is needed to increase the person's faith, while others claim the oil itself had medicinal value. Some conclude that the oil was used as a healing symbol of the Holy Spirit's work. The best understanding of this passage is that the oil was not used for healing but was simply a cultural expression of kindness and customary sign of friendship (Luke 7:44-46; Ps. 23:5). There certainly was no healing magic in the oil.

So, should we use oil to heal people today? The truthful answer is that we should NOT use any oil connected with the physical healing of people. There are several reasons for this. First, we do not have the apostolic gifts of healing or the capability to heal every person as the apostles did in the early days of Christianity (Mark 16:20). This was never promised to us. Second, we should not use oil in conjunction with our prayers for physical healing today since the incident in James suggests only a customary practice, which has not been given as a mandate for the succeeding church generations to follow outside of their culture.

Roy B. Zuck has said something very interesting about cultural patterns mentioned in the Bible: "The Bible is its own authority, including the authority to set limits on which practices are culture-bound and which ones are not. One way to determine which commands are to be repeated (for today) is by examining whether the command or situation is paralleled in Scripture elsewhere."

The cultural practice of oiling in the day of James and during Biblical times is spoken about in several passages (Ps. 23:5; 45:7; Luke 7:44-46), but all of the passages clearly indicate the customary nature of the oiling, which is not binding upon the church for today. Likewise, oiling people for their healing as the apostles did (Mark 6:13) is not mentioned or stressed in any Scripture that deals with continuing church life for today. In addition, using some type of symbolic or magical oil in connection with prayer cannot be supported from the passage in James or any Scriptural reference; therefore, oiling should not be an ongoing ministry or practice for the church today.

Third, the Greek word used in James 5:14 for anointing (aleipho) does not have to point to the same type of oil that was used in a ceremonial fashion or ritual way in conjunction with healing during the days of the apostles (Mark 6:13). The word for "anointing" ("aleipho") in James' passage can also suggest the pouring of oil upon

a person (oiling an individual), or rubbing oil into the skin, in order to provide relaxation to a tired and weary body. In this case it was a sign of mutual friendship.

Fourth, olive oil that you buy at the local grocery store today could hardly be symbolical of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to physically heal people from all of their diseases. This is because many people die after being anointed with oil. I have personally met one sincere charismatic Christian minister who was shocked when my uncle was not healed by his anointing oil. Beloved, God has never promised that His people would be healed of all their physical maladies throughout the succeeding Church generations by elders or pastors carrying around little bottles of oil and placing drops of oil on the heads of their parishioners.

Fifth, if elders could heal others by anointing them with oil, it would seem, theoretically at least, that someone could live indefinitely as long as they keep calling the elders and getting a lube job! Seriously, I don't mean to be demeaning about this. I know there are a lot of sincere Christians who depend upon ceremonial oil for their healing. But this is a false assurance. If you were healed in answer to prayer, thank God! Remember that you were not healed because of oil; you were healed in spite of it.



In actuality, the entire passage and context of James chapter five is NOT referring to *physical* healing. Instead, it's dealing with *spiritual* restoration or healing – not healing from disease. This is a promise regarding spiritual healing from the effects of sin – not necessarily physically healing from the effects of disease. James chapter five seems to be teaching a spiritual restoration of a brother to God who had fallen into sin, not the physical healing of a brother. In arriving at a proper interpretation of this passage we must first of all must understand what James meant when he referred to the “sick” (James 5:14).

Although we believe God can physically heal in answer to prayer, and some may have been healed in answer to elders visiting them in their time of physical illness because of prayer, we must be careful not to misinterpret this passage of Scripture and misrepresent God's Word. There is no reason to consider the word “sick” as referring exclusively to physical illness. The Greek word used in James 5:14 for “sick”

(astheneo) literally means “to be weak.” It can carry the meaning of being spiritually weak and feeble and in spiritual need. Although it is used in the Gospels for physical maladies, it is generally used in Acts and the Epistles to refer to a weak faith or a weak conscience (Acts 20:35; Rom. 4:19; 6:19; 14:1-2; 1 Cor. 8:9-12). It should be interpreted as meaning spiritually weak in this verse and context since another Greek word used for “sick” (kamno) in James 5:15 literally means “to be or grow weary” and is only used in Hebrews 12:3 with the same meaning (“wearied”).

There seems to be substantial linguistic and contextual support to understand the word “sick” as referring to spiritual weakness, weariness, and malady due to the pressures of trials (James 1:2) or temptations and sin which have overtaken this particular brother (James 1:13-16). This man did not need physical healing but spiritual *healing from the power of sin and his alienation from God’s fellowship and the church*. This is referencing healing of the sin-sick soul which has experienced heavy conviction, depression, loneliness, inner turmoil, weariness, sadness, and other emotional and physical effects caused by his sin.

James was not referring to the bedfast, the diseased, or the physically ill. Instead, he wrote about those saints, and one in particular, who had grown weary, who had become spiritually weak from a moral standpoint in the midst of his earthly trials and temptations. Therefore, the healing or restoration being spoken about in this context is *spiritual restoration or healing from a fallen position of fellowship with God and the church*, not necessarily physical restoration from physical illness.

This interpretation and conclusion may be further substantiated and clarified by what is stated in the context – “if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him” (James 5:15b) and “confessing your faults one to another, and pray one for another” (James 5:16). In other words, the elders are visiting a brother who was *spiritually weak and defeated* due to the sins that he committed against the Lord, sins which were worthy of church discipline (1 Cor. 5:9-10). The promise is given that his sins would be forgiven on the basis of his confession to the elders (James 5:16). This confession to the elders would be needed to officially forgive and restore the brother back to a place of acceptance within the local congregation. Apparently this brother committed sins worthy of church discipline and he needed to confess them in order to be restored once again to the church (2 Cor. 2:10).

The promise is also given that when the elders pray in faith (“the prayer of faith” – James 5:15) with this backslidden saint or brother that he will be delivered (“save the sick” or “save the weary” – vs. 15) from his *spiritually weak and defeated* condition (“the Lord shall raise him up” – vs. 15). In other words, when a brother sincerely seeks restoration and calls upon the church leaders to come to his house and pray with him, requesting his spiritual deliverance and restoration, and he confesses his sins to them, then the promise of God’s spiritual healing and restoration can be claimed for a brother or sister in Christ. Restoration to God (James 4:8-9) is assured for the spiritually fallen, discouraged, distressed, and weary believer (“and he shall lift you up” - James 4:10; see also Heb. 12:12).

Through prayer, *the prayer of faith in God’s delivering power* (James 1:6) for this backslidden brother, the wayward believer will experience spiritual restoration to God, victory, freedom from discouragement, and living in spiritual defeat. In short, when a distraught and fallen brother truly wants spiritually healing or deliverance from his sins and prayer is made on his behalf by the elders for his victory, then spiritual healing and deliverance will come. This means God will raise him up by forgiving him and restoring him to his former spiritual place of fellowship with God and victory. He will no longer remain a backslider but be restored to God’s fellowship and the fellowship of the saints. He will experience the refreshing spiritual healing that is needed through cleansing and once again walk with God and no longer experience the weariness and hardships that sin brings into one’s life due to rebellion and spiritual neglect. His soul will be spiritually restored to God (Ps. 23:3) and the paths of righteousness (Ps. 23:3) and he will experience refreshment of his soul once again (Ps. 23:5) due to the forgiveness of sin and his regained fellowship with God and the local assembly.

The oil in this context (James 5:14) also confirms this interpretation of *spiritual* restoration or healing from sin’s power and consequences. As previously mentioned, the oil apparently refers to the familiar customary gesture of kindness and refreshment (Ps. 23:5). It was an expression of encouragement, comfort, strength, love, and acceptance. It was important that the elders anointed this man with oil to show their love and acceptance of him in view of his confession of sin and desire to be spiritually restored with the Lord and the local church.

Many times we forget that people need to be restored spiritually instead of physically (Gal. 6:1). In fact, spiritual restoration is more important than physical

restoration. The truth is this; many physically ill Christians have called on elders to pray for them and to anoint them with oil, but a sizable percentage of them have remained sick. This fact alone suggests that this particular passage in James has been mistakenly understood as physical restoration rather than spiritual restoration or healing of the sin-sick soul. That spiritual restoration or healing of the sinner back to God's fellowship is the meaning which is further substantiated by James 5:20: "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

James is obviously referring to God chastening a wayward believer to the point of physical death (Heb. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 11:29-31; 1 John 5:16). Sometimes we need to save those who are already saved from hell. We need to save those who are Christians from experiencing God's premature judgment upon their lives. The whole context is talking about the revival and restoration of a believer – not the redemption of the lost or the evangelism of the unsaved. The practice of oiling was cultural but what we must take from this passage for us today is that spiritual healing from sin's power and weariness, along with restoration to God and the church can only come through the prayers of God's people. If a Christian has a repentant and willing heart to restore his backslidden life to God and the church, the promise is given that he or she can be healed of their spiritual malady (Isa. 1:18). This person can be forgiven, cleansed, and restored to a place of fellowship with God and the saints.

### Clusters of Miracles



There have been only several clusters of miracles during brief eras of human history. People tell me, "You are putting God in a box if you don't believe in continuous miracles and miracle workers." This is not putting God in a box (limiting God) as some teach today but putting the Bible and truth of Scripture into our hearts. It can be proven that God has not always chosen to work through miraculous revelation and outbreaks of miraculous signs. When the Old Testament Canon of Scripture was closed there followed 400 "Silent Years" when no prophet spoke God's revelation in any form until John the Baptist came on the scene. Simply stated, the Bible is NOT a continuous account of miracles from Genesis to Revelation. There are only three major outbreaks of miracles in the Scriptures:

Moses and Joshua (1441-1370 B.C.), Elijah and Elisha (870-785 B.C.), Christ and the apostles (A.D. 28-70). Every time there was a cluster of signs (miracles) there were two things involved: new *revelation* and new *men* of God.

In addition, the miracles never broke out before the messenger and his revelation (message) had been revealed (Exodus 7:2-3). These miracles served as signs even during the Old Testament days as God was giving out the Old Testament revelation. These periods of revelation and miracles lasted about 150 years. The miracles of the New Testament church era lasted about 30 years until the Bible was complete.

Using Usher's dates on the earth's history, one would conclude that out of approximately 4,100 years of human history, miracles were common during only 320 of those years. This shows that sign manifestations were always temporary and were used to confirm men and their new messages of revelation (II Corinthians 12:12). As the Word of God was completed there was no more need to confirm any new revelation. Therefore, the "working of miracles" and other sign gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 have ceased (I Corinthians 13:8-11).

At this point, allow me to reassure you that I do believe God can heal and does perform miracles today. We serve an all-powerful God "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37). Although we are not witnessing any true outbreak of miracles being done by some specific chosen person or group of men (Moses, Elijah, apostles, prophets), we do know and believe that God still does heal (Phil. 2:27, 30). I know many saints who have been genuinely healed through the prayers of God's people (Acts 12:5). *We must understand that miracles have not ceased, but men working them have ceased (I Corinthians 12:10; 13:10).* There is a difference! God does not work miracles through men today as He did with the apostles. Therefore, we are not witnessing great clusters of miracles as certain brief eras of history have witnessed in the past. This is not putting God in a box (limiting God) as some teach today but putting the Bible and truth of Scripture into our hearts.

The transitory character of the nine gifts is clearly seen. With the Jewish nation being judged in AD 70 (1 Cor. 14:21-22) and the formation of the official canon of Scripture (1 Corinthians 13:8-10), these nine temporary gifts became obsolete. This means their purpose was fulfilled and they were done away with. Therefore, the supernatural gifts of early apostolic Christianity are no longer being given to God's people today. The miraculous gifts of tongues (speaking in different languages),

along with the other eight sign gifts such as healings, revelatory knowledge, and prophecy did cease for the simple reason that they did not occur for almost 1,900 years of church history and certainly have not continued in an unbroken line of succession. Everyone recognizes this, even the honest Charismatic believers. This is a proven fact of history. We don't read about the miraculous sign gifts occurring during some 1900 years of church history, following the days of the apostles.

### The Sources of Miracles & Charismatic Experiences

There are three possible sources behind the influx of the miraculous and many other Charismatic, mystical, unbiblical, and extra Scriptural experiences which are occurring during these last days. These types of experiences would include things such as the recreation of the apostles, apostolic healings, the miraculous done through apostles, early sign gifts (tongue speaking, gifts of knowledge, prophecy, etc.) and many other types of mystical practices being promoted today (dreams, trances, visions, slayings in the Spirit). All of these experiences have a twofold origin.



One cause of all the alleged miracles and modern-day experiences within the Charismatic Movement is that they are *counterfeit* which simply means that the experiences are not true. They are sham and scam experiences. For instance, I have heard people giving lengthy descriptions of their adventures in Heaven, what they saw, and what messages Jesus gave to them before returning to earth. However, their descriptions of Heaven and Christ do not mirror what the Bible says. Therefore, their experience is simply a counterfeit experience which is nothing short of a lie. One cannot dismiss this as a possible source of many of the wild and crazy stories that we hear being advanced today.

Colossians 2:18 says, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." In other words, people can claim to have dreams and visions when all along they are nothing but a bunch of hot air. What they are saying is simply filled with lies and deception. The Bible repeatedly talks about liars who are seeking to deceive people. Jeremiah 23:25 reveals:



“I have heard what the prophets said, that prophecy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.” What Jeremiah is saying is that their dreams were nothing but a bunch of lies (“that prophecy lies” – Jer. 23:26, 31-32). The prophets claimed that God had given them revelation in a dream, but their visions were only delusions of their own minds (Jer. 23:16, 23). Their “dreams” were worthless when it came to meeting the spiritual needs of the people as the chaff or straw was for meeting the physical needs of the people (Jer. 23:28). Jeremiah 29:8 adds, “For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that *be* in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.”

There is an important lesson in all of this. Don’t follow your dreams and don’t follow the dreams of others! God has never promised to guide His people through dreams and visions. Only on rare occasions were dreams given to specific people, during the time prior to the completed revelation of the Bible, while God was still working to gather together the sacred text and record of Scripture. God sometimes revealed Himself in dreams to a limited and very few number of people to bring about His purposes on earth before the whole truth would be finalized in the Bible. With the completion of Scripture there would be no more need for dreams and other miraculous interventions of God to produce ongoing revelation, since revelation would come to a standstill with the completion of the Biblical text (1 Cor. 13:10).

We discover in these verses that mystical experiences can simply be fraudulent or untrue. People can invent stories about certain experiences they allegedly have had but there is no validity to these experiences. Instead, they are a bunch of lies. Lying and deception is a very real source behind the alleged miraculous happenings occurring in the Charismatic Movement of today.



A second cause of these alleged miracles and experiences is *psychological* or *psychosomatic* (self-taught) which refers to an emotional or mental disturbance that affects both the mind and body. The psychological/psychosomatic experiences (experiences self-produced by one’s own mind and emotions) can affect people in a real physical way. Such self-taught experiences as being slain in the Spirit, laughing in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, visibly seeing Jesus,

dreams, visions, casting out demons and dethroning the power of demons (deliverance ministries) are often psychologically inspired and self-induced. This means that many who claim to experience these alleged things are really passing through a psychosomatic experience. It is an emotional experience of some kind that is dreamed up in a person's mind or thinking, which is personally created by themselves, and then claimed to be a valid spiritual experience.

In short, various experiences can be created by emotional and psychological factors. They may be nothing more than an emotional experience induced by the person themselves (an artificial cause). In other words, people can create their own atmosphere or experience by psyching themselves up to a point of emotional instability. But someone will tell you, "I had a dream and it was real. Don't tell me it was not real." Well, the point about psychosomatic or psychological experiences, including dreams, is that they are not part of what is true reality. Yes, you had a dream and your mind was working, but it's a mind that was in a fog and not in contact with the world of reality. Therefore, dreams are psychosomatic and do not pertain to the true world of reality.

Someone has humorously said:

"It is dangerously possible for activity to be no more than a dizzy whirl around a central emptiness."

People can hype themselves up to a point of emotional ecstasy. They can also invent within their own unstable mind (James 1:8; 2 Tim. 1:7) certain experiences such as visions and the so-called direct voices within their spirit. For instance, I can close my eyes and see anything I want to see and call it a vision. But it would be purely artificial in nature. It would certainly not be a true vision. Go ahead, close your eyes and imagine that you see a banana split. Sooner or later, you will see a banana split. It may seem real until you try to take a spoonful of it. A rather silly illustration, I know, yet it proves the point which I am trying to convey.

