

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

I hope this study will help refresh, redirect, and reconfirm your thinking about the original purposes and cessation of the early sign gifts. May the Lord give you a teachable spirit regarding these important truths, so you might serve the Lord together in true unity of doctrine and practice.

As Ever in Him,

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In the following pages I have outlined:

- Twenty Reasons Why the Nine Supernatural/Sign Gifts Mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 Have Ceased.
- The Nine Temporary Supernatural/Sign Gifts Explained
- The Decline and Disappearance of the Nine Supernatural/Sign Gifts (Chart Form)
- 1 Corinthians 13, Christ's Coming, and the Cessation of the Supernatural/Sign Gifts
- The Latter Rain and the Last Days
- Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Speaking in Tongues
- The Book of Acts - Transition Period (Explanation and Chart)

Twenty Reasons Why the Nine Supernatural/Sign Gifts Mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 Have Ceased.

It is important to recognize that we should not question whether or not God still performs miracles today. It would be foolish and unbiblical to claim that God does not heal people, guide people, and perform miracles today. The question is whether the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, described primarily in 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14, are still active in the church today. This is also not a question of "can" the Holy Spirit give someone a miraculous gift. This has already been confirmed in apostolic history. The question is "does" the Holy Spirit still dispense the miraculous gifts today? I want to answer this question with clarity in these twenty arguments which are designed to Biblically demonstrate that God no longer is distributing the supernatural gifts to Christians as He did in the apostolic days.

#1

Since the Bible is complete there is no more need or use for miraculous sign gifts. Paul confirms the sign gifts would cease with the completion of the canon of Scriptures (1 Cor. 13:10). Piecemeal and partial knowledge would give way to complete knowledge when "that which is perfect is come" (the completed canon of New Testament Scriptures – see *1 Cor. 13:10-13 study below*). There would be no more need for confirming sign gifts (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:4) since no more Scripture would be revealed and in need of confirmation (Rev. 22:18-19). The book of Revelation gives official notice to the termination of prophecy and added revelation outside the completed canon (Rev. 22:18). The "faith" (Jude 1:3) or body of revealed truth given to the church today is "once delivered unto the saints" which suggests that we have a final revelation that God has given for the present day church. This verse is anticipating the final revelation of Scripture, which was then in circulation, and which would finally become canonized during the first and second centuries.

From the earliest times the church had a working functional canon of inspired letters even though all the letters were not yet written or gathered together in a Bible as we know it today. The writing and recording of the Bible was promised to take place under the guidance and supervision of the Holy Spirit (John 14:25-26) and this recorded teaching became the apostolic foundation of the church (Acts 2:42;

Eph. 2:20). Copies of the letters were carefully and meticulously made and circulated throughout the churches. It's obvious that the early church recognized a growing body of literature as the inspired Word of God which would one day be complete and canonized as God's final word forever settled in heaven (Ps. 119:89). Hence, there would be no more reason to authenticate God's Word.

The supernatural gifts such as speaking in tongues, healings and other miracles served as sign gifts and sign markers to authenticate the messenger and message being spoken (Mark 16:20; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4). The fact that a man could perform miracles was a sign that his message was true and that he was a true messenger sent from God. The miraculous gifts of the early church did *not* authenticate the Old Testament Scripture since this canon was already settled and confirmed as truth (Acts 17:11; 26:22-23).

The Old Testament Scriptures were the final court of appeal. However, during the first century and infant days of the church the New Testament Scriptures were being formed and God's people needed signs to authenticate the message and messenger presenting the new truths of revelation. But when the New Testament Scriptures would become canonized there would be no more need for miraculous signs to confirm truth. This is why they are seen to be transitory in nature and no longer in use (1 Cor. 13:8-10). *Their purpose would end.* Just as the Old Testament Scriptures during the apostolic age needed no confirmation with miraculous sign gifts so the completed Scriptures in our own day (New Testament Scriptures) require no miraculous confirmation. In other words, the operational purpose for these gifts would be outdated with the completion of the New Testament Scriptures (Rev. 22:17-19; Jude 3).

#2

The entire setting and passage of 1 Corinthians 13 is arguing for the permanence of love in light of temporary gifts. It does teach that the sign gifts will cease and have already ceased. ***It's interesting that Paul does not say that all the gifts will cease but only the sign and supernatural gifts.*** This is an important detail. If Paul was talking about gifts ceasing only when Christ returns, or during the eternal state, then he would have mentioned all the gifts. However, Paul specifically mentions only *sign gifts* (prophecy, tongues,

knowledge). This means that the particular sign gifts would cease at another given point of time – the completion of the canon of Scripture. Thus, the whole argument should not be overlooked and dismissed as insignificant concerning the specific sign gifts. Sign gifts would cease and love would continue on. First Corinthians 13 is demonstrating the prominence of love (verses 1-3) as well as the permanence of love (verses 4-13) in light of the temporary sign gifts. This is exactly what Paul is teaching. Verse 8 specifically points to the permanent character of the essential fruit: love (“charity never faileth”). This indicates the other sign gifts would fail and no longer be operative in the church. The sign gifts were not to be permanent within the future church period. They are mentioned in contrast with the permanent fruit of love and are so indicated by the word “but” in verse 8.

1 Corinthians 13:8

“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.”

The following words distinctly say that prophecies would “fail” (“be entirely idle”), tongues would “cease” (stop — a word indicating to stop in and of themselves), and knowledge would “vanish” (be entirely idle). *These words tell us that the sign gifts would no longer be useful due to their temporary nature.* These specific gifts (not all the gifts – just the sign gifts) would be used during the early days of the church to unfold and proclaim truth prior to the canonization of the Scripture and authenticate the messengers. After they serve their purpose they would pass off the scene. They would not be permanent but love, which is the underlying motivation for using all gifts, would continue to exist throughout the future of church life and ministry.

Please note that many today fail to use 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 as conclusive evidence that teaches the cessation of the nine sign gifts. However, this is not the case. Of course, the cessation of the sign gifts does not rest on this passage alone. However, in spite of what some have claimed, this passage does clearly teach that the nine sign gifts have already ceased and are no longer operative in the church.

#2

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 unto us (the generation of Christians living in AD 66-67) by them that heard *him* (those who lived during the days when Jesus Christ and His apostles lived); God also bearing *them* witness (the past generation of Christians living sometime before AD 66-67 had the visual witness and experience of the miraculous gifts - not us today!), both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”

In other words, the generation of Christians living in AD 66 or 67 did not even possess the same sign gifts that the previous generation had been given. By their time, these gifts were seen to have passed off the Church scene. They were already confirmed in the past to a previous generation of Christians living during the days when the gifts were still being used. God gave witness and confirmation to a PAST generation of Christians, living before the AD 66 or 67, that God was giving out new revelation and messages to formulate the Scriptures that we have in our hands today. However, the next generation of Christians did not witness or have these same miraculous gifts, since the letters of the Bible were already being circulated and the truth was confirmed.

The writer of Hebrews and the generation of Christians living in the middle of the first century is already looking back to the cessation of the nine supernatural gifts, which were given to jumpstart the Church and authenticate God’s messengers and the messages that they were giving out, prior to the completion of the canon of Scripture. As the Scriptures were completed the miraculous gifts also become obsolete and were no longer necessary for Church life and ministry.

“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 outward markers or tokens to verify that these men were true apostles and that the word which they spoke was true (Mark 16:20). The miracles which the apostles did were authenticating gifts designed to prove the

trustworthiness of their office and message. The miracles confirmed the message of the man to be genuine! The miracles were then *credential signs* designed to authenticate both the man and his message. Unger states: “The word (sign) is used for a miraculous appearance, which would attest the divine authority of a prophet or teacher (see Matt. 16:1; 24:30).” Benjamin Warfield states that these gifts “were distinctively the authentication of the Apostles. They were part of the credentials of the Apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confined them to distinctively the Apostolic Church and they necessarily passed away with it.” (Benjamin Warfield, Counterfeit Miracles, p. 6)

The miracles which the apostles performed were also called “**wonders**” (Heb. 2:4) because they brought awe and amazement to those who saw them performed. Can you imagine seeing a man raised from the dead!! Can you imagine people flocking before Peter and his shadow falling on them and healing them? The word “miracles” (Heb. 2:4) emphasizes their supernatural origin and power and the word “gifts” (Heb. 2:4) the graciousness of God in providing them.

In any event, the writer of Hebrews assumes that the days of miraculous confirming sign gifts were already passing off the scene during the later epistles. The exact wording of Hebrews 2:3 (“**was confirmed**”) can reflect the past tense and gives an accurate reflection and understanding what the author was conveying in the Greek text.

Daniel Wallace remarks on the tense of the verb:

“The aorist indicative means ‘it happened,’ but we cannot legitimately extrapolate from that a meaning, ‘and it doesn’t happen now.’ The aorist can’t be used to state a negative in the present time. However, the *context* often is sufficiently clear that one can extrapolate from the author’s overall meaning a once-for-all idea. Does not Paul say ‘Christ died for our sins’? Does not the author of Hebrews argue that ‘God has spoken to us in Son in these last days’? In such instances the aorist is used, but *by itself* a once-for-all idea cannot be meant. Nevertheless, we are on sure ground to argue that the author can use the aorist when he means a once-for-all idea. The tense is well-suited for such, even though corroborative data need to be supplied to see it.”

Let's state it this way. The basic sense of an aorist verb is that an action has taken place at one time in the past. The context will tell us whether or not the action can take place again. The writer of Hebrews is telling us that with the ending of the apostolic age and the passing away of the apostles there would be no repeated confirmation. The confirmation of truth had already occurred even during the writer's day. The text in Hebrews does not say that truth was being confirmed during his day but that it was already authenticated and confirmed. *Likewise, once something has been confirmed, it is for all practical purposes impossible and unnecessary to confirm it again.* This is what the writer is saying. All these men with their miraculous authenticating signs was something that had already occurred in their past and could not be repeated if no apostles were present.

There is a sense of assurance by the writer that something historic, once-and-for-all, and final had taken place during the infant days of the church and was now completed. *The expression "confirmed" indicates that the days of the prophets and their prophecies would be temporary and that the prophetic gift was used for the apostolic days of the church, during the first century, when God was giving direct revelation to the apostles.* These special works belonged exclusively to the apostolic age. They were not to last indefinitely and are not for today. The time, purpose, and miracles of the apostles have long passed away. If it was true in the time of the writing of Hebrews, then how much truer is it today?

Since there is no more Scripture being revealed and written down there is no more need for confirmation. Professor Zane Hodges comments on the verb "confirmed" in Hebrews 2:3 and Mark 16:17-20 and says: "Thus the verb appropriately suggests that miraculous signs provided legally guaranteed security authenticating the New Testament proclamation." However, since these men with their messages "**was confirmed**" already as this text says, it stands to reason that this unique era of apostles with their sign gifts has passed off the scene. Today there is no more need for apostles with their confirming miraculous signs. Everything has already been confirmed and validated in the final authority and doctrine of the Scriptures (2 John 10-11).

#3

There is no more need to return to the foundation once the foundation (Eph. 2:20) of the church is established by the apostles and prophets through their teaching (Acts 2:42) and miraculous sign gifts of confirmation (2 Cor. 12:12; Mark 16:20). A builder does not add to the foundation of a building once it has been laid. He simply relies on the foundation to continue and accomplish its purpose. The apostles (their personal title and office) and prophets (their predictive work and ministry) were not a permanent order. After fulfilling their foundational purpose (Eph. 2:20) for the church they gradually faded from the scene of church life and ministry. This verse indicates that the days of the apostles and prophets would be temporary. Their prophetic gift was used for the apostolic days of the church, during the first century, when God was giving direct revelation to the apostles. As mentioned above, these men established the foundation of the Church with their apostolic teaching (Acts 2:42). It's a foundation that cannot be moved. The sign gifts were the *experience* of the apostles that were designed to confirm their apostleship while the truth they presented became the foundational base of the church.

Larry Pettegrew once said:

“We must not make the tragic spiritual and doctrinal mistake of teaching the experience of the apostles instead of experiencing the teaching of the apostles.”

We need to study the word that the apostles already gave us instead of trying to experience the miraculous things that the apostles did and resurrect the apostolic sign gifts.

John R. Stott wrote:

“What is described in Scripture as having happened to others is not necessarily intended for us, whereas what is promised to us we are to appropriate, and what is commanded us we are to obey.”

2 Peter 1:19 says, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy” which means that the Word of God stands above all experiences and revelations outside the Bible, even Peter's experience on the Mount of Transfiguration! *Every Christian must be willing to bring his experience and life into conformity with the Word of God.* Our point is this. The miraculous gifts were part of the foundation of the church

and were experienced primarily by the apostles and their close associates (Eph. 2:20). We have no teaching found in the epistles, which is the primary source of truth regarding the Church, commanding us to seek these gifts or experience them in our lives today.

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.”

We need to understand the nature of God’s blueprints for the sign gifts. It’s simple. They were foundational. There is no need to do concrete work while building the attic! Today we are in the attic stage and not the foundation stage of the Church. Thus, the special miraculous works being done through chosen and ordained men belonged exclusively to the apostolic or foundational age of the Church. They were not designed to last indefinitely and they certainly are not for today.

#4

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 their ministry and function of receiving supernatural revelation, along with their accompanying sign gifts, would no longer exist. It would become obsolete in the future church era. ***Since the 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).*** This is an easy way to understand the cessation of apostles and prophets with their supernatural revelation and miraculous gifts. All of these offices and gifts would be deemed unnecessary with the passing away of their offices and the associated gifts used to confirm their word (1 Cor. 13:10).

#5

The apostles were a unique group of men that were given the miraculous sign gifts (Mark 16:20; 2 Cor. 12:12 – “the signs of an

apostle”). Acts 5:12, “And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people.” The apostles were the primary group of men who possessed the miraculous sign gifts. This was demonstrated by their ability to heal people, cast out demons, and raise the dead during their earthly ministry. The apostles were specially selected men chosen by Christ Himself during His earthly ministry (Matt. 10:1; John 15:16). They were men who actually saw the resurrected Lord (Acts 1:22 – “must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection”). Paul also saw the resurrected Lord (1 Cor. 15:8). *The apostles were unique men for a unique time period.* The ministry of the super apostles cannot be duplicated today because no man can be directly chosen by Christ since Christ is no longer on earth. In addition, no man can be a direct witness of the resurrected Christ. Thus, no person can qualify as an apostle and possess the apostolic sign gifts.