John Miles, in his writing on tongues records the words of Richard Seymour, who once supported tongues: "Now before you sit down and write me a letter telling me how real your experience with tongues is, let me tell you about mine. I've spoken in "tongues" on several occasions. I've walked down aisles, I've prayed through at the altar, I've followed instructions of the spiritual leaders who were telling me how to speak in tongues, and I spoke in tongues. It was very real. It

happened. There was nothing unreal about it. But it was not of the Holy Spirit! How do I know? I wasn't even saved at the time that's how I know. I became convinced by the preaching I heard that I must speak in tongues to be right with God. I was determined to do it, and I did it." Here is one case among multitudes of others, which illustrates that many experiences people are having today are nothing more than psychosomatic experience that is nothing more than an emotional experience induced by the person themselves (a learned behavior pattern).

Many so-called visions that people are having today, along with other experiences, are simply imaginary, self-taught, and have no validity attached to them. A person with an imagination can even see something with their eyes open. If I am looking to see something, sooner or later I will see it! No, I did not really see it; however, when my imagination is stretched, it will just about see anything that it wants to see. Even a pink elephant in my bedroom! When the mind is totally absorbed with visions and voices and focused (saturated) on other extra-Biblical phenomena, sooner or later the mind will creatively imagine that it sees and hears these very things. All of this is purely artificial. It is speculative and spurious.



I once heard a man speaking about his vision. He said a portion of the roof lifted off the church and a chicken came down and rested on the head of this man. He claimed that this was a vision that pointed to the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon this man's life. Could God really work in this way? Well, if He really wanted to, He could. However, God is not in the chicken business! Today, prophetic T.V. evangelists close their eyes and claim to see people in faraway states and countries, who have physical problems and ailments. They claim that a certain lady has a back problem or a man has a broken rib. The fact of the matter is this; they are right many times. Why? It's because someone watching out of 20 million people will have a broken rib or back problem. The whole point is this: all of these so-called prophetic utterances are imaginary and artificial.

There is a technique practiced today among faith healers which could be labeled as "sickness and healing through the mind." People can come to a point where their minds believe they are physically sick and they are physically healed when in reality they never were physically sick or physically healed. All they had was a psychosomatic illness – an imaginary illness. Many people come up to faith healers today with imaginary illnesses and are they are imaginarily healed. There is really

nothing that occurs at all. This type and technique of healing is very prevalent today. Faith healers will tell people to place their hands on the part of their body which supposedly needs healing or to have great faith (belief) that God will heal them no matter what. This technique works with the mind of people and actually causes some to believe they are bodily healed, when in reality they are not healed. This is because both their sickness and healing were only imagined.

Then too, medical doctors claim that a large part of sickness today is caused by emotional distress. Much sickness can actually be from emotionally induced illness. If the faith healers can find a way to relax the person and have them “forget” about their sickness, the person can actually become better. Good emotions can actually make people feel better who are suffering from an emotionally induced illness. They can (by their own actions) make themselves better. This is the healing through the mind concept which so many faith healers use on people today. The faith healers are not healing the people but the people are actually relieving themselves from the mentally induced illness.

What we have taking place today is psychological (psychosomatic) healing - not divine healing. Modern faith healers will try to convince people from a mental standpoint that they are healed, and it does work in some cases. They will talk about touching the T.V. or radio or some other “point of contact” in order to stir up their emotions. The people can then make these mentally induced illnesses to disappear in some cases. Thus, the faith healer claims the healing, when all along the people make themselves better. God does not heal them; the people heal themselves.

A simple test could be taken to prove that faith healers use the mind healing technique today. If you take a so-called faith healer to the insane asylum and ask him to pray for these people and deliver them from their sickness; he would not be willing to take the test. The reason is obvious. These kinds of people have lost their minds and therefore the faith healer cannot play on their minds, as he can with others, who have only an emotionally induced illness.

In summary, the alleged miraculous experiences occurring today can be nothing more than psychosomatic in origin – they are self-taught and emotional experiences that have been created by those who don't know the truth, don't want to know the truth, and who lack faith in God's real purpose for their lives which is to become more like Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 3:18).



Third, the experiences occurring today can also be *demonically* inspired (Satanic). Demonic and devilish deception is very real (2 Cor. 11:14). Some of the mystical and extra Scriptural experiences of inward voices speaking to people may have their source in the supernatural world of the devil and his demons. In some cases, Satan will use a person's psychosomatic or self-taught experience to become a diversion and deception to them and keep them from experiencing New Testament Christianity through the sufficiency of Christ (Phil. 1:21; 3:10). Satan can enter into the world of a person's emotional experiences and seek to lead them astray from living a Biblical and normal victorious life through the Holy Spirit's power (Gal. 5:25) and by putting on the armor of God (Eph. 6:10-18).

At other times, Satan may actually create certain experiences, even the miraculous, to deceive people and keep them from looking unto Jesus for salvation and sanctification (Heb. 12:2; Phil. 2:13) and trusting in God to directly meet their needs in life without mystical experiences (2 Cor. 3:5; Phil. 4:19).

For instance, the fascination of performing miracles which includes delivering people from demons is not necessarily new, nor must these things necessarily come from God's servants.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:22-23:

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

From this future day of judgment, we learn that not all miracles come from God and not all miracle workers are divinely accredited. Jesus cited this verse in the days of the apostles and the way it will be when He comes back to establish His earthly kingdom. He is teaching that the miracles of God can in some measure be mimicked and mocked by Satan as he seeks to deceive people in the End Times.

The devil seeking to deceive people through the miraculous is nothing new.

Exodus 7:10-12 reveals this:

“And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.”



Satan can apparently reproduce and mimic God's gifts and miracles (1 Cor. 12:3). We are living in a day of Satanic duplication and deception. We must always remember that the supernatural may not be from God. Do not fall for Satanic substitutes today. What you have seen or experienced must be Scriptural or in accordance with God's Word. If it's not, you must write it off as a delusion, devilish, and a detriment to your spiritual growth in Christ (2 Pet. 3:18).

Pastor and teacher Dave Thomson observed: “It is a proven historical fact that many unbelievers have spoken in tongues. James Prichard, in his book Ancient Near Eastern Texts says that in 1100 B.C., an Egyptian temple official recorded an incident when a young man from Canaan, seemingly possessed by some god, behaved strangely and spoke in some frenzied language. Plato, in three of his dialogues, says that a prophetess of Delphi, a priestess at Dodona and a Sybyline priestess spoke in languages that were unintelligible. Virgil, who lived a century before Jesus Christ, describes a priestess on the island of Delos who spoke in an unintelligible language in some ecstatic state. Plutarch, who lived in the first century, describes a seeress at Delphi, not far from Corinth, who spoke in tongues of incoherent utterances. Joseph Smith, who himself dabbled in the occult, claims that the Nephites, who are critical to the history of the Mormons, could speak in tongues (Book of Mormon, Alma 9:21).”

Whether psychological or demonic, it's clear that Satan can enter in the experiences of people – both the saved and unsaved. The Bible says we are to “prove all things” (I Thessalonians 5:21) which includes all experiences which are contrary to Biblical revelation and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). For instance, the Bible clearly says that our worship of the Lord is to be a “rational worship”

(Romans 12:1) and not an experience where the mind goes into a state of neutrality and one passes into a semiconscious, hallucinatory state. We are to serve the Lord and worship the Lord with a self-controlled or disciplined mind (II Timothy 1:7). The great blunder of our day is mistaking the work of the devil for the work of the Holy Spirit. We must be discerning today.

We have every right to investigate and suspect demonic activity in relation to pagan and uncontrollable experiences. Lastly, we are told to “test the spirits” (I John 4:1) realizing that demonic intervention is all around us and that Satan wants to deceive us with his tricks and false messages (Eph. 6:11; 2 Cor. 11:3, 13-14). We are to test the spirits behind doctrines (1 Tim. 4:1) and the experiences that people have (Matthew 24:5, 26). We must also remember that “good feeling” does not mean that the experience is from God.

Since God has not promised ongoing successors of the apostles and their miracles, we must consider a demonic source behind some of the miracles that are occurring today which are designed to deceive people during the last days and as we approach the End Times (“spirits of devils, working miracles” - Rev. 16:14).

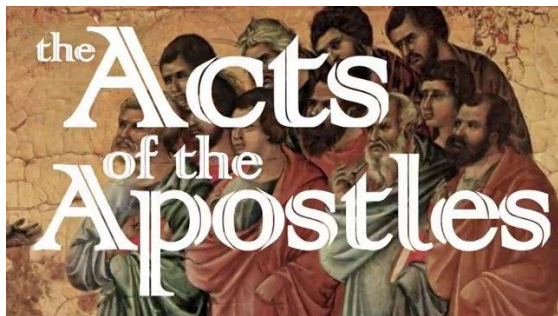
A miracle such as the casting out of demons may seem that God is at work. However, this power can actually be satanic or demonic in origin. Satan may empower his workers to cast out demons temporarily, in order to create the illusion that the miracle is divine and deceive people. Satan is not dividing his kingdom against itself (Mark 3:24) in such cases as this but is using this miracle to plot even worse things against unbelievers in order to keep them in blindness and bring them to future judgment (Matt. 7:23). Remember that Judas participated in some or all of the miraculous activities but was not a true believer. Also, Roman Catholic priests cast out demons but they are not God’s true servants.

Many will talk very enthusiastically about the so-called miracle workers of today and make the bold claim, “You can tell God is with them.” But in light of these verses, can we be sure of this? The name of Christ is on the lips of many people who are leaders of cults, many other “isms” and movements that promote error. But to use the name of Christ, the Bible, and perform a miracle is not proof that a person is genuinely from God and is doing God’s will (Matt. 7:21). In the last days, and as we approach the End Times, Satan will most assuredly use the miraculous

to deceive many people (2 Thess. 2:7–12). Just because something is miraculous does not mean that it is from God.

It should be noted that miracles and experiences are only *God inspired* when they conform to God's standard of truth which today involves praying to God for the spiritual salvation and deliverance of the lost (not casting out demons), sharing the Gospel with people who are lost and in need of deliverance from Satan's power (Acts 26:17-18), claiming personal victory over Satan by putting on the armor of God (Eph. 6:10-18), *defensively* resisting the devil and demons – not seeking them out (Eph. 6:11, 13; James 4:7), and praying to God for healing instead of going to faith healers and deliverance ministries (James 5:15). God's people must rely on prayer, the providence of God, and His purpose for their individual lives (Romans 8:28). When it comes to seeing people saved and experiencing personal healing in their lives (James 4:15), we must remember that we cannot deliver people from Satan's power (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 3:7; 2 Cor. 4:4) nor demand God to heal anyone. We do not possess this authority and power like the apostles did.

### The Book of Acts



Should we believe that all the unique experiences occurring in the book of Acts during early New Testament Christianity, along with all of the miraculous sign gifts that were used to authenticate the apostles, should be part of Church life for today? Let's take a look.

- We do not tarry or wait to receive the Holy Spirit after we are saved (Acts 1:4, 8) since we receive the Spirit at the moment of salvation (1 Cor. 12:13).
- We do not receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands (Acts 10:44-45; 19:6).
- We do not experience wind blowing inside the church building when we meet together and have visible tongues of fire sit on top of our heads (Acts 2).
- We do not and cannot speak in different languages and dialects at will as the apostles did (Acts 2).
- We should not expect to have visible fire fall upon our heads (Acts 2:3).



- We do not go to the Jewish temple to worship God (Acts 2:46; 3:1-2, 8-10; 5:20-21; 5:42).
- We are not offering the Jewish Kingdom to Israel as Peter did (Acts 3:19-21).
- We are not rebaptizing people that were baptized under John the Baptist's ministry - people who are passing from the Old Testament era into the New Testament dispensation (Acts 19:1-6).
- We are not transitioning from Judaism to Christianity and in need of miraculous confirming signs to authenticate the messengers and message of the new Church Dispensation (Mark 16:20).
- We cannot expect to receive direct verbal message from Jesus Christ (Acts 1:4-5; 9:4).
- We should not expect to visibly see the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:9; 9:1-8; 1 cor. 9:1).
- We are not expected to live in communal life (Acts 2:41-47).
- We do not expect God to strike His saints dead for lying about money (Acts 5:1-12).
- We should not expect handkerchiefs to be used to produce healing in people (Acts 19:11-12).
- We should not expect instant deliverance from deadly snake bites (Acts 28:1-6 with Mark 16:18).
- We should not expect to see apostles healing crippled people from birth (Acts 3:1-11; 14:8-18).
- We should not expect a shadow to heal people (Acts 5:12-16).
- We should not expect to see people raised from the dead like the apostles did (Acts 9:37-40).
- We are NOT living in the "last days" of Joel's prophecy which speaks of the Jewish people having dreams and visions to inaugurate the new Kingdom Dispensation (Joel 2). We are living the "last days" of the Church Age (2 Timothy 3). Peter said that what happened at the beginning of the Church Dispensation (Acts 2) is similar to what will happen to Israel in the future. Some of God's people spoke in tongues (different languages) and some would see visions to once again authenticate and confirm the messengers (the apostles) and message of the new Church Dispensation.



The Book of Acts must be viewed as a BRIDGE or time of TRANSITION from Old Testament ground (Jewish Law) to New Testament ground (the new working of God – the Church Dispensation). On the bridge, or during the transition zone from Judaism to Christianity, many things would occur like dreams, visions, trances, angelic visitors, speaking in different languages, early, apostolic, sign gifts of dramatic healings, waiting to receive the Holy Spirit, and laying hands on people to receive the Holy Spirit. These events could ONLY occur on the bridge, or during the time of transition, when the Holy Spirit was initially arriving to form the Church and validate the new men and messages (Mark 16:20; Acts 2:32-33) that were being given out regarding the Gospel, Messiah, reaching out to Gentiles, advent of the Holy Spirit and the formation of the Church.

### **What is Normal for Today?**

Today we do not experience the same events associated with Pentecost and the early days of apostolic Christianity, such as waiting for the Holy Spirit, receiving the Holy Spirit after one is saved, speaking in tongues, or experiencing visions, as the apostles did, when they were receiving direct revelation from God prior to the canonization of the Bible (1 Cor. 13:10-13). The fact that God allowed some Christians to experience these things does NOT mean that every Christian MUST experience them.



Robert McQuilkin has correctly observed:

“That an event was reported to have truly happened does not necessarily make it a revelation of God’s universal will.”

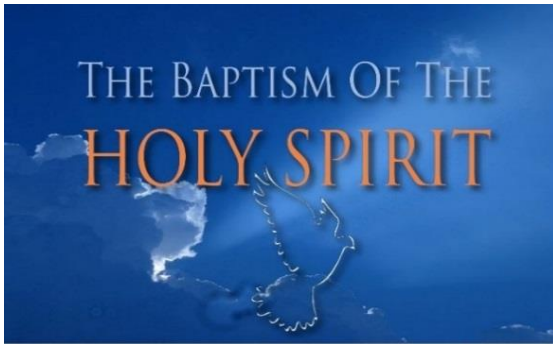
We must look to the Scriptures themselves to determine what is NORMAL for today and what God would have us to follow and practice within our Christian lives. Sometimes Christians apply an experience, such as speaking in tongues and apostolic healing, to the day in which they live, only to discover that God does not always heal them (2 Cor. 12:8-9) and that speaking in tongues is not a gift that can be repeated by Christians today (1 Cor. 13:8).

In 1 Kings 17:8-16 we read about God restocking the widow's cupboard with food because she fed Elijah the man of God. However, I have fed traveling evangelists and Bible teachers, but I do not expect God to restock my food supply as He did for the widow of Zarephath in I Kings 17:8-16. Yes, God could miraculously stock all of our homes with food, but this is not normal for today. One of the dangers of the tongues movement is that it becomes a substitute for *the normal Christian life*. There is always a tendency to substitute the spectacular for the normal. It is much easier to rely on an experience such as tongue speaking than to walk quietly day-by-day with God (James 4:8).

In 2 Kings 5:1-14 we discover how Naaman dipped in the Jordan River seven times in order to be healed from leprosy. However, today leprosy patients or those who are sick do not dip seven times in a river to be cured. This is not God's NORMAL way of doing things today. In addition, we do we throw sticks on the ground and expect them to turn into serpents as Moses did in Exodus 4:2-3. The fact that God used Elijah, Elisha, Peter, and Paul to restore physical life to people (I Kings 17:17-23; II Kings 4:17-37; Acts 9:36-43) does not mean God intends for believers today to raise others from the dead! Jesus' command to the twelve to raise the dead does not mean He gave the command to every Christian today (Matthew 10:8).