I once saw a church with a sign which read, “The First Church of the Apostles.” This is a misleading sign since there are no more apostles in the church today. Nor can we go back to the first church! If there were apostles today they would have to be men who saw the resurrected Lord (Acts 2:32), who could heal everyone that asked them, emptying hospitals (Acts 5:15-16), and who could raise the dead (Acts 9:40; Acts 20:9-11). To apply the term apostle to someone’s name today becomes a misnomer or misapplied designation. No man could ever be an apostle today since every true apostle had a historic calling, since every apostle was a direct witness of Christ’s resurrection, and since every apostle had unique supernatural gifts given to them which cannot be duplicated today.

#6

Second Peter 2:1 says that there “were false prophets” (past tense) during the first century church but “there shall be” in the future only false teachers. This indicates that the prophetic gift would cease. Peter was directed to write that in the future church we should expect “false teachers” to invade the church and not necessarily false prophets any longer. The future tense is used in connection with the ministry of false teachers (“even as there shall be false teachers among you”). Obviously Peter knew and expected the gift of prophecy to cease. Teachers were expected to take the place of the prophets as the canon of Scripture became completed.

#7

Signs are for Israel and not the church (1 Cor. 1:22; John 6:30). The sign gifts which included the gift of tongues were always designed to be a sign to the Jewish nation in order 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). The Jews always wanted a sign to prove that something was from God. This was true in the book of Acts when tongues were used by the apostles (Acts 2, 10, 19) to confirm that God was turning to the Gentiles since the event of Pentecost. It was also true in Corinth when the prophets spoke about God's New Testament truth that God was revealing (1 Cor. 13:2). In every occurrence of tongues in the Bible, Jews were present. The tongues spoken were to demonstrate to Jews about God's initial acceptance of the Gentile people into His program of the church (Acts 2:33; 10:44-45; 11:17-18). They were a sign to the Jews that God was now blessing the Gentiles. The gift of tongues was a sign to unbelieving Israel that God's salvation was now available to other nations. In this later dispensational time in which we live there is no longer the need for such proof as this. The ministry and message about the church (Jew and Gentile together in one body) and God's outreach to Gentiles is established by the Scriptures and revealed to all (Ephesians 3:1-6). However, there was a transition time (the book of Acts) when the Jews needed this message validated by a sign (the sign of tongues).

In addition, tongues served as a sign of coming judgment to the Jewish nation (1 Cor. 14:22). 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 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. Because of this the gift would cease in and of itself during the first century when the Jewish nation was scattered in A. D. 70 (see 1 Cor. 13:8 – where 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.

In other words, the purpose of speaking in different languages would come to an end with Israel's judgment and the setting aside of national Israel. Tongues and the other sign gifts had a specific purpose for a specific time period during the infant days of the Church.

John Phillips said this about the sign gifts:

"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's interesting that there have been numerous miracles in three earlier periods of Jewish history - during the days of Moses and Joshua, during the days of Elijah and Elisha, and during the days of Daniel and his friends. Then there was the time of Christ and transitional period of the early church. Each of those times was a transitional point in Jewish history. Each time the miracles stopped as suddenly as they had begun, and each time they were replaced by the written Word.

#8

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. Furthermore, 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 (1 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. 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. I know many saints who have been genuinely healed through the prayers of God's people (James 5:14-15 – "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick"). ***We must understand that miracles have not ceased, but men working them have ceased (1 Corinthians 12:10).*** 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.

#9

It's interesting that none of the sign gifts and supernatural phenomenon is repeated in the epistles as common instruction for churches and people to follow 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? Actually, during the early church people could speak in tongues and still be carnal (1 Cor. 3:1-3). In the epistles we find that the lasting sign of a person's spirituality is the fruit of the Spirit which contains no mention of speaking in tongues (Gal. 5:22-23). Where in the epistles do we read about apostles going around healing people of all their diseases?

We do read about pastors and people praying for the healing of others (James 5:13-15) but we see no one possessing the gifts of healing and raising the dead like they did in the early apostolic days. *The overall epistles set forth the standard that was to be the norm for the continuing church era.* Within these epistles we see a steady decrease and absence of the sign gifts. Furthermore, the miracle gifts (sign gifts) are only mentioned in the earliest epistles, such as 1 Corinthians. Later books, such as Ephesians and Romans, contain

detailed passages on the gifts of the Spirit, but the sign gifts are not mentioned with the exception of Romans mentioning prophecy – one of the last gifts to cease.

There is no teaching in Scripture that the church should look for miraculous gifts. Since they 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) they are not necessary nor expected to be part of the believer’s life to lead him on to spiritual living. 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.

The absence of sign gifts within the epistles is an important indicator that these gifts have ceased. The gifts such as apostles and prophets were not expected to continue on and exist in the progress and future days of church ministry. This is rather obvious to observe. A simple chart will prove this point about the decline and absence of the sign gifts existing in the later epistles. There are four lists given in the Scriptures of gifts and gifted men. Two are given in I Corinthians, one in Romans, and one in Ephesians. First Corinthians was written earlier than Romans or Ephesians. As the years of the early church went by, the SIGN gifts had already served their purpose and became less and less in evidence. A small chart below will give us a visual understanding of this declining process.

<u>I Corinthians</u> <u>12:8-10</u>	<u>I Corinthians</u> <u>12-28-30</u>	<u>Romans</u> <u>12:3-8</u>	<u>Ephesians</u> <u>4:7-11</u>
Wisdom	Apostles	Prophecy	Apostles
Knowledge	Prophets	Ministry	Prophets
Faith	Teachers	Teachers	Evangelists
Healings	Miracles	Exhortation	Pastor-
Miracles	Healings	Giving	Teachers
Prophecy	Helps	Ruling	
Discerning of spirits	Governments	Mercy	
	Tongues		

Tongues	Interpretation of		
Interpretation of	tongues	***	***
tongues			

***No wisdom, knowledge, faith, healings, miracles, discerning of Spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues are found in these two columns.

This chart indicates the decline of the sign gifts within the later writings. A more detailed chart will be given later. By the time Paul wrote Romans, he was once again looking back over his outreach and expansion of the early apostolic church, when these extra signs were used in the original spreading of the Gospel and the establishment of local churches, before the Scriptures were canonized (Romans 15:19; Ephesians 2:20). *The absence of the sign gifts in the later epistles is most interesting and a very convincing argument that proves they would cease.* As time elapsed, there was no more need to confirm the Word of God with signs since the truth was being brought together and becoming known as Scripture by the early church.

After first Corinthians, Paul never mentioned the gift of tongues again. Neither Paul nor Peter in all of their epistles combined ever mention tongues or the nine gifts as continuing to exist as a gift. John never mentioned tongues and neither did Jude. *Tongues and the sign gifts appeared only briefly in Acts and I Corinthians, primarily as the Gospel was being spread.* By the second century even the apostles and prophets were gone. They had no successors. The historic age of the apostles and what they did is in the past. *After they died, the gifts of the apostles died with them.* Things had changed drastically within the church in regard to the apostolic sign gifts.

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 correct and remind us that signs and wonders faded out of the church as the apostles died off.

#10

The power to perform miraculous healings was diminished even during the lifetime of the apostles. This is an indicator of the temporary nature of the sign gifts. It's very interesting to observe that when the apostolic age was just getting started and churches were being established (Ephesians 2:20) that multitudes were being healed by the apostles (Acts 5:16). However, 25 years later Paul, the greatest of all the apostles, could not be delivered from his own troublesome thorn in the flesh which was evidently weakening his body (II Corinthians 12:7-8; 10:10; Galatians 4:15; I Corinthians 2:3). At one time Paul had the ability to heal people at will (Acts 28:8); however, as he neared the end of his life (2 Tim. 4:6) he showed no evidence of such a gift. Instead of healing Timothy, he advised alcohol as a medical treatment (I Timothy 5:23). Later on, at the end of his career, Paul left a beloved brother sick at Miletus (II Timothy 4:20). He surely would have healed him if he could. In Philippians 2:25-27 we find that he could not heal Epaphroditus of his sickness. In the later years of the apostles' lives we see their inability to heal people. *These Scriptures give a good indication of the dying miraculous gifts.* Something was changing. It's quite clear that the miracles of the apostolic age were not to be the norm for this day. It could be stated that: "The day of divine healing has not passed, though the day of divine healers has passed." We believe in faith healing (James 5:15) but not faith healers!

#11

The early church fathers, who lived soon after the days of the apostles, do not speak of the continued practice and use of the miraculous gifts. They actually argue against the continuation of these gifts. Both Chrysostom and Augustine stated categorically that tongues had ceased by his time.

Chrysostom wrote in the fourth century:

"The obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place."

Augustine 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.”

Augustine also wrote:

"For those that are baptized do not now receive the Spirit on the imposition of hands, so as to speak in the tongues of all the peoples; neither are the sick healed by the shadow of the preachers of Christ falling on them as they pass; and other such things as were then done, are now manifestly ceased."

Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the Corinthians in 95 A.D. discussing all of their spiritual problems. Tongues were never mentioned even though Corinth is the one place in the New Testament where tongues were apparently commonly used. In addition, Justin Martyr compiled a listing of spiritual gifts active in his time (A.D. 100-165) and did not include the gift of tongues and other sign gifts. Think of it this way. The early church fathers who lived soon after the days of the apostles have argued against the continuation of these gifts. Certainly there were many early church fathers who were godly men, who loved the Scriptures.

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

“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.

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)? In your thinking, a red light should be displayed and cause you to reconsider such claims.

#12

The later writings of John (A.D. 90) use doctrine or Bible truth as the sole indicator of final truth instead of the apostles and their confirming signs. This is another indication that the sign gifts have ceased. At the end of the era of New Testament writings and the time period of the early church, the apostle John wrote his epistles. Listen to his instructions for detecting deceivers: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 9–11).

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.** If someone comes along today and says, "Thus saith the Lord," how do you know he is genuine? You check what he says against Scripture. Scripture is the final appeal of authority. There is no more need for apostolic authority and apostolic sign gifts since we have the Scriptures as our final authority base and court of appeal.

#13

Another reason why the sign gifts have ceased is because of the total inability of people to duplicate these 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 who can heal like 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 organically 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.

Have you ever seen a would-be faith healer actually heal a person of cerebral palsy? Have you seen a faith healer enter a children's hospital and begin to heal all the little children that were there? NO! But the apostles who had the true gifts of healing could heal people at their own will and heal all of them at any time. 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.

#14

The lack of evidence of these gifts occurring in the past history of the church is a strong indication that the gifts have ceased. Think of it. *History itself is very convincing proof, if not the most convincing proof, that these gifts have ceased.* Some will counter this convincing argument, regarding the lack of the sign gifts in history, by concluding that the present generation is experiencing what the Bible predicts as the "latter rain" of the Spirit's work and ministry (Joel 3:23). Dayton

feels that many charismatics actually prefer to grant that certain gifts ceased, since they regard today's phenomena as a latter-day pouring out of the Spirit. However, latter rain is not speaking about a revival of the sign gifts for today. It is actually speaking about Israel's rainfall patterns during the Millennial Kingdom. Any literal approach to Scripture will verify this ("latter rain in the first month" – Joel 3:23). Rain is rain! It has nothing to do with the Spirit's work and sign gifts. Let's study our Bibles!

The evidence of history is a convincing argument that these nine gifts have ceased. *If the miraculous gifts of the New Testament age had continued in the church, one would expect an unbroken line of occurrences from apostolic times to the present.* If they are of God, why should such miracles be absent for centuries? There is no controversy with God over the cessation of the nine sign gifts. The controversy is with man. **The miraculous gifts 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.**

In short, history contradicts the charismatics. Though some have attempted to prove that tongues and other miraculous gifts have occurred in the post-apostolic history of the church, the alleged occurrences are actually evidence against this claim. In 150 A.D. Montanus claimed to have the same supernatural gifts that the apostles had here in Acts 4, yet he was rejected by Christians! Think hard about this fact! History indicates that tongues did cease. Tongues are not mentioned at all by the post-apostolic fathers. Other writers such as Justin Martyr, Origen, Chrysostom, and Augustine considered tongues something that happened only in the earliest days of the Church.

Referring to alleged instances of tongues-speaking, Hinson, a church historian, sums up the situation this way.

"The first sixteen centuries of its history were lean ones indeed. . . . if the first five centuries were lean the next were starvation years for the practice in Western Christendom and doubtful ones in Eastern Christendom."

Obviously it would not have been difficult to produce evidence for these gifts during the apostolic age. Why then is there such a famine

of evidence if the gifts continued throughout church history? That the miraculous workings ceased in the past can hardly be refuted, and this is recognized by many charismatics. However, there are those charismatics who suggest that the gifts ceased from their operation due to the lack of faith and frailty of Christians in past centuries. We might counter such an argument in this way. If God gave these gifts during the history of the church, they would have occurred regardless of man's frailty.

During the days of the apostolic church the gift of faith (1 Cor. 12:9; 13:2) was given to help man believe and perform these miraculous signs and wonders. Thus, to argue that man did not have faith to perform these miracles in past generations means that God did not give man the supernatural gift of faith to perform the miracles and wonders. This actually goes against the argument of the Charismatics and proves the nine miraculous gifts have ceased. The point is this. To argue that the gifts faded away in the post-apostolic church because of a failure to believe in miracles evades the facts of history and has no Biblical support. This is because God always gave the gift of faith to enable people to perform miraculous gifts. Furthermore, when one looks at the faith of past Christians and what they have accomplished for God there can be no doubt that they did possess faith. Who could ever question the faith of the great missionaries who pioneered new lands and those who were willing to die for the cause of Christ? The only reasonable explanation for the lack of these gifts in church history is that God did not give them. If He had given them, they would have occurred.

The present charismatic movement is characterized by phenomena that began in the church only about 100 years ago which apart from any historical connection or evidence is claimed to be the same as the miracles performed in the apostolic age. *It is simply naive to accept this claim without some direct historical link or solid Biblical evidence that these present phenomena are the same as those in the days of the apostles.* The most reliable evidence would be a direct historical link with the apostolic gifts due to their continuing use in the church. However, as already argued, history testifies to the contrary. The gifts ceased and there is no reason to expect their presence or reoccurrence today.

The New Testament scholar, Thomas R. Edgar wrote in Bib Sac quarterly of Dallas Theological Seminary (1988): "Since these gifts

and signs did cease, the burden of proof is entirely on the charismatics to prove their validity. Too long Christians have assumed that the noncharismatic must produce incontestable biblical evidence that the miraculous sign gifts did cease. However, noncharismatics have no burden to prove this, since it has already been proved by history. It is an irrefutable fact admitted by many Pentecostals. Therefore, the charismatics must prove Biblically that the sign gifts will start up again during the church age and that today's phenomena are this reoccurrence. In other words they must prove that their experiences are the reoccurrence of gifts that have not occurred for almost 1,900 years!"

#15

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. During this era of time no person prophesied and no miracles were recorded. Likewise, there were no miracle workers in Old Testament times for some 2000 years of Israel's history except in the days of Moses (Ex. 1-11) and Elijah and Elisha (1 & 2 Kings).

The Biblical record shows that miracles occurred during particular periods for the specific purpose of authenticating a new man and message from God. For instance, Moses was given miracles to authenticate his ministry before Pharaoh (Exodus 4:1-8); Elijah was given miracles to authenticate his ministry before Ahab (1 Kings 17:1; 18:24); the apostles were given miracles to authenticate their ministry before Israel (Acts 4:10, 16). Of course, Jesus' ministry was also marked by miracles, which the apostle John calls "signs" (John 2:11). John's point is that the miracles were proofs of the authenticity of Jesus' message and deity (John 20:30-31).

The sudden outbreak of miracles through prophets and miracle workers only occurred in short spans of history which would also include the days of Christ and the apostles during the infant church. *Miracles were also used to introduce a new era of revelation* – The law through Moses, the kingdom through Christ, and the Church through the apostles. Miracles were also used to authenticate the message and messenger of the new era (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4). Since we are no longer in the new era of revelation the clusters of

miracles are no longer needed to authenticate the time period. In short, the gift of miracles and other miraculous gifts would not perpetually exist during the succeeding church age but only during the brief 30-year time frame of the infant church as new revelation was being given by apostles and prophets. The point is this. Just as the close of the Old Testament Canon was followed by the silence of on-going prophecy and supernatural revelation, so the close of the New Testament has been followed by the absence of any prophetic and supernatural means of revelation outside the Bible.

It can also be observed that even during the early church and New Testament record there are very few occasions when God spoke through revelatory trances and dreams or through means of miraculous revelation (Acts 9:10, 9:12, 10:3, 10:10; II Corinthians 12:1; Revelation 1:9-10). To hear modern charismatic Christians talk, one would think visions and trances were common during the Bible and New Testament. Actually they were rare in past history and today God no longer chooses to speak this way. There are only a few instances in history when God supernaturally revealed truth to people through these methods of communication. Dreams and trances were used to reveal information to the apostles during the time when God's new revelation was being formed. They were given at a certain climactic point of history to enable the writers of Scripture to record Scripture (Rev. 1:10) and confirm new truth or revelation that was being shared for New Testament living (Acts 10:1-16).

Since God has now completed His Word (1 Cor. 13:10 – “that which is perfect is come”) there is no more need to direct anyone through dreams or visions or give out any additional information (“the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” – Jude 3). Today we do not have to rely on dreams, visions, and mystical experiences. God reassures of His truth and assistance for living through the promises of His Word (2 Pet. 1:4; Col. 1:9-10; 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17) and the Holy Spirit applying His Word to our lives (1 John 2:20; 1 Cor. 2:12; John 16:13 – “he will guide you into all truth” – not in dreams and visions). Instead of seeking reassurance and direction through the supernatural we should seek God's guidance and wisdom through His unfailing Word.

Psalm 119:105

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

Before the completion of the canon of Scripture (1 Cor. 13:8-13) prophets and the writers of Scripture, who recorded down the Bible (2 Pet. 1:21), were sometimes given truth through dreams and visions. **Dreams and visions were part of the pre-canon days of both the Old and New Testament Scriptures.** They occurred rarely but occasionally, in order to reveal truth to God's special prophets, prior to the days when the Biblical revelation in both Old and New Testaments would be completed.

God is not revealing messages or truth today through trances, dreams, visions, and prophecies, since we have a completed Bible and possess the "**more sure word of prophecy**" (2 Pet. 1:19-21) which was "**once delivered unto the saints**" (Jude 3). God during this present time period is not dispensing new revelation through dreams and visions by prophets. **The canon is closed!** We live in an era of closed revelation which for the most part was true of the entire history of man.

1 Samuel 3:1

And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; **there was no open vision.**

There is no promise given in the New Testament epistles that God would speak to His people through ongoing dreams, visions, and supernatural methods. It's a serious error to expect these supernatural means of communication and claim that God is speaking through these rare methods of communication. I have often been asked if God is still speaking to people through dreams, visions, and other various ways of supernatural communication in order to give them the needed assurance of some truth. I have heard just about everything over the years. People have told me that relatives appeared to them in dreams to assure them that everything would be alright. Others have told me of angelic visitors who showed up at their bedside to increase their faith. One lady even said that God sent a special fly to her home to remind her that everything was okay with her deceased husband. Dear friend, God has not chosen to speak through flies! God has not chosen to speak through supernatural means today to convey messages to people, since these revelatory

messages were confined to a brief era, when new revelation was being processed prior to the canonization and finalization of the Bible.

What is happening today is similar to what Jeremiah said was taking place in his own day. In Jeremiah 23:25-26 we read: "I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart."

There is an *artificial* cause for many of these alleged dreams and visions which are occurring today. There is a self-induced cause for many of these modern day occurrences of dreams and visions. People deceive themselves and think that God is really communicating to them through trances and dreams when in reality He is not speaking to them in this way. Many have simply imagined that God was speaking to them through some dream or experience or they are lying about the entire experience ("things which he hath not seen" – Co. 2:18). The Bible compares dreams to the chaff (Jer. 23:28) and tells us that when people see visions of Christ at their bedside we are not to believe them (Matt. 24:26).

Then too, there can also be a *demonic* cause to some of the extra-scriptural experiences that some people are having today. We must remember that two sources can produce the supernatural: God and Satan with his demons. In the past (Exodus 7:10-12; 8:6-7), Satan duplicated the miracles God did through Aaron. In the future, Satan will also be behind the end-time miracles, signs and wonders, deceiving multitudes of people through the False Prophet and Anti-Christ (Revelation 13:11-14). Demons can also do the miraculous (Revelation 16:14). Certainly they are capable of sending false information into our minds as Christians (2 Cor. 11:3-4; 1 Tim. 4:1) to confuse us and take us away from God's true source of guidance for our lives – the Bible. *It's a dangerous thing to open our minds to dreams, visions, trances, and other experiences that come from outside the parameters of the Bible.*

Many Christians become highly disturbed when you talk about the possibility of being deceived and led astray by Satan or demons through supernatural phenomenon. But we have every right to investigate and suspect demonic activity in experiences outside the

Bible. We are told to “test the spirits” (see I John 4:1) realizing that demonic intervention is all around us and wants to deceive us.

Satan and demons can and do create occult, psychic phenomenon within the minds of people in some cases. *Without knowing it some are trafficking in spirits instead of the Holy Spirit in order to receive guidance.* This is what Saul did when he was disobedient to God (1 Sam, 28:7-8). Today, charismatic Christians do not openly call upon demonic powers to give them hidden messages. No Christian would ever think of doing such a thing as this. However, their dreams, visions, magical messages, and inner voices, which they are receiving today, can actually become a camouflaged form of “black magic” (the use of occult or paranormal powers to receive knowledge about the future). The camouflaged form of black magic is called white magic which masquerades itself in a deceptive religious dress. It is called white magic because it masquerades under the disguise of light and truth, Jesus’ name, the Bible, and the operation of the Holy Spirit. I’m afraid that today we are finding ourselves in the beginning stages of the prophesied terrifying outburst of magical occultism, which will occur in the end-times (II Thessalonians 2:8, 10; Revelation 9:1-12, 20-21; 13:11-15). We are in the beginning stages where even “God’s elect” (His own Christians) are being deceived (Matthew 24:24).

#16

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 here as they are in Matthew 28:18–20. This is significant. Mark was emphasizing the early signs (sign gifts) that were needed as the Gospel was being preached during the original expansion of the church while Matthew does not highlight this aspect in the Great Commission passage.

Matthew looks right to the end of the church age. In doing so Matthew was not directed by God to record about any ongoing miraculous confirming signs. This is because the miraculous signs (sign gifts) would cease to exist throughout the future years of the church age since the canon of Scripture would be complete (1 Cor. 13:10). Mark

viewed the Great Commission from the perspective of the early church and failed to give the instruction for discipleship and training. Matthew viewed the Great Commission from the perspective of a maturing church that was well rooted, grounded, growing, and thriving upon the completed Scriptures. Hence, there would be no need for any ongoing apostolic sign gifts.

#17

We must determine what is normative or normal for today. We must be careful to not generalize for today everything that happened in Bible times. Because God has done something in the past for an individual or individuals, such as giving the apostles miraculous sign gifts (Mark 16:20), does not mean we should expect Him to do the same for us. Just because some Christians were given supernatural gifts does not warrant the conclusion and belief that all Christians would receive them in the same continuing fashion throughout the history of the church.

For instance, 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. God could miraculously stock all of our homes with food but this is not *normal* for today. Leprosy patients do not dip seven times in a river to be cured (II Kings 5:1-14). Nor do we throw sticks on the ground and expect them to turn into serpents as Moses did in Exodus 4:2-3. It's very wise to see that not everything you read about during Bible times is necessarily the normal occurrence for our lives today. The fact that God used Elijah, Elisha, and Peter to restore 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 (Matthew 10:8). Likewise, the signs that were said to be performed by the apostles (Mark 16:20) were not signs that were experienced by all Christians during the early church and they certainly were not signs that were intended to be duplicated by Christians today. Mark 16:17 actually says that "these signs" (which were performed by the apostles) shall follow (attend) them that believe" (new converts). It does not say that the new converts would *perform* these signs but that they would attend their conversion experience by confirming the word of the apostles.

McQuilkin has written:

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

This is certainly true in connection with the supernatural sign gifts that were used in the infant days of church life and ministry and the events of Pentecost. The sign gifts such as tongues, miracles, healings, and protection from snakes and poisons (Mark 16:17, 20) were used to jump start the church. However, these gifts were not intended to be normal operative gifts that would remain and be part of God’s continuing plan and purpose for the church (1 Cor. 13:10). This is very clear to see when looking at church history and at believers today. We cannot empty hospitals of people who are sick, drink deadly poison and survive, and authentically duplicate any of the apostolic sign gifts of casting our demons and speaking in tongues.

There are those today who claim that all Christians of all times should possess all the miraculous gifts and go about healing people and casting out demons. **Mark 16:20 says, “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”** A careful examination of this text in *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).

We might also add this. In the book of Acts the vast majority of miracles are performed by the apostles and their close associates. 2 Corinthians 12:12 gives us the reason why, “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.” If every believer in Christ was equipped with the ability to perform signs, wonders, and miracles - signs, wonders, and miracles could in no way be the identifying marks of an apostle. Acts 2:22 tells us that Jesus was “accredited” by “miracles, wonders, and signs.” In a similar way, the apostles were “marked” as genuine messengers from God by the miracles they performed. Acts

14:3 describes the Gospel message being "confirmed" by the miracles Paul and Barnabas performed.

On a rare occasion we see this gift was given to another man outside the apostolic band and this was actually prior to the church era (Mark 9:38-39). The point is this. These gifts were not given to a large company of people. They had a limited distribution among the body of Christ and would only be used on a temporary basis. Hence, they could be called temporary gifts. *Mark 16:20 also speaks of the sign gifts as authenticating signs ("confirming the word with signs following") and not normative manifestations.* No promise is given that these miraculous sign gifts would be experienced by all people in the future church. 1 Corinthians 12 distinctly argues against all people having the same gifts (1 Cor. 12:7-11; 29-30 – "are all workers of miracles? and "do all speak with tongues?"). The answer to the rhetorical question is no.

Mark 16:17 states, "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues." Please notice what this verse is NOT saying. It's not saying that the miraculous signs would be *performed* by every person that is saved. It says that these signs would "follow them that believe." There is a difference! In this context we see that the apostles ("they" – vv. 16, 17, 20) were the miracle workers whose miracles would "follow after" (attend, accompany - vs. 17) the belief or faith of people during the apostolic days of the church. In other words, the apostles would perform the miracles to reconfirm that their message was genuine and from God (Mark 16:20 – "confirming the word with signs following").

The people were the believers ("them that believe" – vs. 17a) and the apostles ("they" – vs. 17b) were the miracle workers who possessed the miraculous sign gifts to substantiate their message since the Lord was speaking to the apostles and giving promises to them (vs. 19). To conclude that every person who has been saved since this time must cast out demons and speak in tongues in order to confirm their salvation experience is a rather absurd and antibiblical conclusion. If this would be true, then the rest of the signs must also be experienced by all believers.

Mark 16:18 says, “They (the apostles) 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 interpret this as God’s calling for snake handling (snake handling is still practiced in certain areas of the south) one can readily see that these gifts were actually *protective sign gifts* given to the original band of apostles and certain specially chosen men as they went about preaching the Gospel to the unknown regions of the world. If the apostles were accidentally bitten by poisonous snakes they would live (Acts 28:3-6). If their enemies would poison their drink they would not be affected by the poison. God put a special protective hedge about the original band of apostles who went about proclaiming the Gospel.