The same is true regarding the events associated with Pentecost and the early days of apostolic Christianity, such as waiting for the Holy Spirit, receiving the Holy Spirit after one is saved, speaking in tongues, or experiencing visions, as the apostles did, when they were receiving direct revelation from God prior to the canonization of the Bible (1 Cor. 13:10-13). In addition, there are only four references to tongue speaking found in the Bible (3 occur in Acts and the other in the church of Corinth). The point is this; these supernatural gifts were not common place but were rare in their expression and application even within the early apostolic church. Remember that just because God allowed some Christians to experience these miraculous gifts does NOT mean that every Christian MUST experience them.

## The Baptism of the Holy Spirit & Speaking in Tongues



Every Christian at the moment of salvation receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) and there is no mention of speaking in tongues as a sign of this baptizing work. There is no post-conversion experience related to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is NOT an experience but a theological saving transaction that places a believer in the body of Christ.

We read that “all” the Corinthians had been baptized by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) but not “all” of them spoke in tongues (1 Cor. 12:30). Since this is true, how could tongues be a permanent sign of the baptism of the Spirit? This question is unanswerable by those of the charismatic persuasion. Therefore, it would be unscriptural to conclude that God intended the baptism of the Holy Spirit to always include the speaking in tongues. And yet, Jimmy Swaggart says that “every believer should rightfully and scripturally expect to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit of God gives utterance when he is baptized in the Holy Spirit” (Straight Answers To Tough Questions, p. 188). Of course, this conclusion is unbiblical and leads the saints into practicing psychosomatic experiences.

In 1906, the first Pentecostal doctrinal document, known as “The Apostolic Faith” was published which set forth at least four central beliefs: 1) The belief that the events recorded in Acts 2 are to be *continually experienced* in every church; 2) The belief that the Acts 2 experience is a *separate experience that occurs after salvation*; 3) The belief that speaking in tongues proves one has had the Acts 2 experience; 4) The belief that speaking in tongues is to be *expected in the life of every believer*. These ideas are errant conclusions which cannot be drawn from Acts chapter 2.

First, that tongues were to be the continuing experience of everyone in the church is a fallacy since the Bible says tongues were to cease (1 Cor. 13:8-1) and since the original gift of tongues was not given to all Christians (1 Cor. 12:29-30). Second, the teaching that speaking in tongues is to occur in connection with some kind of emotional experience after salvation is an unbiblical position. Since Paul taught that

not every Christian was expected to speak in tongues (1 Cor. 12:28-30), then how can this be a requirement that everyone must pass through to demonstrate their spirituality? Third, the text indicates that it was only the disciples that spoke in tongues on the Day of Pentecost – not the 120 or the 3,000 souls that were saved (Acts 2:13-15). If 3,000 souls could be saved and there is no mention of them speaking in tongues (Acts 2:41), then how can the coming of the Holy Spirit into one's life always be linked to speaking in tongues?

Fourth, the few unique instances where people did speak in tongues after receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-46; 19:1-6) was not to be an indication of their spirituality, through some kind of post-conversion experience of speaking in tongues. Instead, the tongue speaking served as a *sign* to the unbelieving Jews that were present who were witnessing the events. In every instance when tongues were spoken (Acts 2, Acts 10, Acts 19; 1 Cor. 14:21-22) there were always Jews present. This is not by accident but design. Tongues were spoken to prove to the Jewish people that Jesus was the Messiah, the Gospel was true, the Church was being formed which would include Gentiles, and that judgment would eventually come upon them for rejecting the Messiah. Tongues were given as a sign to the Jews (1 Cor. 1:22); it was NOT designed to be a sign that accompanies a second work of grace, which includes ecstatic gibberish and becomes the test of one's spirituality.

Fifth, the Bible clearly reveals that the baptism of the Holy Spirit does not occur after salvation (a post conversion experience) but occurs in connection with a person's salvation (1 Cor. 12:13). The church epistles also reveal that everyone who believes on Christ possesses the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19; Gal. 4:6). Sixth, the tongues spoken in Acts 2 were spoken to prove to the Jewish people that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 2:22-24, 33-36). Tongues were not given to prove the disciple's spirituality but to authenticate this truth. Seventh, tongues were spoken to prove that the new Dispensation of Grace with the initial coming of the Holy Spirit was officially inaugurated as promised (Acts 1:5; 2:33; John 14:16-17). This was when God began to form His Church through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), when people were "added" to the organism of the Church (Acts 2:42, 47). Eighth, the disciples were "filled" with the Spirit and spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4). They did not speak in tongues as a result of some kind of emotional experience called the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Ninth, it's evident that speaking in tongues was never promised to be the specific and ultimate sign of salvation or spirituality, since even throughout the Book of Acts there were many times that the disciples and followers of Christ were filled with the Holy Spirit but did not speak in tongues (Acts 3:10, 4:8, 31). Acts 2 records that the believers were filled with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost and consequently spoke in tongues. But it is one thing to say that this is **the** evidence and this is **an** evidence of the filling of the Spirit.

Tenth, the epistles clearly reveal in Ephesians 5:18-25 and Galatians 5:22-23 that tongues were NEVER given to be a lasting sign of either the baptism of the Holy Spirit (the event that saves a person) or the filling of the Spirit (the control of the Holy Spirit over one's life). In fact, one could speak in tongues and be carnal (1 Cor. 3:3). For all these reasons, it is simply erroneous to conclude that speaking in tongues was to be a continuing practice for all of God's people for all time as a result of an alleged "baptism of the Holy Ghost" experience.

To be baptized by the Spirit means that we *belong to Christ's Body* – the Church (1 Cor. 12:13); however, to be filled with the Spirit means that *our bodies* belong to Christ (Eph. 5:18). *There is one baptism but many fillings*. Scripture mentions no specific signs for those who have been baptized by the Holy Spirit but does mention various permanent signs associated with the filling of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18-25).

- In 1 Corinthians 12:13 and the epistles every Christian is baptized by the Spirit into the saving work of Jesus Christ. It is the event that saves us and makes us a Christian.
- The "one baptism" (Eph. 4:5) of the Holy Spirit is what saves the sinner by merging them into a saving union with Christ.
- In 1 Corinthians 12:13 and the epistles there is no mention of the Spirit's baptism occurring after one is saved; it is what saves the sinner.
- In 1 Corinthians 12:13 and the doctrinal section of the epistles there is no mention of tongues accompanying the Spirit's baptism indicating that this would not be the pattern for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- In 1 Corinthians 12:13 and the epistles there is no mention of a second blessing or work of grace that accompanies the Spirit's baptism, whereby a person is subdued by the Holy Spirit and acts in ways unbeknown to himself (emotional outcries, talking in gibberish, and other esoteric phenomenon).

At the moment of salvation we are already blessed with all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3).

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a *saving* experience – not an *emotional* experience which involves speaking in some kind of ecstatic gibberish or chatter and experiencing other emotional phenomenon (falling backward, climbing tent poles, laughing uncontrollably, etc.).

Remember that we must base our theology on unchanging truth; not *transitional* experiences that occur in the Book of Acts. This is because the epistles clearly reveal that every Christian does possess the Holy Spirit's presence and baptizing saving work at the very moment of his conversion (Rom. 8:9; Gal. 3:27; 4:6; 1 Cor. 6:19; 12:13). Nor do we "wait" for the Holy Spirit as the original disciples did (Acts 1:4) or experience the miraculous signs that accompanied the initial arrival of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:2-4). These were miraculous signs to authenticate Peter's message and demonstrate what had occurred for the very first time in history (Acts 2:33). The miraculous occurring signs on Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4) which included speaking in tongues were NEVER revealed to be LASTING signs that would be included in the saving or baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit which brought the initial believers into the body of Christ (the New Testament Church).

These signs, such as speaking in tongues, which were performed by the disciples (not the 3,000 souls that were saved!) are absent in the doctrinal section of the epistles when linked to the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). Therefore, to conclude that every Christian must experience these same miraculous signs, in connection with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, becomes a gross misunderstanding of what was occurring on the Day of Pentecost.

Richard DeHaan writes:

"The book of Acts certainly does not support the contention of those who say that the gift of tongues is a sign that one has received the Holy Spirit. The vast majority of those who turned to Christ did no exercise this gift, and no one ever agonized or pleaded for it."

In addition, the notion that the so-called "slayings in the Holy Spirit" are part of the baptism of the Holy Spirit experience is a terrible fallacy that has no Biblical credibility or support. There are verses that Charismatics use to try and promote

this imaginary psychological experience. In ignorance they use some Old Testament verses which predate the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 1:28; Dan. 8:17-18; 10:7-9). Other verses are cited (Matt. 17:6; Acts 9:4-8; Rev. 1:17) but none of the verses mention the actual work of the Holy Spirit nor do they even convey a falling backward motion as the Charismatics maintain. In these Biblical accounts the people obviously fell on their face to hide their shame, in response to the holy presence of Deity. They did not fall backward as the result of the touch of someone else or the blowing of someone's breath over their body!

The fruit of the Spirit is self-control – not an uncontrollable movement that results in frenzy, hysterical laughter, and convulsions (Gal. 5:22). Being filled with the Spirit is never evidenced by this kind of counterfeit experience, but by a life that overflows with the Word of God in such a way that it spills over in praise, thanksgiving, and obedience to God (Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16). Many people claim to experience an energy or a force that causes them to fall back. However, there is no biblical basis for this concept. Yes, there may be some energy or force involved, but if so, it is not of God and not the result of the working of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 11:3). This is a bizarre counterfeit experience that is not of God and does not produce spiritual fruit.

All Christians are commanded to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18) and walk in the Spirit (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:25) but NEVER do we find in the Word of God that every Christian is commanded to be slain in the Spirit and speak in tongues. One must be careful to distinguish between the *temporary* sign of tongue speaking on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and throughout the Book of Acts (Acts 10:44-48, 19:1-7) which took place in conjunction with the Spirit's initial baptism to form the Church and the *permanent* signs of the filling and fruit of the Spirit which should to be sought and maintained in the life of every Christian today (Eph. 5:18-25; Gal. 5:22-23).

### Visions, Trances and Dreams



Visions recorded in the Bible were given on rare occasions. We read about Abraham (Gen. 15:1) and the Old Testament prophets having some visions (Isa. 1:1; Ezek. 43:3; Dan. 2:19, 8) and dreams such as Joseph, Gideon,



and Daniel (Gen. 37:5; Judges 7:13-15; Dan. 7:1). We also read about some of the New Testament apostles that were given a vision (Matt. 17:9; Acts 9:10, 12; 10:10; 11:5; 18:9; 22:17; 26:19). However, there is absolutely no Biblical evidence that all Christians received direct visions from God and that this was a common occurrence among the local churches and believers. The modern Charismatic Movement would lead us to believe that visions and dreams were a common occurrence among the Christians. It was not.

Again, these visions were given on very rare occasions (Acts 10:1-4) and were intended in some measure to communicate and confirm truth during the transitional stages of early New Testament Christianity before the canon of Scripture was completed (1 Cor. 13:10). Dreams and visions were part of the pre-canon days of both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. Once the truth was finalized the need for visions would pass away. In fact, the Bible records a time when there were no open and ongoing visions (1 Sam. 3:1) and the people only possessed the Old Testament Scriptures. We live in era and time such as this with the completed New Testament Scriptures. There is no promise given in the New Testament epistles that God would speak to His people through ongoing dreams, visions, and supernatural methods.

Christians will tell you that they had a vision of Christ and that even unsaved people (like Muslims) are having visions of Jesus which in return has helped them to get saved. Are visions of Jesus and others a valid experience that is from God?

- Jesus taught that during the End Times people will claim to see Jesus in visions and deceive many (Matt. 24:5).
- Jesus also taught that we should not believe those who claim to have a vision or dream of Jesus (Matt. 24:26). This is even more apparent today since they are seeing the false “hippie” Jesus which is revealed in many pictures.
- Visions, trances, and dreams were confined to the days when truth was still being revealed in piecemeal revelation and while the Bible was continually being formed. Once again, with the finalization of the Scripture (1 Cor. 13:10) there would no more need for open visions.
- Peter taught that we would not see Jesus today (“whom having not seen, ye love” - 1 Peter 1:8).
- Paul taught that when we get to Heaven through the experience of death we will remain there – not make trips to Heaven and return (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23).

The Bible nowhere indicates that God's people should expect to receive guidance through dreams, visions, or special revelations and visitations from God. We must also note that there is a vast difference between receiving inner guidance and leading by God's Spirit (Rom. 8:14) and receiving special revelations from God through the early supernatural gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7-11). There is a vast difference between being led by the Spirit (Gal. 5:18) and being "carried along" by the Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21; Rev. 1:10) which involved a person receiving special revelatory messages outside the Bible.

Once again, dreams, visions, trances, and direct messages to the New Testament prophets were confined in the early days of the Church period and were used to convey Biblical truth and instruction before the Scriptures were canonized (Acts 11:5; 2 Cor. 12:1; Rev. 9:17). These methods were used as a means to convey direct revelation from God and new information, prior to the completion of the Scriptures, and should be recognized as unnecessary for today (1 Cor. 13:10). If God only on rare occasions used this method to speak to a small minority of people during the early church, then why do many claim that He uses this method of revelation in such great measure today?

It's interesting that Spiritism has made much of visions and dreams but the same is true for Charismatics and Pentecostals today. The fascination and overemphasis with dreams and visions is linked to the world of the cults – not Biblical Christianity. When we seek information through mystical experiences, instead of receiving guidance through God's Word alone (Ps. 119:105), then we will find ourselves being misinformed and deceived by that which is not part of the world of reality and are no longer depending upon the sufficiency of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and Christ to meet our needs in life (Phil. 1:21; 3:10).

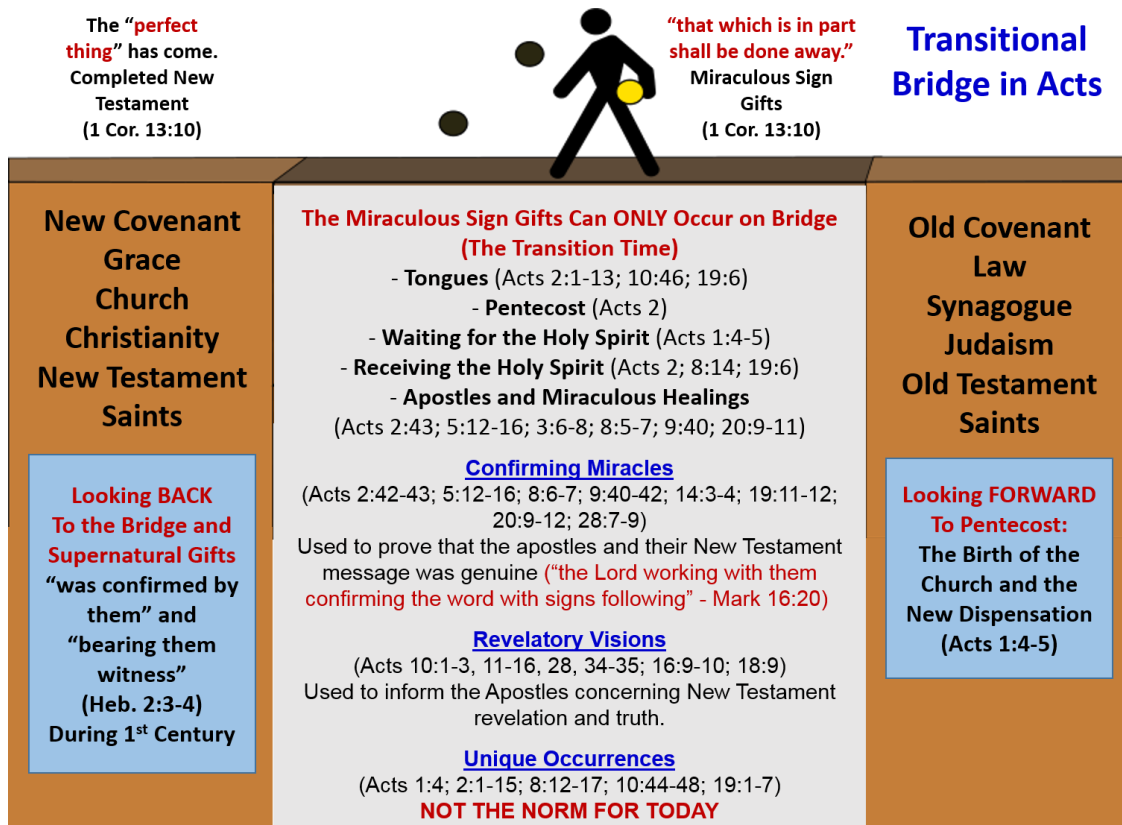
### **The Bridge from the Old to New Testament**



We've mentioned earlier that the Book of Acts must be viewed as a BRIDGE or time of TRANSITION from Old Testament ground (Jewish Law) to New Testament ground (the new working of God – the Church Dispensation). On the bridge, or during the transition zone, many things would occur like dreams, visions, trances, angelic visitors, speaking in

different languages, early apostolic sign gifts of dramatic healings, waiting to receive the Holy Spirit, and laying hands on people to receive the Holy Spirit.

These events could ONLY occur on the bridge, or during the time of transition, when the Holy Spirit was initially arriving to form the Church and validating the new men and messages (Mark, 16:20; 2 Cor. 12:12; Acts 2:32-33) that were being given out regarding the Gospel, Messiah, reaching out to Gentiles, the original advent of the Holy Spirit and the formation of the Church. Once the Church would get on the other side of the bridge, the Church would be living on solid New Testament ground (Eph. 2:20). This means there would be no more need for the transitional experiences found in the Book of Acts but only those teachings mentioned in the later epistles. The purpose of these various means of miraculous communication during the Book of Acts was to confirm new truth prior to the formation of the canon of Scripture. However, today they are no longer necessary since we have God’s truth in the completed New Testament revelation (1 Cor. 13:8-12; Heb. 2:3-4; Jude 3, Rev. 22:18-19). The chart illustrates the book of Acts transition period.



The chart illustrates the “bridge” emphasis seen in the Book of Acts. It demonstrates how God’s saints were passing from the Old Testament to New

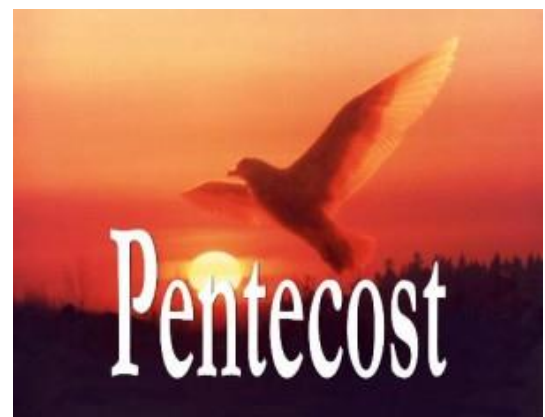
Testament days and experiencing the confirming sign miracles in wake of the new revelation about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Church, acceptance of the Gentiles, and New Testament revelation.

Let me reiterate something that I've mentioned earlier in this study. We must base our theology on unchanging truth; not *transitional experiences* that can only occur in the era of the Book of Acts, which is comparable to a bridge from Old Testament to New Testament living. The epistles are God's final word on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We do NOT "wait" for the Holy Spirit as the original disciples did (Acts 1:4) or experience the miraculous signs that accompanied the initial arrival of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1) to confirm to the Jews that Jesus was Israel's Messiah and the Church Dispensation had begun (Acts 2:33; John 14:16-20; 15:26). The epistles were written later and reveal that all Christians have the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19; Gal. 4:6), all Christians have been baptized by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), and every believer can live a spiritual life by the Spirit's power and fruit without speaking in tongues, seeing visions, or experiencing miraculous happenings (Gal. 5:22-25). A person's spirituality is not determined by what they experience but how they live on a daily basis before God and man.

The supernatural sign gifts which include the speaking in tongues (languages) were NEVER revealed to be LASTING signs that would be included or present in the saving or baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). These signs in relationship to the baptism of the Holy Spirit (entrance into the body of Christ) are not found in the doctrinal section of the epistles. Therefore, to conclude that every Christian must experience these same miraculous signs, in connection with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, becomes a gross misunderstanding of what was occurring on the Day of Pentecost.

### **Peter and Pentecost**

The Charismatics will often say, "Peter said in Acts 2 that in the last days in which we live today people will speak in tongues, prophesy, dream dreams, and do the miraculous. These things are for the church today." One must understand that Peter was NOT talking about the last days of the church (2 Tim. 3:1-12) but the last days in relation to God's plan for Israel (Isa. 2:2; Micah



4:1) after the Tribulation Period has expired and during the Millennium. Therefore, Peter was not talking about tongues, dreams, visions, and miraculous gifts occurring throughout the “last days” of the Church Age in which we live today.

Peter actually quotes from Joel 2:28 which references how saved Israel will manifest all of these miraculous signs just before the Millennium begins. It’s a time when astronomical signs will be occurring just before the Second Coming (Joel 2:30-31 with Acts 2:19-20). It should be noted that none of these worldwide astronomical signs mentioned in Acts 2:19-20 (“blood, fire, and vapour of smoke” and “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood) occurred on the day of Pentecost or during the “last days” that relate to the Church Age. Peter says they will occur “before the great and notable day of the Lord” (Acts 2:20) or just before the Second Coming of Christ to earth. This is a clear indication that Peter was not talking about the literal *fulfillment* of the miraculous sign gifts during the last days that relate to the Church Age but the “last days” related to Israel’s blessing during the inauguration of the earthly Kingdom.

Therefore, when Peter says “this is that” (Acts 2:16) which was happening on the Day of Pentecost, he is saying that what happened on Pentecost is *similar* to what will happen in the future with Israel just prior to the Millennium and as the earthly Kingdom begins. The expression “this is that” is used as a *comparative* or *illustrative* way – not as a literal fulfillment of Joe’s prophecy. In short, the promise of the Spirit’s filling which took place at Pentecost (the birthday of the Church), and which was accompanied with speaking in tongues, becomes an example of what it’s going to be like when Israel is saved and enters the Millennial Kingdom. In conclusion, the “last days” Peter speaks about do NOT refer to the “last days” that relate to the Church Age.

Jesus already told the disciples they could not know when the earthly messianic kingdom would be restored to Israel (Acts 1:6-7). Therefore, Peter was not teaching that the kingdom was actually arriving. He could see that the earthly kingdom was not arriving since he could visually see that not all of the promised celestial or astronomical signs were present on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:30-31). If he truly believed the Kingdom was arriving on earth at Pentecost, then he would not have commented later in Acts 3:19-20 that the Jewish people (Acts 3:12) still needed to repent to eventually bring in the Kingdom blessings. Peter would later reveal that God would have to call out great masses of Gentile people, allowing them to

become part of His Church (Acts 15:14) before the Kingdom could arrive on planet earth (“After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up” – Acts 15:16).

Therefore, in Acts chapter 2, when Peter said “this is that” (Acts 2:16) which came to pass or occurred on Pentecost, he was simply using Joel’s prophecy about Israel’s last days as an illustration of what was occurring (speaking in tongues) during the inaugural or beginning stage of the Church Age (Pentecost). Furthermore, it was the speaking in tongues (different languages) which would only last for a timespan of about 30 years, during the infant days of the Church (1 Cor. 13:10). Peter gave no indication that the miraculous sign gifts would exist throughout the entire course of the Church Age, during the last days of the Church, and up to the time of the Rapture. If you want to repeat the Pentecostal signs of wind, fire, and speaking in tongues which occurred with the initial arrival of the Holy Spirit, you are 1,900 years too late! Pentecost with its specific events, signs, and purpose cannot be recreated any more than Columbus Day can be recreated.

### Acts or the Church Epistles?



We must reiterate something. The only teachings and experiences in the book of Acts that are NORMAL for the Church Age are those that are doctrinally confirmed elsewhere in the New Testament epistles or letters to the churches. There needs to be a common emphasis and repetition of certain events and gifts for them to be *operative* and the *normal pattern* for New Testament Christianity. Charismatics and Pentecostals take a different approach. They build their theology on the sign gifts and transitional verses from Judaism to Christianity (from Kingdom to Church truth) in Acts 2, 8, 10, 19 and on a misunderstanding of I Corinthians 12, 13, 14.

These chapters deal with a church which had a unique and temporary ministry to the Jewish people of that day. The tongues that were spoken in Corinth were a sign specifically for the Jewish people, prior to the impending AD 70 judgment (1 Cor.

14:22), and it was an operative sign that would quickly fade away with the completion of the canon of Scripture (1 Cor. 13:8-10). In fact, tongues are not mentioned in any other epistles and both the writer of Hebrews and Peter (epistles written later) looked back upon the performing of the sign gifts as something that had already occurred in the past during an era or time which had already run its intended course.

Hebrews 2:3-4 declares:

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and **was confirmed** (in the past when Jesus and the apostles walked the earth) **unto us** (the second generation of Christians living in AD 66 or 67) **by them** (the first generation of Christians as they evangelized the next generation of Christians) that **heard him** (who lived during the days when Jesus Christ walked the earth); God also **bearing them** (testifying, giving evidence to the original band of Christians living during the days of Jesus and the apostles who visibly witnessed and experienced these gifts - not us today!) **witness** (visual witness of the miraculous), both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”

In other words, the Gospel that Jesus and the apostles spoke was ALREADY confirmed as being true through the original miracles done by Jesus and the apostles (John 20:30-31). This means that by the second generation of Christians there was no more need for confirmation and the miracles associated with Jesus and the original apostles. In fact, there could be no more confirmation since Jesus ascended to the Father and the apostles were dying off the scene.

Hebrews was written in A.D. 66 or 67. By this time, the second generation of Christian could verify that the temporary gifts, with their miracles and manifestations of the Spirit, had already disappeared with the ascension of Jesus into Heaven and the passing away of the apostles. The apostles themselves, along with their revelatory and miraculous foundational gifts (Eph. 2:20), were seen to be something of the past and part of the original days when the apostles walked upon the earth.

2 Peter 2:1 also teaches us:

“But there were false **prophets** (past tense – they existed in early apostolic Christianity) also among the people, even as there **shall be** (future – in the later

Church era) **false teachers** (no more prophets) among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”

The change from false prophets to teachers is significant since the apostles themselves and the apostolic sign gifts of miracles would no longer be needed and performed within the church. In fact, Paul did not heal a beloved friend of his who was sick and ready to die (Phil. 2:27). It’s clear that something was changing and had changed in the later epistles.

We should start with the church epistles to confirm doctrine and examine what is absent from these epistles, since the epistles, especially the later ones, would naturally reflect the lasting and normal teachings and approach for New Testament Christianity. We should begin with the epistles and move back to Acts to find out what is normal for today and not vice-versa. Don’t start with Acts and then go to the epistles. For instance, the epistles teach that all God’s children have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit which saves a person and places them into the body of Christ – the New Testament Church (1 Cor. 12:13). The epistles do not teach that every Christian spoke in tongues (1 Cor. 12:30). It also reveals that only the Corinthian Church spoke in tongues for a specific ministry that God had given to them with Jewish people prior to the AD 70 judgment (1 Cor. 14:20-22).

It’s interesting that none of the sign gifts and supernatural phenomenon is repeated in the epistles as common instruction to follow for churches and people today. This is also an indicator of their cessation. Where do we read in the New Testament epistles about tongues being a confirming sign of a person’s spirituality or a mark of maturity?

It is also interesting to note that some of the church fathers (those who lived after the days of the apostles) spoke about the cessation of the gift of tongues

Chrysostom wrote in the fourth century:

“This whole phenomenon [of speaking in tongues] is very obscure, but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such then as used to occur but now no longer take place. And why do they not happen now? Why look now, the cause too of the obscurity hath produced us again another question: namely, why did they then happen, and now do so no more?” (Chrysostom, 344–407).



Augustine also wrote:

“In the earliest times, the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spake with tongues, which they had not learned ... These were signs adapted to the time ... That thing (*tongues*) was done for a betokening, and it passed away.”

Neither the epistles nor church fathers indicate that the miraculous sign gifts would continue to exist throughout the future church centuries. This is why there is no teaching in Scripture that the church should look for miraculous gifts. Since the miraculous gifts are not referred to in the passages discussing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10-18), and the life of faith (Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:12-17), these gifts are not necessary nor expected to be part of the believer’s spiritual life. In addition, we have already mentioned that none of these miraculous gifts were given as requirements for church leaders (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).

When the Pastoral Epistles set forth principles for lasting church leadership they only speak of elders and deacons – not apostles with sign gifts. This tells us that the supernatural sign gifts were not given to be part of the continuing church life and ministry. Paul also could not heal Epaphroditus and left him to die (Phil. 2:27, 30). It’s clear that the miraculous gifts were never intended to be part of ongoing church life and ministry after the first century. This is why there is no mention of them following the days of the apostles and throughout church history.

Alva McClain wrote:

“When the church appears in the second century, the situation as regards the miraculous is so changed that we seem to be in another world.”



In his handbook of church history, Samuel Green wrote:

“When we emerge in the second century, we are, to a great extent in a changed world ...”

These observations are factually correct and remind us that signs and wonders faded out of the church as the apostles passed away from the earthly scene. It’s very clear that throughout the history of the church (from the second generation of Christians to the present) that millions of believers have NOT embraced the “sign gift” theology knowing that it was *temporary* and it had its purpose in the historic past, the *infant* days of the church. They know that trying to reproduce it would be

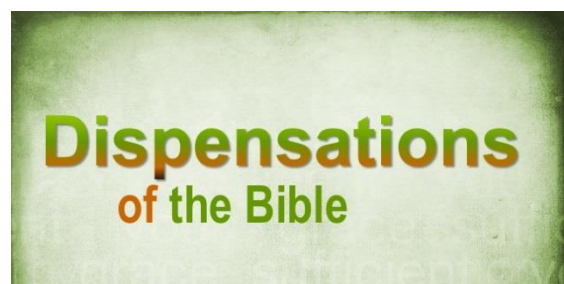
a fallacy and not benefit their spiritual growth in grace (2 Pet. 3:18-19). Throughout the history of the church there have only been fringe groups like the Montanists (170 AD) who claimed to speak with ecstatic utterances and have prophetic revelations directly from God.

Eusebius, a church historian born around A.D. 260-270, wrote the following of Montanus: "In his lust for leadership, he became obsessed and would suddenly fall into frenzy and convulsions. He began to be ecstatic and speak and talk strangely, and prophesied contrary to that which was the custom from the beginning of the church. Those who heard him were convinced that he was possessed. They rebuked him and forbade him to speak, remembering the warning of the Lord Jesus to be watchful because false prophets would come" (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 5.16.1).

Montanus was joined by two women, Priscilla and Maximilla, who also claimed to have the gift of prophecy and also prophesied in an ecstatic state. Following the days of the apostles, church history gives no indication that people practiced the Biblical gift of speaking in tongues. In fact, what is happening today in Pentecostalism and the Charismatic churches is really a Neo-Montanism which is nothing more than esoteric experiences which have no Biblical basis. What is happening today is not a revival of early apostolic gifts but a revival of pagan practices which stem all the way back to the ancient Mystery Religions of Babylon. The Church of Corinth was in some measure trying to mimic these ancient practices which were still being practiced in pagan religions of that day (1 Cor. 12:1-3). Today witchcraft, Shamanism, voodoo, and other apostate religions practice ecstatic tongue speaking. So, just because one has an experience does not make it approved by God.

### Temporary Signs and the Dispensations

God has always given *introductory* and *temporary signs* when He started new Dispensations such as the **Law** (Exodus 3:1-8; 7; Acts 7:36), the **Church age** (Acts 2 and signs in the book of Acts), and the future **Kingdom age** (Joel 2:28-29). We definitely see the introductory miraculous signs in the



Dispensation of the Church with the promised new baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; 2:33; 1 Cor. 12:13). The miracles would serve as signs to the Jewish nation that God was changing His program and ways. He was now reaching out to the Gentile masses (Acts 15:14) with a new program and different emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Church was a program that dealt with the promised Spirit's arrival to indwell God's people (Eph. 2:22) and form the new body of believers (both Jews and Gentiles) by joining them together through the saving ministry of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). The age of the Spirit would consist of a new permanent indwelling ministry (John 14:16-17). Therefore, this new event and teaching about the Spirit was accompanied with the sign of speaking in tongues (Acts 2:33 – "which ye now see and hear"). In fact, all of the miraculous signs during the early days of the infant Church would confirm the messengers who were bringing forth new teaching or revelation regarding the Gospel, the Messiah, Gentiles, and Church truth. These signs were termed as "the signs of an apostle" (2 Cor. 12:12) and these specific miraculous signs were performed prior to the completion of the canon of Scripture (1 Cor. 13:10) to authenticate or confirm both the man and the new message that he was declaring.