The obvious point is this. If all Christians in the future church era are really given the sign gifts of casting out demons and speaking in differing languages (Mark 16:17) then they also should be given the protection and immunity against snake bites and poisoning (Mark 16:18). You can’t have one without the other. Now friend, let me just say this. If you are accidentally bitten by a poisonous snake today or drink poison (strychnine) you had better get help mighty fast or you will soon be in Heaven. You will find out rather quickly that you are not an apostle and that God has not chosen to gift you and protect you in the same way He did these special men. Furthermore, you will discover rather quickly that you cannot go about and “lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:18).

If you can do this, then I want you to go with me the next time I visit some sick folk in the hospital. You should be able to lay hands on them and have them restored to health (their hearts healed, their cancers healed, their bones healed). Then afterward we will stop at the local morgue and raise somebody from the dead! Let’s stop fooling ourselves. These gifts were never intended to be given and experienced by every believer throughout the church age. We only deceive ourselves when we believe that these miraculous gifts were intended to be experienced by all Christians of all generations. We must always ask the question, “What is normative for every Christian today?” Certainly going around to hospitals and healing people of life-threatening diseases, raising the dead, speaking in different languages, casting out demons, and living through poisonous snake bites and drinks is not normal! Let’s be honest with ourselves.

The correct understanding of Mark 16:17-18 is that during the early original expansion and history of the church the apostles (“they” – vv. 17, 18, 20) would perform miraculous signs which were designed to “follow them that believe” (attend, accompany - vs. 17) their Gospel presentations to prospective converts, causing people to believe in Christ and be saved. The signs would prove that the messengers were sent from God, substantiating their authority from God, and authenticating the apostolic Gospel message they were preaching (“confirming the word with signs following” – vs. 20). They would cast out demons, speak in different languages, or lay hands on the sick and restore them to health in order to verify they were true messengers of God and that their message regarding the Gospel was truly from God. These authenticating signs (sign credentials) would accompany their presentations of the Gospel and as a result these signs would illicit faith or belief in their message and result in people coming to Christ. Of course, all this was needed as the Gospel message was being presented during the new Church Age.

As already noted, it’s rather interesting that Mark did not say that these miracles would continue to exist throughout the ongoing church age. The words “to the end of the age” are not found here as they are in Matthew 28:18–20. This is significant. Mark was emphasizing the early signs (sign gifts) that were needed as the Gospel was preached during the original expansion of the church while Matthew does not highlight this aspect in the Great Commission. Matthew looks further into the church age and right to the end of the church age. In doing so Matthew was lead to not record about any ongoing miraculous confirming signs. This is because the miraculous signs (sign gifts) would cease to exist throughout the future years of the church age since the canon of Scripture would be complete (1 Cor. 13:10).

We have also stated already that none of these sign gifts and supernatural phenomena is repeated in the later epistles as common instruction for churches and men today. It’s important to understand that *we must look to the Scriptures themselves to determine what is normal for today and what God would have us to follow*. In doing this we must remember two things. First, sometimes Christians wrongly apply a promise and portion of Scripture to the time period in which they live today. This is why people play with snakes in services today – services which resemble more of a satanic ritual than spiritual

exercise. This is why people are trying to resurrect the apostolic sign gifts such as healings and speaking in tongues. Second, sometimes Christians go beyond the promises of the Bible and put words in God's mouth! In other words, they claim something for themselves that God never intended every person to have such as wealth and perfect health. These alleged promises are not rooted in the Bible (2 Cor. 4:16). When people claim them as God's promises to them they eventually end up discouraged and confused thinking God has let them down in some way.

#18

We can believe that Jesus is God and the Savior by the mighty miracles that He has *already accomplished* while He was here on earth. John 20:30-31 says, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 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." We can prove to others that Jesus is God and the only way to Heaven (John 14:6) by the miracles He has already done which are recorded in the Bible. We don't need to have any ongoing miracle workers and signs to prove who Jesus was and is today. The miracles He already has done, and the greatest miracle of all, His resurrection from the dead (1 Cor. 15:1-3), is enough proof to elicit belief in the hearts of lost mankind.

Lastly, we must remember that miracles in and of themselves can never bring a person to faith in Christ. Jesus proved this during His earthly ministry (John 2:23-24; 12:37). There must be conviction and convincing by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-10). One thing is certain. To rely on the would-be miracles of modern faith healers today to convince people that Christ is God is a misguided approach to evangelism. If we share the message of the death and resurrection of Christ with the lost (Rom. 10:9-10) then we will be sharing what matters most since the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

#19

God has a different way of revealing truth to people and guiding them today. He has not chosen to guide and direct people's lives today through the miraculous sign gifts. God is not giving out direct

prophetic messages and revelatory knowledge to people as He did in the infant days of the church. God has closed the door to this kind of miraculous information and revelatory process (Jude 3; Rev. 22:18). Nor is God *confirming* any truth outside the Bible by miraculous gifts such as speaking in tongues and healings.

How does God guide us today? Let us never forget that the believer's foundational source of guidance for their daily lives is found in the Word of God (119:105, 130; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Col. 1:9). The Bible contains hundreds of clear commands for us to obey as believers, which are definitely the will of God for our lives, and which deal with the many decisions we must face in life. The better we know what these commands are the better we will know the will of God for our lives (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 6:1; 1 Thess. 4:11-12; 1 Tim. 5:8; 2 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 2:10; Eph. 6:4; 1 Thess. 5:17; Heb. 10:25; 13:17; Acts 1:8; Phil. 4:6; 2 Cor. 6:14-17).

Whenever we need to have a specific answer from the Lord we should always ask ourselves the questions, "What does God's Word have to say about this? Is this action in harmony with the Bible?" The Bible is our road map and guidebook throughout our Christian journey and that is why the will and ways of God for our daily living are linked with the truth of Scriptures (Psalm 40:8; 119:15). *The will of God and the Word of God work together.* This is why the promise of guidance and counsel comes through the Scriptures (Ps. 119:24). God directs and guides our lives as we prayerfully meditate on His Word and ask for His direction through the Scriptures. *God guides our lives today by the bare Word of God!*

Building from this underlying foundation, the Lord also guides our daily lives through prayer that is directed toward God or as we pray to Him (Ps. 25:4; 86:11; Col. 1:9; 4:12; 1 John 5:14). He also guides our lives through the direction of the Spirit of God (John 16:13; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18; Acts 8:26-29; 10:19-20; 11:12; 16:6-8), the Son of God (Heb. 1:1-2), the circumstances of God (1 Cor. 16:7-9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Gen. 50:20), the servants of God (Prov. 11:14; 12:15; 24:6; 27:17), the desires of God (Ps. 37:4), the wisdom of God (James 1:5) and through the peace of God – a settled assurance we can have when making proper decisions in life (Phil. 4:6-7; Psalm. 119:165).

The kind of guidance that Christians receive today for everyday normal living is not the same as receiving extra biblical revelation through dreams, visions, trances, or direct voices within the human spirit. ***In other words, 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.

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, prior to the completion of the Scriptures, and should be recognized as unnecessary for today. If God only on rare occasions used this method to speak to 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.

Samuel 3:1 records: "And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. **And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.**" What was true during the days of Samuel and the 400 silent years is also true in this unique era of time in which we live today. God has once again chosen to have no open and ongoing revelation by prophets. That is why I believe the Word of God has been so precious in the Reformation days, with the revival of the doctrine of salvation, and then in the last century with the revival of the prophetic Scriptures and the great prophetic conferences. When there is no open vision of revelation through prophets God's people rally around the truth of Scripture and discover God's mind and purpose as outlined in the Scriptures. Closed revelation brings the church into a deeper understanding of Scripture and greater blessing.

#20

Christians are never told to seek after signs. Jesus said that “a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign” (Matt. 16:4). Today many people are seeking after the sign gifts hoping to increase their faith in God. Dear friend, if we are obsessed at looking for sign miracles today, then we are spiritual babies who lacks true faith in God (John 4:48; Luke 11:29; II Corinthians 5:7). People say they have great faith in God, so much so, that they are waiting for Him to perform great miracles today. Actually, they have doubt in God’s purpose and plan for people’s lives and are looking for God to prove Himself. *Unbelief looks for signs (Matthew 12:38-39; 16:3-4)*. A strong belief or faith does not need any outward confirming signs from God (Heb. 11:1-2 – “the evidence of things not seen”). We need to be reminded today that it takes far greater faith to accept God’s plan for our lives then to expect God to do something that we want to be accomplished (Job 13:15; Proverbs 3:5-6; I Peter 4:19). God’s people have often suffered greatly while still possessing a strong faith in God’s purpose for their lives (Gen. 50:20; Hebrews 11:33-39).

Places in the United States such as “Oral Roberts University” have “Signs and Wonders Classes” whereby people are taught to look for miracles every day in their lives. They are taught that God always promises to heal people and give them a perfect bill of health. Actually, when we think this way, we lack faith in God’s sovereign will for our lives, which may include affliction (Psalm 119:75 – “thou in faithfulness has afflicted me”), and think that God needs to prove himself to us over and over again by way of the miraculous. If a person thinks this way they become confused when their healing does not take place. They also possess a weak faith in the Lord (Matt. 6:30) and lack true spirituality which consists of true peace and joy in the midst of suffering, and longsuffering during trial or sickness (Gal. 5:22-23).

Let us remember that the Spirit-filled life (Eph. 5:18) has nothing to do with the Charismatic Movement or any experience not authenticated by Scripture. The ancient parable of the dog that was crossing the bridge is a great example. While crossing the bridge with a bone in his mouth he saw the reflection of the bone in the water below. The reflection looked better than the one in his mouth and he dropped the

substance for the unreal and went hungry. Millions of people today are like that dog, they have dropped, ignored or bypassed the satisfying reality of true Spirit-filled living (Gal. 5:22-23) for a shadow of some kind of faulty exciting experience that is not a sign of true spirituality.

We have outlined various reasons and valid arguments for the cessation of the nine early sign gifts. For the reasons stated above, we believe that the sign gifts have ceased and that we would do well to “follow after charity,” which is the greatest permanent fruit and virtue that should be seen in our daily lives (1 Cor. 13:13; 14:1). The signs gifts have ceased but our love for others must continue to manifest itself in our hearts and lives. May the Lord give us understanding about these early sign gifts and their historic purpose. And may we continue to love and serve others with the permanent and lasting gifts that God has given for church ministry today.

I was once asked if I thought it was possible that the Holy Spirit might give the gift of tongues to a missionary in a land where the Gospel had not been heard, even though the spiritual gifts known as sign gifts were no longer functioning, as they did during the apostolic age. In other words, if there was no Scripture translated into that language, might God grant the gift of tongues to a missionary so that the people would be able to hear the Gospel? That would seem to be a legitimate question. But if such is the case, why would God allow a man like William Carey to spend more than 50 years translating the Scriptures into the language of the peoples of India? Why do missionaries need to spend years studying the language of the peoples to whom they will minister? Furthermore, the gift of speaking in tongues or differently languages was primarily used for praising God and not witnessing for God (Acts 2:11; 1 Cor. 14:16-17).

A simple chart will reveal how the nine temporary and supernatural gifts of communication were slowly being removed from the later days of the church ministry. They would eventually become a thing of the past. There are four lists given in the Scriptures of gifts and gifted men. Two are given in I Corinthians, and one in Romans, and one in Ephesians. First Corinthians was written earlier than Romans or Ephesians. As the years of the early church progressed, the sign gifts and temporary gifts had already served their purpose and became less and less in evidence. When examining the chart, please notice

how the gift of tongues (languages) and other miraculous gifts disappear first and then the other gifts slowly remove themselves from the picture. Prophecy was the last one to go since this was the vehicle to communicate truth prior to the final writings of Scripture.

Chart on Next Page

The Decline and Disappearance of the Supernatural Gifts

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

The Nine Temporary Supernatural/Sign Gifts Explained

The Bible teaches that there were nine gifts that were *temporary* gifts, which gave aid to the church during its early stage of infancy prior to the completion of Scripture. In order to know what kind of gifts you might possess you must first of all understand that certain gifts are no longer needed in church life today and are not available to God's people. God is not giving out certain gifts that were at one time used in the early days of church life during the first century. The Bible suggests that there are actually nine temporary gifts, which are no longer in the church today, or available for believers to possess and use for the Lord. These nine temporary gifts were only needed for early church life and ministry and appear in a list in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 and are as follows.

#1

The word of wisdom (temporary speaking gift)

This was a revelatory gift that resulted in special wisdom (spiritual insight) being granted to the minds of individuals by direct revelation from God. This was a gift of 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 before the finalization of the "word" or Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15; 1 Cor. 2:6-7, 13; Eph. 3:5). This person became a channel used by God to convey His mind to the early church prior to the writing and establishment of the canon. This gift dealt with the special spiritual insight that was given to others, so they could give out and explain the "word" of God before it was formally established. The emphasis is on the "word" because it revolved around speaking forth the Word of God prior to the canonization of Scripture.

This gift did not involve a type of E.S.P. gift where so-called faith healers or charlatans can see people in TV land who have a back problem and demand their healing from God. This revelatory gift involved the spiritual insight of receiving a supernatural direct word of revelation or message from God concerning new truth that was to be eventually recorded in the New Testament Scriptures. This was a

message that was full of new spiritual wisdom from God and a message that the prophet could reveal to God's people.

Surely the writers of Scripture had this special gift of wisdom to deliver truth (see 2 Pet. 3:15 – “according to the wisdom given unto him hath written” and 1 Cor. 2:6-7 – “But we speak the wisdom of God” – see also 1 Cor. 2:13). Paul was given the original wisdom to deliver the New Testament mysteries or sacred secrets hidden in the past ages (see Eph. 3:1-7; Rom. 11:25; Col. 1:26). Revelatory wisdom was given to all prophets so they could share new truth to the early church concerning God's new program that had been previously hidden to Old Testament saints (Eph. 3:5; Col. 1:27). The wisdom given to these prophets was not learned from previously known truth but from truth undiscovered by human wisdom. In other words, it was given by direct and divine revelation.