Following the completion of "the faith" (Jude 3) or the body of revealed truth that all Christians believe, or "when that which is perfect is come" (the completed and canonized Scriptures – 1 Cor. 13:10) there would be no more need for sign gifts, revelatory dreams, and visions, which all had to do with revealing new truth prior to the finalization of the canon of Scripture. When the Scriptures would be completed and "once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3) truth would be clearly seen and known *without* all of the revelatory and confirming signs gifts ("then shall I know even as also I am known" – 1 Cor. 13:10).



It is important to once again reiterate that the miraculous signs were introductory sign markers pointing to the arrival of the new Church Dispensation and the initial stages of church expansion (Acts 2:33; 1 Cor. 13:8-10). As in other dispensations of the past and future, signs are witnessed in connection with the inauguration of God's new working (Exodus 3:1-8; Joel 2:28-29). In the infancy stage of the Church Dispensation miraculous signs were primarily performed by the apostles (Acts 2:43; 5:12), which were foundational to the early days of the Church (Eph. 2:20), and

these signs were clearly seen to be temporary in nature (1 Cor. 13:10; Heb. 2:3; 2 Pet. 2:1). They were designed to confirm the message and messengers of the new dispensation as being genuine and from God.

The Pentecostal signs of the Spirit's ministry such as speaking in tongues, along with the other nine early apostolic sign gifts (1 Cor. 12:8-10), were primarily practiced by the apostles ("by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought" – Acts 5:12 and "wonders and signs were done by the apostles" – Acts 2:43). These miraculous signs were also practiced by their secondary associates (Acts 6:8; 8:5-7; Acts 14:1-3) during the infant days of the Church. It's these people that Paul had in mind when speaking to the Corinthians about the gifts of healings and miracles which were distributed among early apostolic Christianity (1 Cor. 12:4-10).

Once again, the miraculous signs such as speaking in tongues, miracles, and healings were intended to confirm the messengers and their new messages (Mark 16:20; Acts 2:32-33), and one of their key messages was that God was starting a new Church program through the proclamation of the Gospel message which would save great masses of Gentiles (Acts 13:46) and unite them together with the Jews by the baptizing work of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:15). It would be a new age that emphasizes the permanent indwelling and new dynamic ministry of the Spirit (John 14:16-17; 15:26; Gal. 5:18; 25; Rom. 8:4; Eph. 2:22; 1 Cor. 6:19). The Book of Acts transitions between

### **Signs and Wonders for all Christians?**



Does the New Testament promise that all Christians will be able to experience the same signs miracles that the apostles did? Does it teach that all Christians of all time should be able to speak in tongues, cast out demons, and go about healing people? Certainly not. The Bible does not teach this and neither does church history support this outlandish Charismatic claim.

Be careful to not claim a promise that is not yours to claim. The devil gave a false promise to Jesus in Matthew 4:6. "... If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." This promise, found in Psalm 91, is not a guarantee that God will rescue us if we jump off buildings, yet that is the way Satan tried to get Jesus to view it. Many times we struggle because we are expecting God to work in ways which He has not promised. Our society is filled with people proclaiming what they say are God's promises concerning health and wealth and the things of this world, but often what they confidently declare is not actually what God said. Faith that is based on anything other than God's rightly divided (2 Tim. 2:15) or correctly interpreted Word will result in false promises and false hopes.

A careful examination of the Mark 16:17-20 passage within its *context* reminds us that Jesus was speaking to His apostles ("spoken unto them" – vs. 19) and this is also indicated by the pronouns ("they" and "them" – vs. 20). There is absolutely no indication that these miraculous gifts would be given to *all* Christians in the future church era. Actually, these gifts were limited in their distribution and would be given to the primary apostles and the close associates with the apostles such as Barnabas, Stephen, and Philip (Acts 8:5-8).

Mark 16:17 declares: "And these signs (miraculous signs) shall follow them (the new converts) that believe (this does not say the signs were *performed* by all the new believing converts but would *follow after (attend or accompany)* their faith and salvation experience, which means the apostles performed the miracles); In my name shall they (the apostles) cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues."

Mark 16:20 confirms this interpretation:

"And they (the apostles) went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them (the apostles), and confirming the word with signs (miraculous signs) following. Amen."

Spiros Zodhiates states:

"These signs, then, are apostolic and not intended for any other believers except those who were converted as a direct result of the personal preaching of the apostles."

Later, he writes:

“Through the record of the Word, the evidence once given always accompanies believers as a matter of record.”

In other words, there is no more need for confirming miraculous signs to authenticate the new messages and their preaching since we already have the records of the miraculous signs that both Jesus (John 20:30-31) and the apostles performed (Mark 16:20). These historic miracles are sufficient evidence in and of themselves to act as a continuing confirmation of the inspired Word of God which we have and hold in our hands today (“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” – John 20:31).

The expression “signs and wonders” is a commonly occurring phrase in regard to the infant days of the church (Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12; 2 Cor. 12:12). The miracles were called “signs” (Heb. 2:4) because they were miraculous gifts that served as special outward markers or tokens to verify that these men were true apostles and that the word which they spoke was true (Mark 16:20 – “confirming the word with signs” and “God also bearing them witness” – Heb. 2:4). The apostles have *already been confirmed* in the past when the Church initially began and was receiving new revelation from God in order to establish the New Testament Scriptures.

Please note that if one claims to have the apostolic sign gifts they should also be protected from being harmed from biting snakes and deadly poisons. Mark 16:18 declares: “They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” Although some practice snake handling today (something the apostles never did!) these people discover rather quickly that they are not apostles! God promised to protect the apostles from harm and keep them safe so they could convey the intended message of the Gospel and plant churches during the early apostolic era (Acts 28:3-6).



The apostles did not move about doing snake shows and drinking strychnine out of bottles, in order to impress people and tempt God to keep them safe. The charades

that are being performed today by modern-day snake handlers is a total misunderstanding of the protective sign gift that was given to the apostles and is nothing more than the ancient snake charmer practices which have been historically fueled by demonism (1 Cor. 10:20). If you handle snakes today and claim to be an apostle, then you are on your own! There is no promise that God will protect you. Don't tempt God.

Here is the point. Not all Christians living during the apostolic church possessed the miraculous gifts and supernatural abilities which were primarily given to the apostles. Furthermore, we must reiterate the point that even during the transition time period within the Book of Acts that not every Christian spoke in tongues. Very few people spoke in tongues (Acts 2, 10, 19). In fact, in the Church of Corinth, the only church that is specifically said to possess this unique transitional gift of tongues, only some of its people actually spoke in a different language (1 Cor. 12:30). Furthermore, there is absolutely no proof that the mass majority of Christians went about possessing the gifts of healings and miracles and were living a life free from disease and illness. The record of the Book of Acts does not substantiate this. It was primarily the apostles (Acts 5:12) and their close associates (Barnabas, Philip – Acts 5:6; 15:12) that possessed these supernatural gifts, with perhaps a few other exceptions (1 Cor. 12:30; Luke 9:49-50).

### Apostles



Today there can be no apostles since they were to be an eyewitness of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 15:8), since they healed every one of every disease one hundred

percent of the time (Acts 5:15-16), since they raised the dead (Matt. 10:8; Acts 9:40; Acts 20:9-11), and since their purpose of receiving new revelation is no longer needed with the finalization of Scripture (1 Cor. 13:8-10). The apostles were only designed to function as the foundation of the Church (Eph. 2:20), since they preached truth, prior to its canonization, and paved the way for the Scriptures to be finalized. There is no mention of any requirements for apostles or prophets in the later epistles (Tim 3:1, 8; Titus 1:5-7). This is because they would pass off the church scene with the completion of the revelation God intended to give through them.

It should be reiterated that the primary tongue speakers and miracle workers during the infant days of the church were the apostles since they obviously would possess both the gift of speaking in tongues and miracles in order to convey the miraculous “signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” before their Jewish audience (1 Cor. 1:22; 14:20-22). They spoke in these foreign languages to authenticate WHO they were and WHAT they said (Mark 16:20). These types of miraculous credentials were necessary during the infant and foundational part of church life and ministry while the Bible was being written, truth was being confirmed, and apostles were present.

Today, no confirmation of truth is necessary by apostles, since the Scriptures are completed (Rev. 22:18; Jude 3) and since God is no longer confirming truth to the Jews through miraculous signs (1 Cor. 14:22; Rom. 11:15). God has already judged Israel and temporarily set her aside until a future time.

In addition, the supernatural gifts of receiving revelatory truth through gifts of knowledge and wisdom, along with apostolic trances and visions, are no longer necessary, since the Bible is now completed and canonized (1 Cor. 13:10). All the historic purposes of the supernatural and sign gifts have run their course and for this reason they have “ceased” (1 Cor. 13:8-10). This is the unmistakable teaching and evidence of Scripture. Since the foundational period of time when the apostles would function would pass away, it stands to reason that their miraculous signs (sign miracles) used to confirm their messages or supernatural revelation would also pass away (Heb. 2:3-4; 2 Cor. 12:12; Mark 16:17; Acts 2:43).

Another reason why the sign gifts have ceased is because of the total inability of people to duplicate these apostolic miraculous signs today. Faith healers (fake healers!) cannot perform miracles like the apostles did. The apostles raised the dead (Acts 9:36-42; Acts 20:9-12; Acts 28:8-9). If men claim to have the apostolic sign gifts, then why can't they raise the dead? Why can't they go up to a corpse that is lying in a coffin and raise them up? The answer is simple. It's because these men are phonies. They are impostors and frauds. The early gift of healing extended to even the area of raising the dead! Let's set the record straight. There is no person today who can raise the dead and heal people of any disease and every disease as the apostle did. The burden of proof rests upon the shoulders of those, who say that there are apostles today, to prove that they are true apostles. Where are the modern faith healers that can heal as the apostles did?



- a. The apostles healed with a word or touch (Acts 9:32-35; Acts 28:8).
- b. The apostles healed instantly (Acts 3:2-8).
- c. The apostles healed totally (Acts 9:34). There never was a progression in their healing or any recurring symptoms or slow improvement.
- d. The apostles healed organic disease.

Organic disease is when an organ is destroyed, maimed or crippled. The apostles could heal people with all kinds of organic diseases such as palsy (Acts 3:2-8) and infectious diseases caused by diseased organs (Acts 28:8). Infections, heart attacks, gall stones, hernias, slipped discus, cancers, broken bones, deformities and lacerations are all kinds of organic diseases. Faith healers can sometimes make people feel better through mind techniques (psychosomatic healing). The people who are suffering from a *psychological* illness can think themselves well. However, when it comes down to organic diseases the faith healers are at odds. They cannot heal people who are bent over and crippled in wheel chairs and hospitals. They cannot enter a hospital and heal broken backs, cancers, and deformities as the original apostles could. Nor can they heal babies since they cannot play with their minds.

In Acts 5:15-16 we see what I call a hospital in the street! The Bible says the “apostles” (vs. 12) healed “everyone.” No person was left out for any reason. Sickness, severe palsy, and demon possession were all healed. What happened here would be comparable to someone going into a hospital and healing everyone in the hospital. Can you imagine the people lying in the street waiting for the apostles to heal them? Diseased people, deformed people, demon-possessed people, were all waiting to be healed. Every one of them! Let’s see the glamorous, slicked-back haired, money-making faith healer of today walk down the halls of the hospital and heal everyone in the hospital. Let’s see him go into the insane asylum and deliver the poor people from their sickness.

Both Christ and the apostles could heal everyone and all their healings were undeniable. Everyone knew that these people were not frauds. Their healings were genuine. Today, faith healers make the outlandish claim that when people are not healed it’s because they do not have enough faith. This is totally incorrect to assume. *The text in Acts 5:15-16 mentions nothing about the people’s faith.* It merely says they were all healed. This is true in other cases (Acts 19:11-12) and especially of those who were already dead (Acts 9:36-43, Acts 20:9-12, Acts 28:8-

9). The gift of healing which the apostles had was the instantaneous ability to heal people of any kind of disease or deformity regardless of their faith. They healed as the Lord Jesus did (Matthew 8:16; 9:35; 12:15; Luke 4:40). Jesus healed “all” the people in spite of their faith.

2 Corinthians 12:12

“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”

The primary tongue speakers and miracle workers during the infant days of the church were the apostles since they obviously would possess both the gift of speaking in tongues and miracles in order to convey the miraculous “signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” before their Jewish audience (1 Cor. 1:22; 14:20-22). They spoke in these foreign languages to authenticate WHO they were and WHAT they said (Mark 16:20). These types of miraculous credentials were necessary during the infant and foundational part of church life and ministry while the Bible was being written, truth was being confirmed, and apostles were present.

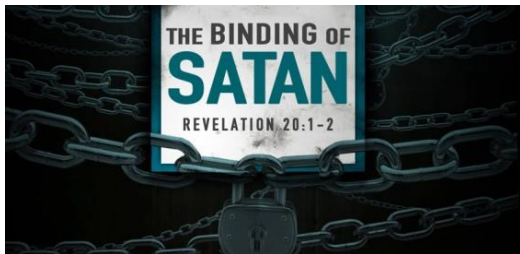
Benjamin Warfield, the great Bible scholar, said:

“These miraculous gifts were part of the credentials of the apostles as the authoritative agents of God in *founding* the church. Their function thus confirmed them distinctively in the apostolic church, and they necessarily passed away with it.”

The issue today is not signs but doctrine. The issue for today is “What saith the Scriptures (Rom. 4:3) and “Not what saith the apostles!” This is because there are no more apostles with their miraculous signs of confirmation. Today we do not need the supernatural sign gifts to confirm truth since the truth is self-authenticated in the Bible. The issue today is no longer *signs* but *Scripture*. The apostles had a unique transitional ministry to bridge the gap between the Old and New Testaments by giving out new revelation and validating it with confirming miraculous signs (Heb. 2:3).

One unique apostolic ministry of Paul involved turning some people over to Satan (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:19-20) which involved special disciplinary actions for those who were committing sin and promoting error in the early church. These unique prerogatives or special rights are not given to any church authorities today. This

special apostolic authority has long ceased with the passing of the apostles. There is no indication in the later epistles that what the apostles did is normative for church leaders today as they deal with church discipline. We find no mention of the churches practicing this procedure.



Nor do we find church leaders given the same kind of authority to bind and loose people as the apostles did (Matt. 16:18-19). What about binding Satan? Have you ever heard someone say, “I bind the works of the devil” or “Satan, I bind you and release God’s blessing upon you.”

This kind of reasoning is not Scriptural or Biblical reasoning. You don’t find believer’s doing this during the days of the apostles and certainly no instruction is given in the later epistles or anywhere in the Bible for the “binding Satan and demons” (not permitting demons to work). This terminology is taken from other verses that have nothing to do with binding demons.

Another one of the apostle’s unique transitional ministries of authority (“keys of the kingdom”) related to *binding* and *loosing* people (Matt. 16:18-19; 18:18; Acts 20:22-23). Contextually this refers to forbidding people to be forgiven or permitting them to receive forgiveness in relation to disciplinary matters and salvation. The verses that speak of “binding and loosing” in Matthew 16 and 18 (Matt. 16:19; 18:18) primarily refer to the apostle’s right to proclaim the judicial forgiveness or punishment of those people who initially received or rejected the Gospel during the initial expansion of the Church. *The binding has nothing to do with binding Satan or demons.* It has to do with binding (retaining) or releasing (loosing) people from their sins based on the declaration that their sins are either unforgiven or forgiven in response to how people respond to the Gospel message.

The apostle’s declarations were linked to God’s original dispensational outreach to the Jews and Gentiles in the new Church Dispensation (Acts 2, 10; 13:46; 14:27). The official and declarative announcements they made were based upon God’s will in Heaven which was to make known His new work of expanding salvation and the Church to the ends of the earth. Of course, none of the apostles could actually forgive the sins of people (Matt. 5:9-6; Luke 5:21) but they did have a special ministry and unique transitional authority to openly declare masses of people forgiven based upon God’s original expansion of His salvation program among the

Gentiles in order to form the Church. Again, it should also be noted that none of the binding and loosing has anything to do with binding Satan and demons. Satan will not be actually bound until the Millennium (Rev. 20:1-3). Today he still moves about as a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8). It's incompatible with Biblical revelation to conclude that one can actually bind Satan or stop him from working in specific areas throughout the earth.

Jesus taught a spiritual illustration in Matthew 12:28-29 about Satan's binding: "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you (the earthly messianic kingdom age was about to dawn). Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house (Satan's kingdom), and spoil his goods (steal away the souls of men taken captive by the devil), except he first bind the strong man? (Satan) and then he will spoil his house" (Satan's kingdom).

If Jesus were driving out demons by Satan's power, He certainly would not be preparing the people for God's earthly kingdom. This is because Satan will not be permitted to operate during the earthly kingdom. Satan will be literally bound (Rev. 20:2) and the Spirit of God will be doing great wonders (Joel 2:28-29). Jesus used the word "bind" in relation to Christ's past victories over Satan, while He was on earth, but ultimately He was looking ahead to Satan's coming defeat on the cross. Jesus repeatedly spoke of Satan's ultimate defeat in anticipation of His death on the cross (John 12:23, 27, 31).

In other words, Jesus is teaching that Satan is bound like a strong man in his own house for he is a defeated foe. Jesus illustrated this by overpowering Satan during His earthly ministry (Matt. 4), by casting out demons, and actually proclaimed Satan's defeat over the lives of people in view of His death on Calvary (John 12:31; 16:11). To "spoil his house" (Satan's house) means that during the present age of the Gospel people can be rescued from Satan's bondage to become the property of God.

The death of Jesus might appear to be a victory for Satan, but really it signaled his doom. The cross defeated Satan's power over our lives (Col. 2:15) since we can now be saved from the wages of spiritual death which Satan demanded because of our sinful lives (Rom. 6:23; Heb. 2:14) and since we can also claim our spiritual victory through Christ's shed blood (Rev. 12:11). The cross also sealed Satan's eventual fate to the abyss or bottomless pit (Rev. 20:2) and finally to the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10).

This final sentence has not yet been carried out on the devil but his doom has been sealed. Satan is defeated in every way through Christ's cross (Rom. 16:20).

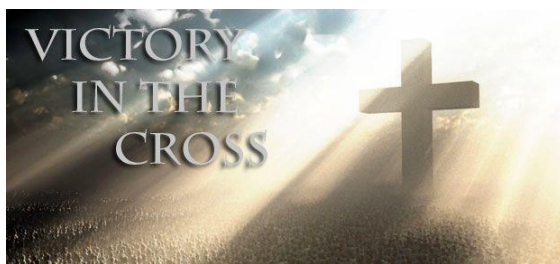
In summary, the death blow to Satan was inflicted at the cross (Gen. 3:15) and will be actualized in the future. Satan is presently still powerful, but His power and authority is limited, his doom is sealed, and his time is short. In Matthew 12:29 Jesus was teaching that in a spiritual sense Satan was bound or utterly defeated by Christ in every way. In fact, Satan's authority and power over our lives was defeated when Jesus died on the cross. This means we don't have to pray that Satan would be bound. He was already bound, which means His power and authority over our lives was removed, as a result of Jesus' death and defeat of the devil upon the cross. We must simply claim the victory we have through Christ. Of course, Satan's defeat through Christ does not mean that believers have the authority to rebuke the devil, to bind Satan, or to even talk to him. This is actually a risky practice. Many today insult the devil, make fun of him, and mock him. This behavior is foolish and unbiblical since not even the angels do this (Jude 8-9).

Mark Hitchcock said:

"We are not to tremble at the devil but neither are we to trivialize him."

How do we have victory over Satan and sinister spirits who roam about to defeat us (Eph. 6:12)?

1. Remember they are already defeated.



We cannot defeat Satan and his wicked spirits; Jesus has already defeated them for us. Colossians 2:15 says, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Jesus "spoiled" (disarmed) the

wicked spirits or the demonic powers and authorities that were against us when He died on Calvary's cross. This word refers to those who were captured in a Roman invasion and who were brought back as captives. Through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, the shedding of His precious blood, He defeated Satan and all his wicked spirits (demons) that are following him today. They were in one sense overtaken, defeated, and captured as a result of the death of God's son. This means

they no longer must defeat us. Christ's death, when properly appropriated to our lives in the time of temptation, is the ground for our victory over Satan. Our union with the victorious Christ is the ground for our victory (Phil. 3:10).

## 2. Reclaim your victory in Christ.

We don't pray for victory; we claim our victory in Christ. This means that we must claim our victory over Satan and the wicked angels through the ministry of aggressive prayer, God's strength, and wearing the victorious armor (Eph. 6:10-18). We must learn the secret of appropriating to our daily lives the victory that Christ already won. When the Tempter comes, we must remember Calvary and Satan's utter defeat. Jesus not only paid it all on the cross; He won it all!

The practical, day-to-day victory over Satan and demons involves standing upon our victorious ground. We take a defensive position or posture and by doing so, resist the devil. The words "stand" (Eph. 6:11, 13, 14) and "withstand" (Eph. 6:13) speak of taking a defensive stand whereby we hold the victorious ground that we already possess in Christ and don't give any "advantage" or starting point for Satan to work (2 Cor. 2:11), so he can gain enemy ground or territory in our lives. The Bible says, "Neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27). This means that Satan is constantly trying to gain greater amounts of territory in our lives and possess more control over our Christian lives. In simple terms, we should not allow the devil to get a foothold in our lives by flirting with sin and fooling around with sin.



STAND  
WITHSTAND  
RESIST

Rather than addressing demons directly and demanding that they stop tempting us, we should follow God's advice for possessing victory in our personal lives. We are not commanded to *confront* demons (offense) but *counteract* demons (defense) with the truth (Eph. 6:17) as they seek to raise havoc in our own personal lives (Eph. 6:12). We have victory over the devil and demons by putting on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:11, 13). Ephesians 6:10-18 is the believers field manual for spiritual warfare. We are called upon to put on or *appropriate* God's armor to possess victory in our life. Romans 13:14 gives similar advice when it states that we should: "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh,

to fulfil the lusts thereof.” In a very practical way, we are called upon to clothe ourselves in Christ’s virtues, life, accept Him as our guide and rely upon His strengthening grace and power to live victoriously. Victory is always pictured as putting off one thing (the old life with its sins) and putting on another (the new life of righteousness and Christian virtues). There are many verses that portray this (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 4:22. Col. 3:8). If we want victory, we must put on our spiritual armor and in a very practical way put on Christ in our daily lives, experience His life in ours (Gal. 2:20) and allow ourselves to be directed by Jesus Christ.

### 3. Resist the devil.

James 4:7

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”



This resisting is a decisive action (aorist imperative) on behalf of the saint of God who is undergoing temptation. This means to take a stand against the devil. Notice that the command to “resist the devil” follows the command to submit therefore to God (Eph. 4:7). The word “submit” is a military term which means to be subordinated, to give obedience to one’s superior. This means that we must first place ourselves under the complete authority of God through repentance (James 4:8-9) and determine to give obedience to Him, if we are going to have victory. No Christian can experience victory without first submitting to God through repentance and determining to give Him allegiance.

After repentance, we can then effectively “resist the devil” (Eph. 4:7) or his advancements upon our life. To resist the devil means to effectively oppose the devil or stand against him. When we carry out these responsibilities, God promises that the Evil One “will flee from you.” Notice that our daily victory has nothing to do with binding Satan, rebuking Satan, seeking out the devil, or being part of some kind of deliverance ministry. The early church did none of these things. God’s plan for victory is clearly stated in the Bible.

There are two comforting promises found in James 4:7-8. First, when a child of God takes a stand against the devil to resist him, Satan flees. Second, when a believer draws near to God, God does not flee (James 4:8).

1 John 4:4

“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”

## Tongues

### *Spoken Languages*



The tongues of the Bible were always intelligent languages (not gibberish) spoken by people. This can be confirmed by Acts 2:11 which says the people heard them speak in their native languages (“how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?” and “we do hear them speak in our tongues” – languages). The Corinthians were chided and corrected for not having an interpreter so they could understand the languages being spoken (1 Cor. 14:2, 5, 13-16). Tongues were not unintelligible gibberish or the secret language of angels (1 Cor. 13:1), as Charismatics suggest, since whenever angels spoke in the Bible they always spoke in languages people could understand. Nor were tongues some kind of secret prayer language that was designed to keep a worshipper more connected to God. Larry Sparks said that “Tongues keeps us talking directly to God, praying in agreement with His perfect will (Rom. 8:26-28).” Let’s investigate this claim.

Romans 8:26-27

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities (prayer infirmities): for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us (before God’s throne – not inside of us!) with groanings which cannot be uttered (the Holy Spirit is groaning – not the child of God). And he (God the Father) that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints (before the throne of God) according to *the will of God.*”

This verse is not teaching what Charismatics claim. In fact, the subject of tongues is not even remotely in the context or mentioned. To find tongues in these verses is like trying to find a needle in a haystack! The Bible is teaching that when God’s children pray, the Holy Spirit comes to their aid, intercepting their prayers and



conforming them to the will of God before the throne of God. This is a remarkable thing.

The question that needs to be answered by those who allegedly use tongues as a secret prayer language is why is it necessary to pray in another language that is not one's own language? Cannot God understand when someone prays in their own language? Some kind of unknowable language (gibberish) does not benefit God and it certainly does not benefit or enhance the prayers of the believer, since they would not know what they were saying. The prayer that Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 14 is public - not private. In fact, the whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 14 is fixing the abuses the early Christians of Corinth had when using the gift of tongues. Paul is not approving of the people's use of the gift of tongues for private prayer and devotions, but is actually chiding and forbidding them to do so, since the gifts were designed to edify others (1 Cor. 14:2-2, 5,12). First Corinthians chapter 14 is a corrective chapter ("I will pray with the understanding also" – 1 Cor. 14:15).

There is no such thing as an unidentified language of prayer. The text of Jude 20 which mentions about "praying in the Holy Ghost" has nothing to do with a secret prayer language but simply means to pray under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. Like the Romans 8:26-27 passage, Jude 20 does not say anything about praying in tongues, but praying in the Holy Spirit. To link tongue speaking with these Bible passages is an attempt to huckster the true meaning of the Bible by "handling the word of God deceitfully" (2 Cor. 4:2).

### *Confirming New Truth*

As mentioned above, tongues (languages) were always a sign to the Jewish nation to confirm a new man, new message and new event that was taking place (1 Cor. 1:22; John 2:18; 6:30; Mark 16:20). This purpose was true in the book of Acts when the gift of tongues was used (Acts 2, 10, 19). In every instance when tongues (languages) were spoken there were always Jews present who were there to receive the new information that God was presenting during the beginning and early years of the Church Dispensation. This information consisted of the liberating Gospel message, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the blessing of both Jews and Gentiles together in a new body or organism called the Church. The same purpose of revealing new truth is seen in Corinth as the prophets spoke about the New

Testament mystery program of God (1 Cor. 13:2) and were revealing new truth about the Church and God's New Testament workings.

### *A Sign Gift*



The gift of speaking in tongues (actual languages) was given to serve as a specific sign to the Jewish nation. The Jews require a sign (1 Cor. 1:22). Therefore, signs were given to the Jews, specifically the sign of speaking in tongues, to confirm the Gospel to the Jewish people and that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (Acts 2:22-24:25-36). This gift was also given to confirm that God had begun the Church Dispensation as He promised (Acts 1:5; 2:33; John 14:16-20) and was now accepting Gentiles to be part of God's new people (Acts 10:43-47) and also rebaptize those who were being introduced to the Gospel and New Testament Christianity (Acts 19:1-7). Tongues also served as a sign to the Jews of their impending judgment and this is why the Corinthians spoke in tongues (1 Cor. 14:21-22). Their local churches were in the vicinity of the Jewish synagogue (Acts 18:7) indicating that they visited the local assemblies (1 Cor. 14:23).

In every instance when tongues were being used, Jews were always present (Acts 2:5; 10:45; 19:1-4). This is actually the key that unlocks the understanding of the primary purpose of the gift of tongues. The speaking of tongues was given to authenticate the new revelation of the Gospel, that Jesus was the Messiah, and that the Church Dispensation had begun. The gift was given with a Jewish purpose in mind. It was not given for personal devotions, as the primary sign of spirituality, a second work of grace (a full Gospel experience) or something we must seek after we are saved to be initiated into a Pentecostal or Charismatic Church. The "full Gospel" is found in 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 (Christ's death, burial, and resurrection) – not in an esoteric experience.



### *Jewish Judgment*



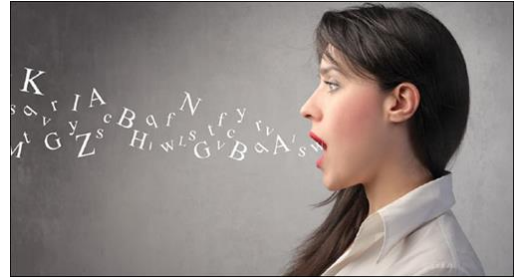
Signs are for Israel – not the Church (1 Cor. 1:22; John 6:30). As mentioned above, in the Corinth setting tongues also served as a sign of coming judgment to the Jewish nation (1 Cor. 14:20-22). Since Israel was already judged historically and God has temporarily set aside

national Israel (Rom. 11:15; Matt. 21:43; Luke 13:35) the purpose of tongues is no longer needed as a confirming sign of coming judgment upon the Jewish nation. Once God's judgment had fallen upon Israel the gift of tongues would have no significance at all. Therefore, the gift would cease in and of itself during the first century when the Jewish nation was scattered in A. D. 70. In 1 Corinthians 13:8 the word "cease" means to stop or come to an end. The Greek verb form (middle voice) indicates a self-causing action which means that the gift will stop by itself (self-cessation). The activity of tongues would automatically end by itself because it has a built-in stopping place.

The purpose of speaking in different languages would come to an end for several reasons. First, it's very possible that the speaking in tongues would come to an abrupt stop with Israel's judgment and the temporary setting aside of national Israel. *Tongues had a specific purpose for a specific time period.* The speaking in tongues, which was primarily granted to the apostles to authenticate their messages (Mark 16:17, 20), and to a few other believers living during the transition period to confirm new truth to Jewish brethren (Acts 10:44-46; 19:6), would no longer be needed. This is because Israel was judged in AD 70. Second, within the context of 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, it's also equally true that tongues would cease when the Scriptures would be completed, canonized, and no further confirmation of revelatory messages would be necessary (1 Cor. 13:10). The stopping point would come with the starting point of the canon of Scripture. When the deposit of "the faith" (Jude 3) was "once delivered" and given to the Church, the confirming signs of that newly adopted faith would no longer be necessary, since it would be canonized and finalized in the written Word of God.

Tongues were viewed as having a purpose which was already fulfilled. The second generation of Christians were looking back to this short period of time, which served its purpose and had faded off the scene, even during the first century when they were living (Heb. 2:3-4 - "was conformed" – looking back to something that occurred in the past - "unto us" – the original Christians who lived with the apostles - "by them" - the original apostles while they lived and walked the earth). The purpose of tongues would run its course with the completion of Scripture (Jude 3) and the judgment of Israel (1 Cor. 14:22). For all these reasons tongues would cease or stop. Their design and purpose would no longer be needed. God has chosen to use tongues for a specific purpose and time and then end the use of this miraculous gift.

Concerning the use of tongues (speaking in foreign languages), we know that the house of Cornelius spoke in tongues (Acts 10:44-48), the disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-7) and certain members within the church at Corinth (I Corinthians 12-14). Besides the original apostles (Acts 2:1-4) and later the apostle Paul



(I Corinthians 14:18), we find no other people using this miraculous sign gift. The Scripture never once teaches that there would be some kind of generic practice of speaking in tongues by all the Christians following the days of the apostles and early New Testament revelation.

### *A Limited Gift*

Outside Mark 16:17 and a few passages in Acts, we only see tongues mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12-14.

Spiros Zodhiates makes this important observation:

“We have no record that this phenomenon occurred in any other New Testament church, nor did Paul ever seek to introduce it to them in his epistles. If this were the indispensable evidence of spirituality and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, we would certainly expect him to urge all believers to pray for this gift.”

This is true. *There is no indication anywhere in the Scriptures that God gave this gift to any of the other churches.* There is no evidence that it existed in any other apostolic church. Perhaps the reason for this is because of their unique opportunity to reach the Jewish people. Their church was in close proximity to the Jewish synagogue (Acts 18:7) and the sign of tongues and other miraculous signs gifts were given for the purpose of convincing the Jews of coming judgment, the Gospel, and God’s new revelation.

John Phillips correctly observes:

“Those sign gifts were especially relevant when the church was still in its infancy, when its testimony was primarily to the Jews and when it needed such special accrediting from on high.”

It can be observed that some of the Corinthian Christians spoke in tongues but not all of them (1 Cor. 12:30). In addition, the people were confused about spiritual

gifts and needed guidelines for the use of them in the public services of the local churches in Corinth. In these chapters, specifically chapter 14, Paul gives to them the necessary guidelines to follow in using tongues (speaking in languages), while the temporary gift was being used. The guidelines were needed for several problems had developed due to their carnally and selfishness.