Robert Thomas wrote:

“At strategic times throughout Bible history, God has spoken directly to His servants that they in turn might communicate His message to people at large. The period following Pentecost was one such strategic era. Special need arose for an understanding of hitherto unrevealed truths in order for the church to grow into an instrument for encircling the globe with the message of Christ. The spiritual gift of wisdom to certain first generation Christians was the means God adopted.”

Today all of us can receive wisdom from God (James 1:5) but the gift of wisdom should not be confused with the wisdom that God gives today to every believer. Every believer needs divine enlightenment to face the various circumstances of life and to know God's will for their lives. Wisdom in a more general sense is available to all Christians today. But the “gift of wisdom” was a special revelatory wisdom given to people to actually communicate the truth of the Word of God before the truth was established. This wisdom or spiritual insight was a gift given to first century Christians and was used in a *specialized sense* and specific way to get the Word of God out to other people. It was the process of receiving and communicating special revelation prior to the completion or finalization of Scripture.

#2

The word of knowledge (temporary speaking gift)

This was a special ability to understand revelatory truth and then communicate or systemize the information before the Bible was canonized and complete. It was another gift of the intellect or mind given to first century Christians. It was another revelatory gift given to first century Christians, which means that special insights were given to the minds of individuals by direct revelation from God. Receiving a direct word of revelation or message from God would mean that the speaker would be given the *ability to understand and grasp new revelatory data* so that he could communicate the truth to God's people. The word of knowledge dealt with receiving and actually understanding truth (1 Cor. 11:3 – "have you know" 13:1-2 – "all knowledge"). This gift was the special ability to be able to understand truth and then communicate the information that had been divinely revealed.

We should note the distinction between the gift of wisdom and knowledge. It would seem that the word of knowledge differs from the word of wisdom in that the first gift dealt with the actual wisdom (spiritual insight) given to prophets in applying the word to life's situations, whereas the word of knowledge dealt with the actual understanding, sorting out, and systemizing of this data. The apostles likely had both gifts in that they not only were given wisdom to unveil and apply God's mind and thinking but also had the knowledge to communicate the actual meaning to the lives of God's people. In the primary sense of understanding and conveying previously unrevealed truth, the word of knowledge has ceased, because the Christian faith has been once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). The body of Christian doctrine is complete. There is no more ongoing revelatory knowledge. Therefore, the gift of knowledge would vanish away (1 Cor. 13:8).

Today the Bible is complete and all the knowledge and practical day-to-day wisdom that people receive comes from God through the finality of the Scriptures or the completed revelation of God's truth (Col. 1:1-5). There are no special gifts of wisdom and knowledge in

operation today since there is no direct revelation being given out today.

#3

Faith (temporary serving and supernatural gift)

This was a special gift of faith given primarily to the apostles so they could perform supernatural miracles and miraculous healings. Faith was the special God given gift to someone, to enable them to trust God for supernatural miracles and mighty signs (see I Corinthians 13:2). This gift of faith was unique in that it was used along with the other early sign gifts. Today we have discovered that God gives faith to every believer to enable them to exercise their spiritual gift (Rom. 12:3, 6). Every Christian is to live and walk by faith (2 Coir. 5:7; Heb. 12:1-2). All Christians must never turn their backs on trusting in God as a basic rule of life. But this general faith that is common to all Christians should not be confused with the “gift of faith” that was limited to a certain group of first century Christians. This gift had to do with a more intensive manifestation of trust, a specialized function of which only certain Christians were capable (Acts 27:25, 44). This unusual ability helped people to believe God in the face of enormous obstacles. Paul’s special gift of faith enabled him to make dogmatic predictions, cast out demons and raise the dead!

#4

Gifts of healing (temporary serving and supernatural/sign gift)

These were the gifts given to the apostles of the early church to restore health (Acts 3:6-8; 5:15-16; 8:7; 9:17-18; 33-35; 19:12; 20:9-10; 28:9). The gifts of healing were not the result of human medical practices but had to do with cures wrought by special supernatural powers. This was a special ability bestowed on some within the early church, mainly the apostles, and this person then became a specific divine channel for producing miraculous cures to physical problems – even death. This person who had the gift became the vehicle God used for accomplishing spectacular and supernatural healings. He

became God's human instrument that He worked through to accomplish healing. The apostles who possessed these gifts healed all those who came in contact with them. They healed people with a word or a touch (Acts 9:32-35; 28:8). They healed instantly (Acts 3:2-8) and totally (Acts 9:34). They healed everyone (Acts 5:11-12; 28:9) – those with organic disease (crippled from birth). No one was left out. Finally, the apostles raised the dead (Acts 9:36-42; Acts 20:9-12). Despite all of the claims being made today about healing no person is exhibiting these six healing traits. These healings were part of the miracles and signs that God was pleased to grant through His apostles following Pentecost (Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:13; 14:3; 15:12; Heb. 2:3-4). These healings all served as the way to authenticate both the message and the messenger during the first century when there was no verified written New Testament (2 Cor. 12:12). These gifts of healing were miraculous sign gifts that were used for God's special purposes to authenticate God's new men and new revelation (N.T truth) that was being given out.

Please note that *the gifts of healing were not intended as a permanent way to keep the Christian community in perfect health as is verified by the decline and use of these gifts* (2 Cor. 12:8-9; Phil. 2:25-27; 1 Tim. 5:23; 2 Tim. 4:20). Apparently in the later era of the first century these gifts of healing were no longer operational. In fact, Hebrews 2:3-4 verifies that a second generation of Christians were already looking back on the past use of these apostolic sign gifts of healing (“was confirmed unto us by them that heard him”). It could be stated that: **“The day of divine healing has not passed, though the day of divine healers has passed.”** We believe in faith healing (James 5:15) but not in faith healers! God is not using people as instruments to accomplish divine healing. This special apostolic gift went out of the church with the completion of the New Testament (1 Cor. 13:8-12).

#5

Working of miracles “operation of power” (temporary serving and supernatural/sign gift)

This was an early first century church gift that covered a wider range of miracles other than physical healing as mentioned in the previous

gift. It 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). A close connection is made between the miraculous healings that the apostles did and casting out demons since many times demon possession caused disease and sickness (Acts 5:16). The "gifts of healing" and "the working of miracles" ("power") for the most part were overlapping gifts given to the apostles and their close associates (Acts 8:5-7; 15:12) during the infant days of church ministry. Many times healing accompanied exorcism or the casting out of demons ("operation of power") since the people who were possessed by demons were inflicted with disease and sickness (Matt. 4:24; 8:16; Luke 8:36). Therefore, it was necessary for God's chosen apostles to have both these sign gifts – the gifts of healing and the working of miracles or powers (casting out demons).

The "working of miracles" (operation of power) was a well-known miraculous gift that was used by the apostles and their close associates during of the first century. Outside the original apostles commissioned by our Lord (Matt. 10:1), the close associates commissioned by the original apostles (Acts 6:8 - Stephen; 8:5-7 – Philip - 14:1-3; 15:12 - Barnabas), and Paul (Acts 19:11-12), we never see any other people delegated by God to perform miracles to overcome Satan's kingdom of darkness. In other words, we never see these gifts being used by other people in the local churches or itinerate ministry, to overcome Satan's kingdom by casting out demons (exorcism) or making people physically well. Both the gifts of healing and the operation of power were associated with Christ, the twelve, Paul, the seventy, and some who were intimate coworkers with the apostles (Philip, Stephen, Barnabas).

Certain miracles do continue to happen today according to God's providence. But the need no longer exists to verify specific persons as channels of new revelation through the exercise of miracles since new revelation ceased with the writing of the last New Testament book (Rev. 22:18-19). William McRae said: "As the Scriptures (the Old Testament) in the apostolic age required no miraculous confirmation, so the Scriptures (New Testament) in our day do not require it."

In other words, God is not using people as instruments or His appointed channels to accomplish the miraculous today. This is because He no longer must confirm His Word. **The question is not, “Does God still perform miracles?” The question is rather, “Are miracle workers still with us today?”**

The Bible is full of miracles. But it is not full of miracle workers! The miracle workers are not longer needed since the New Testament document was already confirmed like the Old Testament document. Today Scripture is the final court of appeal. There is no need for confirming miracles to occur through miracle workers. There is no Biblical basis or assuming that the gift of miracles was to continue and be perpetually present in the church age. There were no miracle workers in Old Testament times for some 2000 years of Israel’s history except in the days of Moses (Ex. 1-11) and Elijah and Elisha (1 & 2 Kings). And the gift of miracles would not perpetually exist during the church age but only in the short 30-year time frame during the infant church as new revelation was being given. Of course, there are self-proclaimed miracle workers today who claim to have the gifts of healings like the early apostles. However, if they are genuine they should be able to raise the dead!

#6

Prophecy (temporary speaking gift)

This was 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. It is a compound word including the verb “to speak” (phemi) and the preposition “before” (pro) which indicates that its ministry was that of speaking beforehand and connotes prediction. Prophecy in its strict sense was a temporary predictive speaking gift that involved receiving revelation from God prior to the canonization of Scripture. The prophet predicted God’s mind before the Bible was written and this is why the gift of prophecy was so very important to the early church during the first century (1 Cor. 14:3-4). The entire writing of the Bible is the direct result of the operation of the prophetic or predictive gift of God’s mind being communicated to the minds of the writers of Scripture (2 Pet. 1:19-

21). The wording of “revealed” (1 Cor. 14:30) and “came it unto you only” (vs. 36) suggests that special insights were granted to the minds of individuals by direct revelation from God. Prophecy was a revelatory gift. The apostles (their personal title and office) and prophets (their predictive work and ministry) were not a permanent order. After fulfilling their foundational purpose (Eph. 2:20) for the church they gradually faded from the scene of church life and ministry. But their use was irreplaceable during the first century and infant days of the church.

Apostleship – Temporary Office Along with Their Sign Gifts

The title of apostle was given to a specific group of men who lived at a particular state of history. A person with the gift of apostleship possessed many and perhaps most of the other sign gifts. Sign gifts of healing (Acts 5:12-16), miracles (Acts 13:8-11), prophecy (Acts 27:25), and tongues (Acts 2:4; 1 Cor. 14:18) were given as credential signs of the apostolic office (2 Cor. 12:12). The apostles were the vehicles of revelation and eventually composed the New Testament books (2 Pet. 1:20-21). They also would then possess the gifts of wisdom and knowledge which were intertwined with receiving and giving out new revelation from God (1 Cor. 2:7, 10-13; 2 Pet. 3:15-16).

These men were spokesmen of new revelation and prophets of future events (Rev. 1:1-3). The apostles with their associated gift of prophecy were given many special abilities and were foundational to the commencement of the church (Eph. 2:20). This is why the gifted men who were apostles are given special attention by Paul as foundational and necessary to church ministry and life during the first century (Eph. 4:11; Heb. 2:3-4). The prophetic revelations of the original apostles served a unique purpose and role in that they gave instruction to God’s people before Scripture was completed and God’s complete mind was made known. Eventually the Scriptures became canonized in a written record of the faith (1 Cor. 13:10; Jude 3) and since this took place there is no more need to go back to the foundational days of the church and foundational ministry of the church when prophecy and open revelation were needed to reveal God’s mind.

The apostles and prophets eventually provided a foundation of truth (the completed canon of Scripture) so that there is no more need for God to communicate through prophets and their prophecies. The gift of prophecy pertained to approximately the first seventy years of church history. This was the period when the Holy Spirit chose to use direct revelation to communicate previously unrevealed truths to the body of Christ. This gift was vital in the absence of a written New Testament.

There were also secondary apostles, such as Stephen and Philip, who were commissioned by the original apostles (Acts 6:5-7) and given the same miraculous power as the messengers of God (Acts 6:8; 8:5-7; see also Acts 14:1-3 - Barnabas). The apostles (Acts 5:12) and some other specially chosen men (secondary apostles or messengers of Christ) like Barnabas (Acts 14:1-3), Stephen (see Acts 6:8) and now Philip (Acts 8:6-7) had the miraculous sign gifts of the early church. Let us repeat something already said. Not everyone had these gifts - only those who were in the places of leadership, those who were taking the Word of God out to the world.

There came the day when the sign gifts disappeared. They disappeared after the time of the apostles. By the time the canon of Scripture was complete and established, the credentials of a true man of God was no longer the miraculous sign gifts but correct doctrine (2 John 9-10). Outside the original apostles commissioned by our Lord (Matt. 10:1) and the close associates commissioned by the original apostles, we never see miracles being performed by any other person. The miraculous ability to perform miracles, such as healing and the casting out of demons, was only given to the apostles and not to the average Christian. These were special and very selective gifts given to a relatively chosen few.

The mention of the “gifts of healing” and “the working of miracles” in 1 Corinthians 12:9-10 has reference to the confirming signs *done by the original band of apostles and secondary apostles*, which were chosen by the original apostles during the early days of church life. These men were obviously few in number. It would then seem that the gift of miracles was not a widely distributed gift bestowed upon multitudes of Christians during the infant days of the church but a gift

specifically designed for the apostles and a few extraordinary men directly associated with their ministry.

The apostles possessed healing gifts to confirm truth and themselves as God's messengers before the Scripture was finalized. *Miraculous signs of healing and casting out demons were done by the apostles to authenticate their message and office.* The apostles could even raise the dead, as was illustrated when Peter raised Tabitha (Acts 9:40-41), and Paul raised Eutychus (Acts 20:9-10). *This is why I say with dogmatism today that there are no more apostles in the church today!* I will challenge any man who says he is an apostle. No man has the apostolic gifts of healing. The apostles healed everyone that came to them without exception and even raised the dead. There was no fakery, financial gain, or finagling people to convince them that they were healed when they were not. What we have going on in the church today is not first century apostolic miracles but chaos and confusion among God's people.