Finally, the filling of the Spirit and speaking in tongues during early apostolic Christianity was not designed to be the ultimate evidence or sign of spirituality. Some of the Corinthians spoke in tongues (1 Cor. 12:30) and yet they are said to be carnal (1 Cor. 3:3). Furthermore, we must remember there are many times in the Book of Acts where the disciples were said to be filled with the Spirit without speaking in tongues (Acts 4:31; 13:9, 52). Tongues were NEVER intended to be the normal, primary, and permanent sign of spirituality as outlined in the later epistles (Gal. 5:22-25; Eph. 5:18-25).

Something else needs to be addressed at this point. The Bible reveals that spiritual gifts are imparted at the time of one's salvation (1 Cor. 12: 4, 7), the same time a person is saved by the spiritual immersion or baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-13). 1 Corinthians 12:11 states that spiritual gifts are distributed according to the sovereign will of the Holy Spirit and then Paul further reveals that not everyone has the same gifts ("do all speak within tongues? - 1 Cor. 12:30). This means that it is utter folly for Charismatic leaders to inform all Christians to take a "tongues class" in order to learn how to speak in tongues. Not even during the infant days of Christianity, when tongues were still a sign to the Jewish people, was everyone expected to speak in tongues. The whole idea that tongues is for all Christians is a gross misrepresentation of Pauline teaching on spiritual gifts and demonstrates the great lengths misinformed brethren will go in promoting a psychosomatic experience over the truth.

When Paul said "I would that ye all spake with tongues" (1 Cor. 14:5) he was not declaring that all of God's people throughout the future church centuries should speak in tongues, as Charismatic's claim, since this was contrary to God's original gifting and purpose (1 Cor. 12:7, 11, 18, 30). Paul's wish ("I would that ye all spake with tongues") was said during the time (the days of the infant church) when tongues were being spoken and must be seen as his desire for the Corinthians to speak in clearly understood tongues (languages) in order to receive edification in their ministry, while using the gift of tongues ("that the church may receive

edifying”). In other words, his desire was that the more gifts that are properly used, such as speaking in tongues (interpreted languages), the more edification occurs.

This means that Most Charismatic’s will read 1 Corinthians 14:5 flippantly and conclude that Paul wants us all to speak with tongues. But this NOT what Paul is teaching. What he was saying is that *if tongues were used by everyone to bring glory to God, then everyone would be able to understand them and there would be much edification that would take place*. He makes no promise whatsoever that everyone would and should use them. Paul’s point is that edification or the spiritual building up of the saints is most important. When people are speaking in unknown languages without interpreting them then no edification takes place, which is the intended purpose for the gift of tongues. The key word is “edifying” (vv. 5, 12, 26). Paul’s point is that instead of mindless worship, there must be understanding in our time of worship (1 Cor. 14:2, 9, 14, 15, 19, 20).

Again, we must also remember that Paul shared this desire to speak in tongues while the gift of tongues was still operative in the Church of Corinth and when the gift had a specific intended purpose to serve as a sign of judgment for his Jewish brethren (1 Cor. 14:20-22). Although one might be edified by the praising, singing, and prayers that were spoken in different languages (1 Cor. 14:14-15), the main purpose was to ultimately warn the Jews of future judgment (1 Cor. 14:21-22) and serve as an aid to bring them to faith in Christ.

Even during the transition time in the Book of Acts, the use of tongues was not a normal experience. For something to be normal for everybody, it must happen to everyone. But it did NOT happen to everybody. Consider that of all the 16 salvation events described in Acts, only 2 groups are recorded as speaking in tongues.

1. Acts 2.....3,000 at Pentecost..... no tongues
2. Acts 3, 4.....5,000 at the Beautiful gate..... no tongues
3. Acts 5:14.....Multitudes saved..... no tongues
4. Acts 8:17.....Samaritan believers..... no tongues
5. Acts 8:37-39.....Ethiopian eunuch..... no tongues
6. Acts 9.....Saul on Damascus road..... no tongues
7. Acts 10:46.....Cornelius' household..... **tongues**
8. Acts 11:19-24..... Greeks saved at Antioch..... no tongues
9. Acts 16:14, 15.....Lydia..... no tongues

10. Acts 16:16-19.....Demonized damsel..... no tongues
11. Acts 16:25-34.....Philippian jailer and his household..... no tongues
12. Acts 17:1-4..... Thessalonian believers..... no tongues
13. Acts 17:10-12..... Berean believers..... no tongues
14. Acts 17:15-34.....Athenian believers..... no tongues
15. Acts 18:8..... Crispus and Corinthians at salvation..... no tongues
16. Acts 19:1-12.....12 disciples of John at Ephesus.....tongues
17. Acts 19:18-20.....Ephesian believers..... no tongues
18. Acts 28:23,24..... Roman believers..... no tongues

There are only three occurrences of tongue speaking in the entire book of Acts (Acts 2, 10, 19) and only the Church at Corinth is said to speak in tongues. Speaking in tongues was NOT a widespread phenomenon during apostolic Christianity. It was a rather rare and limited gift. Here is the point. Are we to believe that the thousands of mighty men which God has used down through the church were not Spirit-filled because they did not speak in tongues? Were not the reformers (Luther, Calvin) Spirit-filled? Was not Billy Sunday, D. L. Moody, Adoniram Judson, or William Carey filled with the Spirit? Some of the world's greatest missionaries and Bible students have never spoken in tongues. Were they not Spirit-filled? Jesus never spoke in tongues and He received the Spirit without measure or limitation (John 3:34).

It is simply an erroneous error to always equate spirituality and Spirit-filled living with speaking in tongues. Neither the Book of Acts nor the epistles that were given specifically to the churches teach this. In fact, how could speaking in tongues be a definite sign of spirituality that we are all commanded to seek, since not everybody was gifted to speak in tongues in the early church ("do all speak with tongues? - 1 Cor. 12:30). How can tongues be a permanent sign of spirituality when all the epistles, except Corinthians, fail to mention this gift?

It must be understood that the speaking in tongues, which occurred in connection with the Spirit's filling on Pentecost and during the early days of the church was NEVER designed to be a confirming sign of the Spirit's filling. Once again, Ephesians 5:18-18-25 and Galatians 5:22-23 speak of the LASTING and permanent signs of the filling and fruit of the Spirit. The permanent signs of the fruit of the Spirit are those that we are to seek and maintain in our Christian walk and experience as we rely upon the Spirit's power (Gal. 5:25).

### *Rules for Speaking in Tongues*

1. You MUST speak a human/intelligent/discernible language (Acts 2:4-6; 1 Cor. 14:9).
2. You MUST be living before AD 70 since tongues were a sign of coming judgment that was given to the Jews (1 Cor. 14:21-22).
3. You MUST be living during the 1<sup>st</sup> century when new revelatory messages for the Bible were being given and needed confirming signs (Mark 16:17, 20; Heb. 2:4).
4. You MUST have an incomplete Bible (1 Cor. 13:8-10).
5. You MUST have Jews present while speaking (1 Cor. 14:21-22; Acts, 2:1-4; 10:44-48; 19:1-7; Acts 18:7 with 1 Cor. 14).
6. You MUST never use tongues for personal devotions (1 Cor. 14:1-3).
7. You MUST edify others with the gift (1 Cor. 14:5, 12, 26).
8. You MUST take your turn in speaking (1 Cor. 14:27).
9. You MUST have an interpreter (1 Cor. 14:13, 27-28).
10. You MUST be a man – not a woman in the church service (1 Cor. 14:34-35).

### *Sources of Tongue Speaking Today*

There are two possible sources for the alleged tongue speaking of today. We covered this in greater detail in an earlier section of our study.

#### a. Psychologically inspired (Self)

Much of what is happening in the Charismatic Movement today is self-induced and is nothing more than psychological or psychosomatic (produced by one's own mind and emotions). I believe psychological manipulation (mind control) is the primary source of the tongue speaking that is occurring in the modern-day Charismatic Movement.

Richard DeHaan acknowledges:

“It is tragic, yet true, that a person may sincerely believe he is exercising a genuine gift from God, while in actuality he is playing a trick on himself.”

#### b. Demonically inspired (Satan)



The Holy Spirit does not cause God's people to enter into mindless worship and supernatural seizures where they are out of control and speaking in some kind of gibberish or nonsense (I Corinthians 14:32-33, 40; Galatians 5:23). This kind of work and delusion comes from Satan's workers.

Merrill F. Unger stated:

"Although the grace of God to a large extent undoubtedly protects sincere but doctrinally ignorant saints, yet the peril is very real that demons may deceive and despoil when the protecting power of the Word of God is forfeited by falling a prey to unsound teachers and their teaching."

When a person claims to have an experience that does not have a Biblical foundation they can in some measure open themselves to Satanic influence and deception (2 Cor. 11:3, 14) and can follow "doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). The Bible tells us as believers to guard our minds from demonic deception (I Peter 1:13; Ephesians 6:17). II Corinthians 11:4 clearly tells us that Christians can receive the deception of another spirit, other than the Holy Spirit. This is why we are called upon to "test the spirits" to see "whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1). When a believer seeks an experience without Biblical authority he gives the enemy an opportunity to counterfeit the work of God and introduce confusion into his life.

Confusion abounds when a person tries to recreate the early sign gifts such as speaking in tongues. But confusion can also abound in the realm of worship. Some worship being practiced today is nothing more than a time when the mind goes into neutral and people enter into a type of mindless and hallucinatory state. This is not worship (John 4:24; Rom. 12:2). Whenever the church gives in to these types of experiences they will reap the results of demonic influence in some measure.

Raymond Frame, a former missionary to China, once said: "Evil spirits can easily find opportunity to operate in the believer's emotional life — especially when the believer is persuaded to suspend all intellectual activity and to yield his will over to an invisible intelligence (whom the Christian, of course, is persuaded to regard as being the Holy Spirit Himself). For this reason, the child of God who becomes preoccupied with that least of all gifts, tongues, places himself in a particularly vulnerable position in relation to the danger of demon depression, obsession ..."

## The Cessation of Tongues



When Paul speaks about the cessation of the temporary sign gifts that were needed in the original expansion of the church, he was clearly looking back to the list found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. The correlation to this list will be seen in a moment. This list of gifts given to first century Christians includes NINE specific gifts.

These gifts include: the **word of wisdom** (a special insight granted to the minds of certain individuals to understand and skillfully apply to life's situations the direct revelations that came from God prior to the finalization of the "word" or Scripture – 2 Pet. 3:15; 1 Cor. 2:6-7, 13; Eph. 3:5); **word of knowledge** (a special ability to understand revelatory truth and then communicate and systemize the information before the "word" or Bible was canonized and complete [this is not a knowledge that a would-be faith healer has concerning someone who has a migraine headache in his TV audience]; **faith** (a special gift of faith given primarily to the apostles and some of their close associates so they could perform supernatural miracles and miraculous healings); **gifts of healing** (the gifts given to the apostles and their close associates of the early church to restore health which pertained to bodily healing and even resurrections from the dead - Acts 3:6-8; 5:12-16; 8:6-7; 9:17-18; 33-35; 19:12; 20:9-10; 28:9); **working of miracles** (an early first century apostolic church gift that covered a wider range of miracles other than physical healing which extended to raising the dead [Acts 9:40; 20:9-12], inflicting blindness [Acts 13:8-11], and the ability to cast out demons through God's supernatural intervention and power [Acts 8:6-7; 19:11-12]. **prophecy** (an early church gift given to the apostles and prophets so they could *predict* God's mind and Word [1 Cor. 14:30, 36] before the Bible had been canonized or completed [Eph. 2:20]; **discerning of spirits** (the special ability to discern true and false revelation before the Bible was completed - 1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:20-21); **divers kinds of tongues** (the supernatural linguistic ability to speak in different kinds of literal human languages in order to confirm new revelation, apostolic authority, and coming judgment upon the Jewish people - Mark 16:20; 2 Cor. 12:12; 1 Cor. 14:21-22); **the interpretation of tongues** (the divinely given ability to translate what others said in different human languages and give the exact meaning to the church so the church could be edified (1 Cor. 14:5, 13-19, 27-28).

All of these gifts were temporary in nature, relegated to the early days of apostolic Christianity, and served a unique purpose before the completion of the Bible. The Bible clearly teaches cessationism of the early sign gifts given to authenticate the apostles and their prophetic messages prior to the canonization of the Word of God. It does not teach the “continuationist” theory. Neither the Bible or church history attests that the miraculous signs gift continued after the days of the apostles.

1 Corinthians 13:8-12 informs us that the NINE temporary sign gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 would cease. “Charity never faileth (in contrast to the temporary, miraculous, sign gifts mentioned in the list found in 1 Cor. 12:8-10): but whether *there be* **prophecies** (found in the 1 Cor. 12:8- 10 list of nine gifts),

**they shall fail** - (become entirely idle and useless like a pair of old shoes);



whether *there be* **tongues** (found in the 1 Cor. 12:8-10 list of nine gifts), **they shall cease** (have a built in stopping point – cease in and of themselves with the AD 70 judgment – since tongues were a sign to the Jews of this coming judgment and also because apostolic revelation would no longer be authenticated by these languages);



whether *there be* **knowledge** (found in the 1 Cor. 12:8-10 list of nine gifts), **it shall vanish away**.

“For we **know** in part, and we **prophecy** in part (piecemeal knowledge and revelation before the canon of Scripture is finalized). But when **that** (talking about a thing – not a person or an event such as the Rapture) **which is perfect is come** (the completed canon of Scripture), then that which is in part (the piecemeal revelation along with all of the nine temporary sign gifts mentioned in the 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 list which were needed during the days of piecemeal revelation) **shall be done away** (cease and no longer be needed since we will have the completed revelation).



“When I was a **child** (illustrates the early apostolic days of the infant church), I spake as a child (a reference to the gift of **tongues**), I understood as a child (the gift of **knowledge**), I thought as a child (the gift of **wisdom**):



“but when I became a **man** (illustrates a later era and time which is being pictured as the adulthood stage of the church), I put away childish things” (**the 9 early, temporary sign gifts**).

“For **now** (in Paul’s day) we see through a glass, darkly (we are looking into a darkened mirror that produces a faded picture – not seeing or knowing everything regarding God’s entire revelation); but **then** (when the final and completed revelation is finished)



“face to face” (it would be like looking into a transparent mirror and seeing a clear picture of oneself – we would have a clear revelation of all God’s truth and mind):

“now (in Paul’s day – early apostolic Christianity) I know in part (piecemeal knowledge through piecemeal revelation); but **then** (when the Bible is finished – the canon of Scripture is delivered – Jude 3) shall I know (God’s complete or entire mind, purpose and will would be known) even as also I am known” (Paul would know God’s complete mind and will as seen in the formation of the canon of Scripture, even as God knows his mind).



The “perfect thing” which would eventually come (“that which is perfect is come”) CANNOT be referring to the Rapture or coming of Christ as Charismatics repeatedly try and promote in order to keep the supernatural gifts in the Church until Jesus returns for His Church. There are several reasons for coming to this conclusion.

- This verse is talking about a thing (“that”) – not a person (Jesus Christ) or an event (the Rapture).

- The sign gifts will be exercised at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom (Joel 2:28) which indicates that the Rapture cannot be the perfect thing which causes the supernatural sign gifts to permanently cease.
- The word “perfect” (Greek – teleion) is never used of the Second Coming of Christ anywhere in the Bible. If Paul would have meant to describe the coming of Christ he would have been specific about this event, as he was in every other place in Scripture (II Thessalonians 2:1; I John 3:2; Philippians 3:20; 4:5; Titus 2:13).
- The word “perfect” is elsewhere used as a descriptive reference of the Bible (James 1:25).
- Paul was talking about revelation – not the Rapture. The phrase “the perfect thing” (teleion) of verse ten is contrasted to incomplete prophecy (vs. 9). This means the completed prophecy (the New Testament canon of Scripture) would replace the partial prophecy and knowledge. Once the New Testament Scriptures are complete or finalized the incomplete revelations and prophecies would no longer be necessary along with the other sign gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10.

The circulating letters of New Testament revelation, which were confirmed by the early church, would serve as a united witness of God’s final word (Jude 3) and eventually these same documents would be brought together in the Bible that we know and love today.

In the later Church letters, Paul makes considerable mention of church leadership (elders, deacons, and bishops) but he makes no mention of prophets. Along with the apostles, prophets were a part of the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20). Once the foundation has been built (the completed canon of Scripture) then there is no need for the partial or piecemeal revelation of truth. If it's in the Bible, I don't need prophets, and if it isn't in the Bible, I don't want it, since prophecy has ceased.

Paul is teaching in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 that the nine temporary gifts (the miraculous gifts) mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, which were needed to reveal God’s truth and confirm the truth during the early apostolic days of the church, would no longer be necessary, when the “perfect thing,” the completed revelation of God’s Word, became fixed and final. The early supernatural gifts were compared to “childish things” that needed to be put away. This expression depicts the infant days of church ministry, when the church was just beginning to be formed and

needed these special gifts to convey and confirm revelatory truth. These gifts were part of the infant church as it was getting started and receiving new revelation, but these same gifts would one day pass off the scene or “be done away” (1 Cor. 13:10), since their purpose would no longer be needed with the full and final revelation of truth – “the perfect thing.”

There are other texts of Scripture that inform us of the cessation of tongues. The Bible reveals that the original purpose for tongues has ceased since it was a sign to unbelieving Jews before the AD 70 judgment (1 Cor. 14:22). Hebrews 2:3-4 also declares that the miraculous sign gifts (including the speaking in languages or tongues) “**was confirmed**” (something that occurred in the past – during early first century Christianity) “**unto us**” (the second generation of Christians living in AD 66-67) “**by them**” (the original generation of Christians living before them) “**bearing them witness**” (the original band of Christians who lived with Jesus and the apostles) “both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.” These Bible verses refer to something that took place in the past during the original days of 1<sup>st</sup> century Christianity. The second generation of Christians (after the ascension of Christ and the days of the original apostles) already recognized that the apostolic gifts, including the speaking in tongues, had an ending point during the middle of the first century.

Once again, tongues are not referred to in the passages discussing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10-18), and the life of faith (Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:12-17). This demonstrates the transitory nature of this gift and that it would no longer be necessary for New Testament Christianity.

### The Great Commissions and Sign Gifts

Mark 16:17 and 20 records how the miraculous sign gifts would be used during the original spreading of the Gospel and expansion of the early church. However, it’s rather interesting that Mark did not say that the miracles would continue to exist throughout the ongoing church age. The words “to the end of the age” are not found in Mark as they are in Matthew 28:18–20. This is significant.



Remember that Mark viewed the Great Commission from the perspective of the *early* or infant church (Mark 16:15-20) and did not therefore give the instruction for discipleship and training. Matthew viewed the Great Commission from the perspective of a *maturing* church (Matt. 28:19-20) that was well rooted, grounded, growing, and thriving upon the completed Scriptures. Therefore, he mentions no need for any ongoing apostolic sign/miracle gifts.



Here are some questions that need to be answered by our Charismatic brethren.

- Why is church history silent regarding the use of the miraculous gifts?
- Has God restarted the early sign gifts after 1,900 years of silence in church history? If so, what is the basis for your answer in the context of Biblical revelation?
- What Biblical proof (not experiences) can you give to substantiate your answer? Are you more spiritual than Jesus or John the Baptist and many other early New Testament saints who never spoke in tongues?
- The reformers like Calvin and Luther never claimed to speak in tongues or possess any of the supernatural sign gifts.
- The Puritan writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have never claimed to have these gifts in all their writings.
- Millions of godly and spiritual saints of the 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries have never spoken in tongues but they have loved God, lived Spirit-filled and spiritual lives, and were victorious in their Christian living.
- Millions of believers have not embraced the “sign gift” theology knowing that it was *temporary* and it had its purpose in the historic past, the *infant* days of the church. They know that trying to reproduce it would be a fallacy and not benefit their spiritual growth in grace (2 Pet. 3:18-19).
- Can I honestly conclude that this gift of tongues has resurfaced in the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement after being conspicuously absent and dormant for 1900 years? Red flags should immediately go up when one insists we must speak in tongues today! We must view what is happening today in light of Scripture and history and come to a Biblical and common sense conclusion.

Cleon Rogers, writing in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, wrote:

“After examining the testimony of the early Christian leaders whose ministry represents practically every area of the Roman Empire from approximately A.D. 100 to 400, it appears that the miraculous gifts of the first century died out and were no longer needed to establish Christianity.”

The reformers like Calvin and Luther never claimed to speak in tongues or possess any of the supernatural sign gifts. The Puritan writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have never claimed to have these gifts in all their writings. Men God used in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries have never laid claim to the miraculous gifts. Learned and godly men such as Griffith Thomas, Charles Spurgeon, D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday, J. N. Darby, C. I. Scofield, Arno Gabalein, Augustus Strong, James Orr, Benjamin Warfield, J. Gresham Machen, Henry Thiessen, Charles Fuller, C. T. Studd, Hudson Taylor, David Brainert, William Carey, Adoniram Judson, (and all the great missionaries God has used), Charles Ryrie, John Walvoord, J. Vernon McGee, etc., etc., etc., have never once claimed to possess the miraculous gifts in their ministries.

If the miraculous gifts of the early apostolic church had continued to this day, one would expect an unbroken line of occurrences from apostolic times to the present. But church history on the whole, godly men of past generations, and godly men of the present generation, have never laid claim to the miraculous sign gifts. The silence of church history and the silence of godly, learned saints of the past and present, concerning the miraculous gifts, should cause all those who claim to have these gifts to reconsider their authenticity or trustworthiness. Has God really given to you something which has not been possessed by God’s people for eighteen or nineteen centuries (1,800 or 1,900 years)? A red light should go off in your mind and cause you to reconsider such claims.



The Bible teaches the cessation of the miraculous early sign gifts. The burden of proof rests on the Charismatic/Pentecostal Church to prove the sign gifts, such as speaking in tongues, have restarted in the later Church Age. In other words, a person must prove that their experiences are the reoccurrence of gifts that have not occurred for almost 1,900 years! We have already studied various texts which have pointed to this such as **1 Corinthians 13:8-10** (the cessation of the early miraculous/sign gifts with the completed revelation of Scripture) and **Hebrews 2:3-**



4 where the wording clearly teaches that 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians, who lived just after the days of the apostles, had already witnessed the passing away of the supernatural gifts.

The days of divine healing are still with us (Phil. 2:27) but the days of divine healers have long passed away. Let us never forget this. David reminds us in Psalm 103:3: “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.” This does not mean that God always grants us physically healing (2 Cor. 12:7-10). However, we can prayerfully look to God for healing, submit to His will, and whenever we do recover from an illness, we can agree with David that it was God who healed us.

Study the chart on the next page carefully, along with the Biblical references that point to the passing away of the sign gifts, which were originally used to authenticate the claims of the apostles. These miraculous gifts gradually faded out over time because the Scriptures were being completed and no more miraculous confirming signs were needed regarding God’s new revelation. In addition, the apostles were dying and passing off the scene. Their special and unique transitional work as prophets and revelators was no longer necessary.

### **Chart Appears on Next Page**

<b>First Corinthians</b> <b>12:8-10</b>	<b>First Corinthians</b> <b>12:28-30</b>	<b>Romans</b> <b>12:3-8</b>	<b>Ephesians</b> <b>4: 7-11</b>	<b>Second Peter</b> <b>2:1</b>	<b>Rev.</b> <b>22:18-19</b>
(A.D. 59)	(A.D. 59)	(A.D. 60)	(A.D. 64)	(A.D. 66)	(A.D. 96)
Wisdom	Apostles	Prophecy	Apostles (foundational) Prophets (foundational)	False Teachers	No more adding to the final prophetic revelation
Knowledge	Prophets	Teachers	Evangelists (permanent)	“But there <i>were</i> false prophets also among the people, even as <i>there shall be</i> false teachers among you ...”	The New Testament is a fixed revelation <b>(Revelation 22:18-19)</b>
Faith	Teachers	Ministry	Pastor-Teachers (permanent)	Note: The absence of any temporary gifts (prophets) in this later epistle	The apostles have died along with their foundational ministry <b>(Eph. 2:20)</b>
Healings	Miracles	Exhortation	Apostles and prophets were foundational to the church <b>(Eph. 2:20)</b>	The apostolic miraculous gifts and their revelation “ <b>was confirmed</b> ” <b>(Heb.2:3)</b> when the <i>first</i> and only generation of apostles were living among the people.	The canon is officially closed
Miracles	Healings	Giving	Evangelists and pastor-teachers would continue to be used in the church ministry.	“ <b>was confirmed</b> ” <b>(Heb.2:3)</b> when the <i>first</i> and only generation of apostles were living among the people.	“ <b>Once delivered unto the saints</b> ” <b>(Jude 3)</b>
Prophecy	Helps	Ruling	Note Once Again: No wisdom, knowledge, faith, healings, miracles, discerning of Spirits, tongues, Interpret. of tongues are found in this column.	when the <i>first</i> and only generation of apostles were living among the people.	Bible officially brought into a canon during the first and second centuries.
Discerning of spirits	Governments	Mercy	Note: No wisdom, knowledge, faith, healings, miracles, discerning of Spirits, tongues, Interpret. of tongues are found in this column.	when the <i>first</i> and only generation of apostles were living among the people.	“ <b>a more sure word of prophecy</b> ” <b>(2 Pet.1:19)</b>
Tongues	Note: Some permanent gifts are added in this column.	Not mentioning these gifts would indicate their lesser use among the saints as the church progressed and the Scriptures began to be circulated and used.	Philippians <b>2:27, 30</b>  (A.D. 64)  Paul did not heal Epaphroditus.	By this time the second generation sees the temporary gifts/apostles already disappearing	By Pastor Kelly Sensenig
Interpretation of tongues	<b>1 Cor. 13:10 concludes:</b> “But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”			<b>Hebrews was written in A.D. 66 or 67</b>	
Note: All the nine early sign gifts and temporary gifts are mentioned during the early stages of church life	When the perfect revelation is complete (the canonized Scripture) then the imperfect piecemeal revelation ( <i>prophecy and knowledge</i> ) – along with the other temporary gifts – (“childish things” – vs. 11) will pass away and no longer be needed. <b>A total of 9 temporary gifts would cease.</b>				
<b>1 Thess. 5:20</b> “ <b>Despise not prophesyings.</b> ”  (A.D. 54)					
The prophetic gift was in full bloom during the infant days of the church life.					

Once again, and in summary, the Bible teaches that the early sign gifts were given only to the original apostles in order to authenticate the new *messengers* (the apostles themselves) and their *messages* (Mark 16:20; Acts 2:43; 5:12) before the completed revelation of God's Word was given. This is why their miracles are called "signs" (2 Cor. 12:12 – "signs of an apostle" – see also Acts 2:22, 43; 5:12; 8:13; 14:3; Rom. 15:19; Heb. 2:4). They were miraculous signs given to authenticate the original band of apostles and their messages before the Scriptures were completed. Therefore, these types of miraculous sign gifts, which include the casting out of demons, a form of the apostolic healing ministry (2 Cor. 12:9-10 – the word "heal" is used in association with casting out demons) are no longer possessed by God's children today. This is because we have God's full revelatory truth in the canon of Scripture – the New Testament (1 Cor. 13:10-13). This is why the ministry of the apostles, along with their miracles, was foundational (Eph. 2:20) and temporary.

Every apostle had to be a direct witness of Christ's life and resurrection and be personally and directly commissioned by Him (Acts 1:21-22). Since this is true, there can be no apostles today. The miraculous gifts, receiving direct revelatory truth from God, along with the unique ministry of the apostles has ceased. The gifts of miracles and healing, the unique signs of apostleship, including the casting out of demons, also ceased with the passing away of the apostles. The sign miracles done by Jesus and the apostles was not something that was occurring in AD 66 (the days following the original followers of Jesus and the apostles – Heb. 2:3-4) and they certainly are not occurring today.

It's sad but true that many Christians want the *experiences* of the apostles without truly understanding the *teachings* of the apostles. At one point, Jesus taught that "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (Matt. 12:39). Miraculous signs were primarily intended for Israel (1 Cor. 1:22; John 2:18) – not the Church. The sign miracles served as an aid to prove that Jesus was the Messiah (John 20:30-31) and the apostles were His disciples who carried on His words and works (Mark 16:20). To constantly seek miraculous signs in order to help one possess faith in God's truth is actually a sign of a weakened faith (Heb. 11:1), since Jesus and the apostles have already confirmed themselves and their messages as being true, when performing miraculous signs, and since these same messages spoken by them are now found in the completed Bible (Jude 3).

The truth of Scripture was already confirmed by the miracles of the historic past which were done by Jesus and the apostles (Heb. 2:3-4 – “was confirmed”). These miracles (John 20:30-31) are enough to confirm the unchanging and unalterable truth of God’s Word that we hold in our hands today. We should believe in the original miracles of Jesus and the apostles and follow the Scripture that we now possess as a result of their revelatory ministries. Reading and believing the promises found in the Bible, not seeking after modern-day miracles and miracle workers, will strengthen your faith (2 Peter 1:4) and help you to grow in your Christian life (1 Peter 2:2).

### Experience versus Truth



Those who claim to have revived and who are now practicing these same supernatural gifts today are placing their experience above the revelation of God’s Word. This is something that the Bible forbids since the Bible is the final authority for faith and practice (Rom. 4:3; John 17:17; 2 Tim. 2:15). Even Peter, after seeing a true apostolic revelation of Jesus Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration concluded that “We

have also a more sure word of prophecy (the revelation of Scripture); whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Pet. 1:19). The message is that the revelation of truth found in Scripture always supersedes someone’s experience. Always!

The promise is that the Holy Spirit will guide us in the truth (John 16:13) – not experiences generated outside the realm of truth and revelation. If you cross the barrier of truth and the intellect in your time of worship (John 4:24) then you will move into the area of mysticism and esoteric experiences outside the Bible (Col. 3:18, 23). All true worship is rational worship based upon truth (Rom. 12:2).

One Charismatic writer said:

“We are speaking in our spirit, and that is good for us because it releases us from an intellectual approach that confines and limits what we can experience.”

But the Bible condemns any approach to worship that has no intellect or understanding (1 Cor. 14:14-16). Intellectual barriers, the time when our intellect is blocked from rational thinking (mindless worship), can never be a sign of genuine worship (John 4:22).



1 Corinthians 14:33

“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”

God is a God of holy order and those who worship Him must not adopt pagan styles of worship into their services and become pagan in their practice of worship as the Corinthians did (1 Cor. 14:33, 40; 2 Cor. 6:14-17). Once again, the Holy Spirit does not direct us into mystical and mindless

experiences that are outside the realm of truth and rational worship (John 16:13; Rom. 12:1; Ps. 51:6; 1 Tim. 4:1).

Jesus warned us to be cautious by watching and praying, remaining spiritually alert against the temptations and delusions of the devil (Matt. 26:41). When experience replaces Biblical truth and knowledge, we have abandoned God’s absolute standard of truth (1 John 4:6; 17:17) and “**the more sure word**” (2 Pet. 1:19). Following the truth will set us free from sin and error (John 8:32). Yes, knowledge can be painful when it corrects us (Prov. 18:15; 23:12), but it can cost much more to follow error and falsehood (Eph. 4:14). We can acquire a false sense of spirituality, lack true spiritual growth, develop a dependency on shallow, unbiblical experiences, and waste our time and energy on emotional/mystical/unbiblical practices rather than depending on Christ, experiencing His indwelling life (Phil. 1:21; 3:10), and possessing a daily and genuine walk in the Spirit’s presence and power (Gal. 5:25) to enrich our personal lives.





Beloved, let us draw near to the Lord today by relying on God's power, ranking ourselves under God as our Master, repenting of our sins, and resisting the devil (James 4:6-8; 1 Pet. 5:9). This is the way to victory and blessing – not mysticism (Col. 2:18). Mysticism is placing experience above truth. Mysticism occurs when people pass through states of ecstasy or an altered state of consciousness which is then given a religious or spiritual meaning in their personal lives. Mysticism is a belief system that is characterized

by self-delusion through dreams and other esoteric (secret) experiences that a person passes through. Mystical experiences become the basis of truth and reality for the person that is overcome with this type of lifestyle.

Friend, don't allow yourself to be caught up in mystical and mindless experiences that take you away from living the "normal" Christian life, which is centered upon knowing and experiencing Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:20), developing a deepening walk and relationship with God (James 4:8), and becoming more Christlike in your everyday living and character (2 Cor. 3:18). Instead of claiming false promises and experiences related to healing, the Holy Spirit, and spiritual gifts, instead of seeking after dreams, visions, and other mystical experiences, our goal and desire should be to "grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).