We must also remember that the secondary apostles, such as Stephen, Philip and Barnabas, did not write down and record Scripture for us in the New Testament canon like the other apostles. They could not do this since they were not part of the original apostolic company of men directly commissioned by the Lord. There were also other "messengers (apostles) of the church" (2 Cor. 8:23) sent out by the body of believers. This was a nontechnical term that held a general meaning. It spoke of a man being a messenger sent by the church. But this was not the *historic gift* of apostleship that was only given to the original apostles that Christ chose to speak forth His Word, which would eventually be brought together in the sacred Scriptures. In addition, there were also other prophets in Corinth (1 Cor. 14:29-37) that gave out piecemeal revelation, which agreed with the original supernatural revelation of the original apostles (Eph. 2:20; 3:5), but they did not have the privilege of becoming a writer and recorder of the sacred Scriptures. However, like that of the original apostles and prophets, the unique role and gift of all prophets, receiving supernatural revelation, ceased to exist while the church was still very young or in her infancy stage (1 Cor. 13:10).

Judging from Paul's Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus), prophets ceased to function in the church even before the end of the

apostolic age. In those letters he makes considerable mention of church leadership, which consists of elders and deacons, but makes no mention of prophets. *There is no mention of any requirements for apostles in the later epistles (Tim 3:1, 8; Titus 1:5-7). This is because their ministry and function of receiving supernatural revelation would no longer exist. It would become obsolete in the future church era.* This office soon disappeared from the New Testament church as the foundation of the Scriptures was being established. Nevertheless, it was the originally commissioned apostles, also working as prophets, who gave out the initial, introductory and inaugural supernatural revelation that would eventually become recorded in Scripture, prior to the actual writing of the New Testament Scriptures.

The apostles laid the primary and underlying framework of the New Testament church (Eph. 2:20) by receiving prophetic messages from God about New Testament truth and then delivering those messages to the people. It was specifically the “apostles doctrine” (Acts 2:42) that was continually adhered to in the starting days of the church, since it was God’s new words to believers concerning the formation, practice and teaching of the body of Christ. *This means that the doctrinal teaching of the original apostles and prophets became the actual foundation, which they laid.*

Furthermore, their New Testament epistles, which would eventually be recognized and canonized as sacred Scripture, are preserved for us today in the Bible. In other words, the Scriptures are this foundation, which the original apostles and prophets laid, even though these apostles are no longer with us. *So we must conclude that the apostles were the foundation of the church because of the foundation they laid (New Testament Scriptures).* Jesus Christ is of course the Chief part of the foundation that holds the entire church together (“Chief Cornerstone” – Eph. 2:20).

Since the apostles had a unique role to lay the foundational teachings of the church, this unique role of receiving direct revelation of God to form the canon of Scripture can never be repeated. The foundation (New Testament Scriptures) only needs to be laid once! No builder would wreck the house to go back to the foundation. Once it has been laid, it is to remain intact and untouched. No homeowner wants to tear up his foundation after his building is complete. Instead, he

wants to walk through the front door and enjoy the home that rests upon the foundation. In a similar way believers today should enjoy the completed Scriptures and no longer try to dig up the foundation ministry and gifts of the early church, which were used to give out piecemeal revelation.

In the same manner, there is no need to go back to the foundational days of the early church since the foundation has already been completed in the New Testament Scriptures (II Peter 1:20-21). The Word of God has once and for all been delivered (Jude 3) and is now closed (Revelation 22:18) and perfected (I Corinthians 13:10). There is no need for any more foundation or apostles.

There were also requirements for holding the office of an apostle which included having personal contact with the Lord while He was living on planet earth and being a witness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor. 9:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:5-7). In addition, it was required that an apostle have a direct appointment from the Lord Jesus to this office (Luke 6:13; Rom. 1:1). There were specialized apostles (Luke 6:14-16) and there were also secondary apostles in the early days of church life during the first century. Men such as Barnabas and James bore this title and possessed the sign gifts (1 Cor. 9:5-6; 15:7; Gal. 1:19). Lesser known apostles were those of Andronicus and Junia (Rom. 16:7). The last person to receive the title of apostleship was Paul (1 Cor. 15:8-9).

The reason for the absence of apostles from the body of Christ after the time of Paul is easily established. The kind of personal contact with the incarnate Lord Jesus required for this office restricts the time of its functioning. Eyewitnesses to Jesus Christ's personal life had all but ceased to exist by A.D. 100. The apostle John, one of the twelve, died at about the same time, and the historical records reveal that He was the last living witness of Christ's resurrection. This is why John explains how one of the apostolic gifts of direct prophetic revelation would cease.

The book of Revelation, written by John the apostle, gives notice to the termination of prophecy (Rev. 22:18). God included in this great and final prophecy all the predictions that would be needed by the church in coming generations. It's wise and correct to limit prophecy

to the period before John concluded the writing of the book of Revelation at the end of the first century A.D. *The Bible is very clear that prophecies went out of the church as the canon of Scripture came into the church (1 Cor. 13:8)*. Second Peter 2:1 says that there “were false prophets” (past tense) during the first century church but “there shall be” in the future only false teachers since the prophetic gift would cease. It should be noted that this gift of prophecy also extended to predicting certain future events not known to others (Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11; Rev. 1:3). In its broad meaning prophecy refers to the predictive powers bestowed upon first century Christians.

#7

Discerning of spirits (temporary serving gift)

Discerning or distinguishing of spirits was the special ability to discern true and false revelation before the Bible was completed. Paul elaborates on the exercise of this gift in 1 Corinthians 14:29 when saying, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.” This *specialized* discernment gift was greatly used during the days of the early church when many false prophets were arising and when verbal, direct revelation was being given to the assembly of Christians through prophets. This gift was given to serve as a *check* or *guard* upon those who spoke as prophets (see Acts 16:16, 18). Since direct revelation and new revelatory messages were constantly being given out the gift of discernment was necessary to detect error and demonic manipulation or deception.

Even during the days of the early church, when the nine temporary gifts were still active in the local church and necessary for operation, there was the constant threat of demonic messages being sent to the minds of believers. This is why there was the early gift called “the discerning of spirits” (1 Cor. 12:10). This was a necessary gift that needed to operate in the early church, due to the false demonic messages that could be revealed to the minds of Christians, and which would in return be proclaimed in the stated gatherings or meetings of the saints. This lets us know that Satan does seek to confuse believers’ minds and lives through the use of revelatory knowledge outside the Bible. This is why it is a blessing to be able to

live in a day when progressive and prophetic revelation is no longer being given and promoted by God. This is because the danger of satanic revelation is a very real possibility.

Raymond Frame, a former missionary to China, has 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).”

Satan and demons can and do create occultic, psychic phenomenon within the minds of people in some cases. This may be done in order to lead God’s people away from the Christ life (Phil. 1:21) into a life of endless searching for visions, messages and other supernatural experiences, which God has not promised for the Christian today or any time for that matter. This type of devilish or demonic communication is widely known to be true through the use of what is called “black magic.” *Black magic has long been used by the occult to gain secret, hidden knowledge in order to help guide people.* This is done through contacting demonic powers. Black magicians and spirit mediums use magical guidebooks and literature to produce satanic miracles from the evil hosts of Satan. Both the Bible (Genesis 41:8; Exodus 7:11; 8:7, 18-19; Deuteronomy 18:9-12; Acts 8:8, 13:6-10; II Timothy 3:8) and history points to the use of black magic through demon energized people.

Today all believers are to possess an overall discernment in regards to scriptural messages being presented even as the first century Christians were to possess discernment (see 1 John 4:1). The early church saints had the apostle’s doctrine (Acts 2:42), which was being spoken throughout the first century, and God’s people could compare revelatory messages with what they already knew and heard the apostles preach. Believers could compare a prophet’s message with what the apostles had already taught. If a message contradicted something that was already taught by the apostles Christians were to possess enough discernment to see that the message was not according to truth. In other words, all of God’s people were to have a general discernment about spiritual things. They were expected to discern between what is right or wrong, false and true, and between error and truth (Heb. 5:14-15; 1 Cor. 2:15).

This is still true today. We must “prove all things” by the truth that we already know (1 Thess. 5:21). However, we do not possess the specialized early gift of discernment concerning revelatory messages, which was only given to some first century Christians prior to the finalization of Scripture, when progressive and piecemeal revelation was still being given (1 Cor. 13:9). Since there is no ongoing revelation being given today there is no more need or use for this specialized gift of discernment to determine the truthfulness of a prophet’s message. *Since prophecies have ceased the gift of discernment has also ceased.* The one cancels out the other. Today we are to measure whether or not a message is true by the doctrine or teaching that we have recorded in Scripture (2 John 10; 1 Tim. 4:1). We are to test a man’s message today by the final written Word of God (see Isa. 8:20).

#8

Divers kinds of tongues (temporary speaking and supernatural/sign gifts)

This was 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). In other words, the tongue speaking and other supernatural sign gifts (healings, miracles, interpretation of tongues) were used as a token to prove to Israel that a messenger and his message was genuine and could be trusted (see Heb. 2:3-4) and that God was going to eventually bring judgment upon His ancient people once again (1 Cor. 14:21-22). ***Tongues had a specific purpose for a specific time period.*** The understanding of “other tongues” in Acts 2:4 means other languages of a different kind.

In every instance of first century tongue speaking we discover that they were always real human languages being spoken. This is clearly verified from the accounts of Acts 2:8, 11; 10:46 and 1 Corinthians 14 where Paul argues for interpretation and understanding of the languages being spoken. The Greek word for tongues (“glossa”) refers to the human speech organ which brings forth human language

and is the word used to convey actual speech and language (James 3:5-8; 1 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9). To “speak” (laleo) with other “tongues” or languages (glossa) is the understanding of Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6 and 1 Cor. 12-14.

In I Corinthians the same Greek word “glossa” is used for tongues which is the Greek word used for language. Likewise, in I Corinthians 12:10 Paul spoke of “divers kinds of tongues.” The word for “kinds” (“genos”) speaks of the family of languages and could only mean this. The idea that there is some type of unintelligible angelic language spoken in I Corinthians 13:1 is absurd. Whenever angels spoke in Scripture they always spoke in a genuine language. I Corinthians 12:3 and 13:1 allude to the fact that these tongues were real languages (“callesth Jesus accursed,” “tongues of men”). The idea that tongues were some kind of God-given gibberish is totally absurd. God is a God of order and not chaos (1 Cor. 14:40). He is a God of sense and not nonsense (14:33). God would never allow someone to worship Him without their rational mind (14:15).

Tongues were actual foreign languages which the Christians had not previously known. **Tongues were languages that were spoken by first century Christians which functioned as a credential sign for the unbelieving Jews who always required a sign (1 Cor. 1:22).** They were God’s sign nation. For the Jewish people, tongues became a sign or token of God’s approval upon a certain man, new revelation of truth being presented, and some new event that was occurring. In the three Biblical accounts in the book of Acts (Acts 2, 10, 19) and 1 Corinthians 12-14 where tongues are used **there were always Jews present** (see Acts 2:22 - 36 – “Ye men of Israel” and Acts 10:45-46 – “they of the circumcision” and Acts 19:1-6 – Jewish disciples of John the Baptizer and Acts 18:1-11 – “whose house joined hard to the synagogue”).

This is very important to understand. Jews were always present when tongues or different languages were spoken. When the gift of tongues (languages) was used there was always a new man speaking (Peter or Paul or some other person who had the early gift), and a new message being taught by these men that was in some way connected with the new dispensational work of the Spirit’s ministry and the formation of the church. There was also a new event that had

occurred such as Pentecost and the formation of the church (Acts 2), the breaking down of Gentile distinction and their acceptance into the body of Christ (Acts 10), the Jewish disciples of John the Baptizer being baptized in Jesus' name (Acts 19) and the teaching about the New Testament sacred secrets about the church, Gentiles and the indwelling Christ that God wanted the Jews to know about (1 Cor. 13:2).

From the tongues mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12-14 we gather that Jews were present since the Corinthian church was right next to the local synagogue (see Acts 18:1-11). The church at Corinth evidently had a unique and widespread witness to the Jews. Perhaps no other church in Bible times was so closely watched, observed, and attended by Jews like the Corinthian church. The unbelieving Jews had their eyes and ears on this church, which was next door to the synagogue. In this setting the Bible once again specifically says that tongues were given as a sign to the unbelieving Jews (see 1 Cor. 14:22). The Jews in the past heard the unfamiliar dialect of the Assyrians and they knew that God was judging them for not listening to His servant Isaiah. The foreign tongue being spoken during the Assyrian invasion symbolized God's judgment upon them. The presence of this "tongue" was evidence of God's judgment on the nation. As they (the Jews) heard this foreign tongue, they knew God had judged them or that God had spoken (in judgment) "to this people."

The situation was similar to the Corinthian days. If the Jews would reject the Gospel message of the prophets concerning who the Messiah was and what He did for them then they too would experience God's judgment. The tongue speaking that is going on in Corinth, next to the synagogue would serve as a sign of coming judgment upon them. In Isaiah's day the people knew they were being judged when they heard the Assyrian invaders speaking among them. And during the days of the early church, the Jews would also hear the tongue speaking in Corinth, so it could serve as sign of coming judgment upon the nation, if they refuse to accept the Gospel message. History tells us that in A.D. 70 Titus the Roman general came down and ransacked the city and killed over one million Jews. The foreign languages or tongues that the Corinthians were speaking were but a foretaste of what they would hear when the Romans come

down and destroy them. So the Jews in Corinth needed to stand up and take notice.

In summary, tongues 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 was true in the book of Acts when tongues were used (Acts 2, 10, 19) and 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. But in this setting tongues also served as a sign of coming judgment to the Jewish nation (1 Cor. 14:22).

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 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. Because of this the gift would cease in and of itself during the first century when the Jewish nation was scattered in A. D. 70 (see 1 Cor. 13:8 – where 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.

In other words, the purpose of speaking in different languages would come to an end with Israel's judgment and the temporary setting aside of national Israel. *Tongues had a specific purpose for a specific time period.* It's also true that tongues would cease when the Scriptures would be completed, canonized, and no further confirmation of them would be needed (1 Cor. 13:10). In addition, 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. The purpose of tongues would run its course with the completion of Scripture and the judgment of Israel. 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.

Alden Gannett has stated:

“The gift of tongues as produced by the Holy Spirit ceased during the age of the apostles. The question today is *not*, as so many propose, can God bestow the gift of tongues today? Of course He can. *Rather*, the issue is, has God *purposed* to do so since His purpose for tongues has already been fulfilled? It is most significant that, historically speaking, tongues occurred *only* in connection with the ministry of the apostles, that both this sign and healing and other miracles occurred less and less through the Book of Acts.”

#9

Interpretation of tongues (temporary speaking and supernatural/sign gifts)

The interpretation of tongues was the divinely given ability to translate what others said in different human languages and give the exact meaning to the church. In this way the message could become spiritually profitable to the church. Without interpretation there could be no edification and this is why Paul argues for its use (1 Cor. 14:5, 13-19, 27-28). Edification can only come when a message is communicated to their intelligence by means of the gift of interpretation.

These gifts in this list (1 Cor. 12:8-10) are seen to be *temporary* gifts that served their purpose during the first century prior to the completion of Scripture. The transitory character of the nine gifts is clearly seen. With the formation of the official canon of Scripture and the judgment of the Jewish nation these nine temporary gifts were done away with and no longer are being given to God's people today (see 1 Cor. 13:10 - where tongues, prophecy and knowledge are used to represent the entire nine temporary gifts).

This brings us to the important question of what gifts are still in the church today? The permanent gifts appear in several lists in Romans 12:7-9; 1 Cor. 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11. These lists also have temporary gifts mentioned. Paul mixes some permanent gifts in with

the temporary supernatural gifts in a list found in 1 Corinthians 12:28-31 to prove the importance of all the gifts. The less spectacular gifts were just as important as the spectacular/sign gifts of tongues and healings, which would not remain in the church. Other permanent gifts are mixed in with the temporary gift of prophecy in Romans 12:3-8 since prophecy was the last gift to go out of the church due to its importance of receiving direct revelation from God.

The same is true in the list found in Ephesians 4:11 where the temporary gifts of importance that were foundational to the church (apostles and prophets) are given along side of the permanent gifts (evangelists and pastor-teacher). There is no list that separates the permanent from the temporary gifts. **However, this mixing of temporary and permanent gifts was understandable since in the days of early church life all the gifts were still functioning.**

Nevertheless, other Scriptures clearly inform us that the spectacular sign gifts mentioned in **1 Corinthians 12:8-10** would serve their historic purpose in the early days of the church (Eph. 2:20) and cease with the passing of time as the Scriptures were being completed and confirmed by the apostles (1 Cor. 13:8-10; Heb. 2:3). It's clear that *Paul uses the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge (1 Cor. 13:8) as representative of all the early nine supernatural and sign gifts that were used to communicate and confirm truth prior to the completion of Scripture.*

These gifts would also cease because of Israel's national judgment and loss of blessing through her failure to believe the Messiah (1 Cor. 14:20-22). Signs are for Israel and not the church (1 Cor. 1:22; John 6:30). These miraculous signs always followed on the heels of prophetic revelation to prove or authenticate the message and messenger (Mark 16:20; Acts. 2:22; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb.2:3-4; John 10:24-25). *The temporary gifts had a specific purpose for a specific time period.* Since this is true there is no more need for the temporary sign gifts to exist today, which in the past served as a way to distribute truth and authenticate truth prior to the completion of Scripture (Mark 16:20 – “confirming the word with signs following”), and which served as a sign to unbelieving Israel (1 Cor. 1:22; 14:22) when she was still in the working program and blessing of God.

1 Corinthians 13, Christ's Coming, and the Cessation of the Supernatural/Sign Gifts

Many today interpret 1 Corinthians 13:10 as referring to the Rapture or coming of Christ for His children and therefore conclude that the miraculous sign gifts will remain in the church until the Coming of Christ when we see Him face to face. This is a fallacy and misunderstanding of what the text is saying.

There are at least ten reasons why 1 Corinthians 13:10 (“when that which is perfect is come”) does not refer to Christ’s coming and why it does refer to the completion of the canon of Scripture. This correct understanding is another strong argument to the cessation of the supernatural sign gifts and explains why they are no longer needed in the present church era.

#1

“When the perfect comes” (verse 10, literal reading) is set in contrast to the “in part” of verse 9 (incomplete knowledge and prophecy). Contextually, it must refer to the “perfect” or completed knowledge and prophecy to come, that being the completed prophecy (II Peter 1:19-20) or canon of Scripture which was formally closed in Revelation 22:19.

#2

The word “perfect” (Greek – Teleion) is never used of the second coming of Christ anywhere in the Bible. It is used to describe the Word of God (James 1:25). The Word of God is perfect and is all we need as a guide!

#3

The Rapture of the church is not to be looked at as the end of a process or development (verse 9 — “In part”) of knowledge and

prophecy. It (the Rapture) is not involved in a process at all but is an instantaneous event (I Corinthians 15:52) in and of itself.

#4

The Bible is likened to a mirror (James 1:22-25; with II Corinthians 3:18). In Bible Times a mirror was a polished metal surface held in the hand to see one's own reflection. Here again we see the glass (mirror) being spoken of. In verse 12, Paul is using a dark metallic mirror as a metaphor (figure of speech or comparison) to represent imperfect knowledge. A darkened mirror is compared or likened to ("know in part"). Paul could only know parts and pieces of God's mind and will ("Now" — when he was recording the Bible and using the gift of prophecy). Metaphorically, he was like a man looking into a dark piece of polished metal only seeing blurry glimpses and distorted figures of himself.

Likewise, Paul also uses ("face to face") as a metaphor (figure of speech or comparison) just as he used the dark mirror. ("Face to face") relates to the ("Then shall I know") which speaks to a "full knowledge." This comparative statement is used for the complete state of knowledge that would come in the completed canon. Metaphorically, he would then be like a man looking into a clear, highly polished mirror who could see a clear image of himself ("face to face"). He uses this metaphor or figure of speech to indicate a time when the full knowledge would come without any parts or pieces.

At first he would see out of a dark mirror ("know in part"). Then he would see out of a clear mirror ("face to face"). The seeing is not to be face to face with Christ literally, but as the context demands, "face to face" is used comparatively of Paul seeing himself clearly in a transparent glass (mirror) to demonstrate the completed, clear knowledge, and understanding he would have in that day. Paul knew it would be a clear and unclouded day when the canon of Scripture would be completed. Then God's complete mind, purpose and will would be known. He then would know God's complete mind and will as seen in the formation of the canon of Scripture, even as God knows his mind ("am known").

#5

We are not in the “now” stage of history (verse 12), seeing through a glass darkly and waiting for the coming of Christ, but in the “then” stage seeing “face to face” (the clear and complete teaching of God’s Word). We have God’s Word bound together in 66 books which does not have to be dark and dim to our understanding, but unveiled, revealed and known (I Corinthians 2:10-13), just as a man would see himself face to face in a clear mirror. This is God’s Word forever settled (Psalm 119:89), closed (Revelation 22:19), and delivered (Jude 3).

#6

The word “Then” in verse 12 cannot be isolated from the rest of the context. “Then face to face” relates back to the “then” of verse 10 (the perfect or complete knowledge and prophecy) and to the “then” which follows in verse 12, the “then” of complete knowledge (“Then shall I know”). This is the only grammatical and exegetical approach to this passage and therefore leaves us with the inescapable conclusion that Paul is not talking about the perfection of saints at Christ’s coming but the perfection of knowledge and prophecy at the completion of the Scriptures.

#7

The text in verse 10 clearly leaves out the masculine pronouns. It is actually in the neuter which would describe an object and not a person. If the text was to teach the coming of Christ, it really should be masculine and thus read “When He which is perfect is come.” The phrase “when that which is perfect is come” is a proper translation. 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).

#8

Other views, such as the eternal state or the perfection of the church in glory after the coming of Christ, have been used to describe the “perfect thing” of verse 10. Such explanations do not fit the context of this passage nor the flow of Paul’s thinking on revelatory knowledge

in its early stages (verse 9). *It's interesting that Paul does not say that all the gifts will cease but only the sign gifts.* This is an important detail. If Paul was talking about gifts ceasing only when Christ returns, or during the eternal state, then he would have mentioned all the gifts.

The Bible itself does not leave a man in a state of immaturity (verse 11) and darkness (verse 12), waiting for the perfection of the church. On the contrary, the Scriptures establish a man that he might be “perfect” (mature and complete in the Christian faith — II Timothy 3:16-17). To liken this reference to the maturity of the church in the future is to take away from the effect the Word of God can have in our life today. *Paul never said we would have to be immature and lacking knowledge until we become like Christ.* Rather, he said we are to seek to be unified, know Christ better, and become “perfect” (mature) right now in our life, so we are not led astray by all kinds of false doctrines (Ephesians 4:11-14).

Even during the early days of the church, the saints could grow and become mature through the Word being shared in piecemeal (verse 9). The gifts (not the Word of God) were merely described as childish and immature things that needed to be put away (verse 11). The Bible and its effect upon the lives of the saints has always been toward maturity and not some kind of foggy, darkened, immature state, waiting for the eternal state.

#9

I Corinthians 13 is demonstrating the prominence of love (verses 1-3) as well as the permanence of love (verses 4-13) in light of the temporary gifts. It has nothing to do with the parousia (coming) of Christ.

Verse 8 specifically points to the permanent character of the essential fruit: love (“charity never faileth”). However, certain gifts were not to be permanent within the future church period. They are mentioned in contrast with the permanent gift of love and are so indicated by the word “but” in verse 8. The following words distinctly say that prophecies would “fail” (“be entirely idle”), tongues would “cease” (stop — a word indicating to stop in and of themselves), and

knowledge would “vanish” (be entirely idle). These words tell us that the gifts would no longer be useful. They would no longer be used.

In verse 9 he leaves out the word tongues, since they would cease in and of themselves, even before knowledge and prophecy (Daniel 9:26; Luke 21:6; I Corinthians 14:21-22). So in verses 9-10, only two of the nine gifts are mentioned: knowledge and prophecy. It is quite clear from these verses that *the three gifts mentioned in verse 8 and the two gifts mentioned in verses 9-10 are merely examples of the other gifts just referred to in the previous chapter (12:8-10)*. In other words, these three and then two are examples or representatives of the entire nine gifts found in chapter 12. Prophecies, tongues and knowledge were interwoven with the other gifts of chapter 12 and thus represent all of them as a whole in chapter 13.

In the last verse of chapter 12 he said, “Covet earnestly the best gifts: (the gifts that would NOT cease) and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.” The “more excellent way” over the use of all the gifts is “love” which will be expounded upon in chapter 13. More specifically, love was the “more excellent way” in relationship to the nine sign gifts, since it would never cease, whereas the nine gifts would cease.

In chapter 13, Paul is teaching that sign gifts would be done away with but love would continue to exist. The main emphasis in this chapter is *on the prominence and permanence of love in light of the temporary gifts*. The chapter has nothing to do with the promise of Christ’s coming. In fact, three virtues would remain after the other nine gifts would cease: “faith, hope, charity” (verse 13). The greatest of these three is love, for in death and throughout eternity faith will become sight and hope will become reality. Love is permanent but the nine gifts would not be. They would go out as the Bible came in!

To insist on the coming of Christ as a plausible interpretation of this passage is to ignore the context, forget the exegesis, overlook the grammar, and to destroy the central teaching of this text concerning the eternal fruit (love) *in light of the temporary gifts*.

#10

Paul was looking forward to the perfection of prophecy, knowledge and the banishment of the nine gifts within the early church. By using an illustration of the progressive development from infancy to maturity, he illustrates this process (verse 11). First, partial gifts are likened to infancy. We can note the triple analogy of infancy to the gifts: “spoke as a child” (tongues), “understood as a child” (knowledge), and “thought as a child” (wisdom and prophecy). Just as Paul put away the expressions of his physical infancy when he became an adult, so the assembly was to render null and void those gifts which were needed during the stage of the infant church. The church reached adulthood when the apostles and prophets were removed and the completed canon of Scriptures came into existence. These men and their gifts were foundational to the early church (Ephesians 2:20).

Today, we see the results of these early gifts of apostleship and prophecy in that we have acquired through them a Divine Revelation — the Bible. Ephesians 6:11-16 tells us of the important role they played during the time of the infant church. Through the writings which God gave to these men and through the continuing gifts of evangelists and pastor-teachers, the church of Jesus Christ reached adulthood. *The church reached adulthood because the Scriptures were completed and dispersed among the churches.* The results are evident: “perfect man” (Greek — Teleion [verse 13]); “no more children” (verse 14); “may grow up” (verse 15).

It is evident that when a child grows up he puts away “childish things” (the early gifts — tongues, knowledge, prophecy, etc.). These gifts are no longer needed. They were for the early church (infant church) and were used to reveal, deliver and authenticate the divine message being revealed (Hebrews 2:4; Mark 16:20). Today the “perfect” is come (verse 10), and the nine gifts have ceased (verse 8). Their purpose is no longer necessary; therefore, they are gone forever and put away, just like a grown man puts away his baby rattles and teething rings!

At no place in this passage or chapter is it implied that we are to play with childish things (the nine gifts) until Christ returns. Quite the contrary, *they (the early nine gifts) are not given in this adulthood stage of the church’s existence.* Blocks, rattles and baby rings belong

in the toy box! Today you can open the refrigerator and get out “the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). Please pass the milk!

The Latter Rain and the Last Days (Acts 2:17)

Charismatics talk about the latter rain and equate this with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the miraculous sign gifts that are to allegedly occur in the last days of the Church age. It's assumed that the latter rain of Joel 2:23 is referring to the last days of Acts 2:17 and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which will reproduce the miraculous sign gifts toward the end of the Church age. The conclusion that the latter rain refers to the outpouring of the miraculous gifts by the Holy Spirit in the last days of the church age has many problems. We must conclude that the "latter day" explanations of a revival of supernatural gifts are simply inadequate. Some Pentecostals hold that the sign gifts did cease and that they are now reoccurring in the "latter days" of the Church age as prophesied by Joel and Peter in Acts 2. However, this must be demonstrated from Scripture. The truth is this. The facts of Scripture teach otherwise.

Joel was not talking about the Church since the Church and prophetic days of the Church are not mentioned in the Old Testament (Eph. 3:5). Furthermore, Peter could not be talking about the last days of the Church Age, since it was actually the beginning of the Church Age, when the Church was initially born on the Day of Pentecost. The clear explanation is this. There is no Biblical evidence that there will be a reoccurrence in the Church of the sign gifts or that believers will work miracles near the end of the Church age. **The "latter rain" arguments are incorrectly based on verses that actually are referring to seasonal rainfall in Israel.** Hosea 6:3 and Joel 2:23, for example, refer not to some unusual outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days of the church age. They refer instead to spring rains, in contrast to early rains in the fall. They have nothing to do with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

As mentioned above, some Christians equate the last days mentioned in Acts 2:17 with the last days prior to Christ's return in the

Rapture for the Church, but this is faulty exegesis of Bible texts. **The last days of Acts 2 and Joel 2 are dealing with the last days used in connection with God's plan for Israel when He will once again be blessing them during the Millennial Kingdom. They do not have anything to do with the "last days" related to the Church prior to the Rapture (2 Tim. 3:1-12).** There is no mention of these miraculous happenings occurring in the last days before Christ returns in the Rapture. Actually they are the blessings that related to Israel at the Second Coming and into the Millennial Kingdom.

Read Paul's letter to Timothy. You will find none of these signs mentioned! However, we do read about the "last days" which are connected with Israel's kingdom blessings (Isa. 2:2; Micah 4:1). The expression "last days" is not a generic expression that only applies to the Church. Scripture will bear this out. The last days can only point to Israel's last day blessings they will enter when they are saved following the Tribulation Period and enter the Millennial Kingdom.

Isaiah 2:2

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."

Micah 4:1

"But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it."

Joel's prophecy actually envisions Israel's salvation and blessings in relationship to Christ's Second Coming to earth and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom. Here is an outline to follow.

- The promise of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-29) – Blessings of the Holy Spirit for the Millennial Kingdom ("those days" – the days of Israel's blessings in Millennium – not the days of Church blessing)
- The prophetic setting (Joel 2:30-31) – After the Tribulation Period when astronomical signs indicate Christ's Second Coming is near.

- The personal salvation (Joel 2:32) – Israel will express faith in Christ (the Messiah) for her salvation and then call upon Messiah to return and deliver her from all her enemies.

In Joel 2:30 we are given the prophetic signs that will occur after the seven-year Tribulation Period has expired and just before Israel's blessings in the Millennial Kingdom. They will be astronomical signs that occur in the days prior to Christ's Second Advent. Following these days, when Israel enters the Millennial Kingdom, many within the nation of Israel will begin to speak in tongues and experience supernatural gifts of the Spirit, as they come to faith in the Messiah at His Second Advent. It will be a time when Israel will believe on the Messiah (Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21) and enter the Millennial Kingdom. It's during these "last days" (Israel's future blessing with the salvation and return of the Messiah and her entrance into the Millennium) when the Jews will experience the special gifts of the Spirit.

Please notice that the manifestations of the Spirit's ministry and blessing upon their lives follow the Tribulation Period and take place during the Millennial Kingdom. It's during this future time period when many Jews will once again prophesy, dream dreams, and have visions.

These signs and other miraculous signs in the past have always accompanied new dispensations and workings of God such as in the days of Moses and the law (Exodus 3:1-8; 7; Acts 7:36), the beginning of the Church age (Acts), and now the Kingdom age (Joel 2:28-29). They are actually *preparatory signs* that indicate God is doing something different with a new people. Similar signs, such as speaking in different languages, and many other miraculous signs, were also manifested in the infant days of the Church era, to authenticate new truth and God's new work with the Church which was composed of both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 2:1-13; 5:12-16; 8:12-16; 10:10, 44-46; 19:6). Many times when God begins a different dispensation, with a different work, and with a different people, He allows them to manifest certain miraculous signs to authenticate the change in God's working program. They are normally signs that last for a short period of time and then cease.

Many wonder if Peter actually knew that the Church Age was beginning at Pentecost based upon the disciple's question in Acts 1:6: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" It may be that Peter actually thought the Millennial Kingdom or messianic age was going to be inaugurated, but looking back upon the events, he came to realize it was actually the Church Age that began (Acts 11:15-18; 15:14). In retrospect, both Peter and we can see that the prophecy that he gave likens the Spirit's blessings on Israel, just prior and during the Millennial Kingdom, to the blessings of the Holy Spirit that came upon the Church at its beginning at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit lead Peter to record Israel's future blessing to teach a similar blessing that would occur on the Day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:18-21

"And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

The promise of the Spirit's filling which took place at Pentecost (the birthday of the Church) becomes an example of what it's going to be like when Israel is saved and enters the Millennial Kingdom. In retrospect, Peter can say that the experience the Church had at Pentecost "is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Joel 2:16). Peter eventually knew and understood that what happened to the disciples on Pentecost was not a *literal* fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. This is evident for the simple reason that there were no "signs in the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke" (Acts 2:19). In other words, no tribulational signs preceded the blessings of the Holy Spirit in the new dispensation of the Church. There were no astronomical signs in the heavens that occurred (Acts 2:20). These would come at a later time when God promises to bless His national people Israel at His Second Coming and kingdom. It's during this time that the prophecy of Joel will be literally fulfilled with its astronomical signs and Israel's salvation and blessings of the Holy Spirit in the kingdom era.

Peter tells us when the actual fulfillment of Joel's prophecy will take place. The astronomical or heavenly signs will occur "before that great and notable day of the Lord come" (before Christ's Second Coming – Acts 2:20) marking the beginning of the last days for Israel. Israel's salvation will then take place in connection with Christ's Second Advent to earth (Acts 2:21) which follows these signs and occurs prior to the commencement of the Millennium. In other words, the exact literal fulfillment of Joel's prophecy did not occur on Pentecost. It will occur at another time following the Tribulation Period (Matt. 24:29 – "after the tribulation of those days") in connection with Israel's salvation at Christ's coming (Joel 2:31-32). The pouring out of the Spirit upon Israel will occur when Israel is saved prior to her entrance into the Millennium and then continue on throughout the kingdom age on planet earth.

Joel uses the phrase "afterward" (Joel 2:28) and relates Israel's blessings of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29) to the time following her salvation at Christ's Second Coming (Joel 2:12-20) and her entrance into the Millennial Kingdom. Peter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit substitutes the expression "in the last days" (Acts 2:17) to further clarify the exact fulfillment of Joel's prophecy for Israel, which will take place at another time, separate from Pentecost. The "last days" (Acts 2:17) are related to Israel's blessings, when God will once again turn back to His ancient people of Israel, and bring exalted blessing and power upon them from the Holy Spirit. This will occur at Israel's time of conversion (Rom. 11:26; Zech 12:10-13:1) following the Tribulation Period and her subsequent blessing in the Millennial Kingdom. The heavenly signs will herald Christ's coming. These signs will prepare Israel to believe in her Messiah and when He returns to earth Israel will enter into her times of refreshing (Acts 3:19) when the Spirit's blessings are once again poured out upon Israel. Both Joel and Peter spoke about this time (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18).

In retrospect, or looking back on this prophecy, Peter knew or understood that "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:18) was only a *comparison* or *illustration* of what Joel spoke about to what was taking place on Pentecost. It was simply a matter of comparison and not literal fulfillment. God never directed Peter to use the word "fulfill" in Acts 2. However, the words of similarity ("this

is that”) are used (Acts 2:16). Peter’s prophecy and language was designed to compare Israel’s future blessing to the blessing that the Church received on the Day of Pentecost. It was not given to indicate a literal fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy.

Thomas Ice correctly observes:

“Peter’s point is that of similarity between what the Holy Spirit will do in the future with the nation of Israel and what He was doing almost 2,000 years ago.”

There is a vast difference between application and literal fulfillment. Looking back, Peter’s point is that of similarity or analogy. The filling of the Spirit that will take place upon a saved Jewish nation at Christ’s Second Coming is similar to what was taking place on the Day of Pentecost. *Peter was ultimately making a comparison between Joel’s prophecy and what took place on Pentecost.* In essence, Peter was saying, what took place today on Pentecost is similar to what Joel spoke about in his prophecy concerning the filling and infusion of the Spirit’s presence and power.

There was a point of similarity with the description of Joel’s prophecy and this is all Peter is bringing to light. There is an *application* from this Old Testament text to what was occurring on Pentecost in relationship to the Spirit’s filling ministry and work. Another example of comparing a New Testament text to an Old Testament text is found in Matthew 2:17-18 which is a quotation of Jeremiah 31:15. The quotation serves as an example and comparison. It shows the similarity between Ramah and Bethlehem and how Jewish mothers were weeping for their sons that they would never see again.

The fact is this; Pentecost was only an *illustration* of what will happen to the converted nation of Israel at the commencement of the Millennium (Joel. 2:28-32). Pentecost with the Spirit’s filling and empowering ministry was similar to the way it will be when God pours out the ministry of the Holy Spirit upon His regenerate people in the future kingdom. The Holy Spirit will apparently indwell His people and empower His people for living and service in a new dynamic and wonderful way. *Added to the Spirit’s work will be some new signs that prove God has turned to bless His ancient people once again.* Many of them will have visions, dreams, and prophesy. **These signs will**

once again point to a new work of God and be a way to introduce the world to the Dispensation of the Millennial Kingdom and that God is fulfilling His promises to His ancient people – the Jews.

So let's once again confirm in our thinking the clear teaching of Scripture regarding the last days of Acts 2. **The occurrence of supernatural phenomenon is actually a promise given to Israel concerning her "last day" blessings which are connected with her salvation after the Tribulation Period and entrance into the Millennial Kingdom. The "last days" have nothing to do with the last days of the Church age.** These supernatural phenomena (prophecy, dreams, visions) have to do with the prophetic days related to Israel during the Millennial Kingdom and not the last days of the Church age.

Here is another important note. **If these miraculous signs relate to the Church today, then what about the other signs that are mentioned?** What about the "wonders in heaven" and "signs in the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke" (Acts 2:19). The Bible also speaks how "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood" (Acts 2:20). Surely none of these signs are occurring today! These are tribulational signs that will occur before Christ's Second Coming to earth ("before that great and notable of the Lord come" – Acts 2:20). Let's study our Bibles and read them in context. The old saying is still true, "A text out of context becomes a pretext."

The arguments that the supernatural gifts will return to the Church based upon the expression of "the last days" in Acts 2:16-21 is simply invalid. If what was happening was related to Pentecost (the beginning of the Church Age) then it certainly cannot at the same time refer to the last days of the Church age. You can't have it both ways! **Peter was simply recording this prophecy to indicate that the ministry of the Spirit's filling was coming to pass on the Day of Pentecost (birthday of the Church) and this work of the Spirit was much like Joel's prophecy, which spoke of Israel's blessing of the Holy Spirit in the Millennial Kingdom.** Peter was using an *application* of Joel's prophecy but not giving a verbatim literal fulfillment of this prophecy with all of its signs and supernatural

happenings. In short, this passage gives no evidence for a reoccurrence of miraculous gifts during the "last (latter) days" of the Church. It is unsound exegesis that comes to this conclusion.

It's important to understand that God has never promised that we will possess miraculous signs of the Holy Spirit outpouring in the last days of the Church Age dispensation. This miraculous outpouring was for the days of the early Church (apostolic foundational days) and the coming Millennial Kingdom. However, this conclusion does not mean the Church is exempt from the blessings of the Holy Spirit today (John 7:37-39). The epistles, which are given for continuing Church life and ministry, do mention that God's saints possess the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), the leading of the Spirit (Rom. 8:14), and the power of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25) for their lives today during the latter years of the dispensation of the Church. Although the introductory dispensational miraculous signs and miracles are no longer with us the Spirit's work of changing our lives is still very real (2 Cor. 3:18). Let us never forget that we need the same filling (Eph. 5:18) and power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) working in our lives today so that we might live effectively and victoriously for the Lord ("Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts (Zech. 4:6).

One added note. On the Day of Pentecost the disciples spoke in different tongues (languages) and were said to be filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4). This indeed was a supernatural happening that pointed to the Spirit's filling ministry upon their lives. However, one will search the Bible in vain to find that speaking in tongues (different languages) was intended to be a lasting sign of the Spirit's filling ministry. The lasting signs of the Spirit's filling or controlling ministry upon the lives of God's people is not seen in the supernatural happening on the Day of Pentecost but in the record of the epistles which were given to guide the continuing generations of believers in the Church age (Eph. 5:18-33). These signs are the Spirit's controlling power to live victoriously, joyfully, thankfully, submissively, and harmoniously with others.

In short, the Pentecostal signs of the Spirit's filling such as speaking in tongues, along with the other 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. The signs were intended to teach that God was starting a new program (the Church). God has always given temporary signs when he started new dispensations such as the Law (Exodus 3:1-8; 7; Acts 7:36), the Church age (signs in the book of Acts), and the future Kingdom age (Joel 2:28-29). The same was true regarding the dispensation of the Church and the new baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; 2:33)

The Church was a new program that dealt with the promised Spirit’s arrival to form the new body of believers welded together by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) and would be accompanied with the sign of speaking in tongues (Acts 2:33 – “which ye now see and hear”). All of the miraculous signs during the early days of the church would confirm the messengers who were bringing forth new teaching or revelation regarding Church truth (2 Cor. 12:12 – “the signs of an apostle”) prior to the completion of the canon of Scripture (1 Cor. 13:10 – “when that which is perfect is come”). Following the completion of “the faith” (Jude 3) or the body of revealed truth that all Christians believe, 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).

The miraculous signs were introductory to the new dispensation (Acts 2:33; 1 Cor. 13:8-10) as in other dispensations (Exodus 3:1-8; Joel 2:28-29). They were performed by the apostles (Acts 2:43; 5:12), foundational to the early days of the Church (Eph. 2:20), and 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 (Mark 16:17 – “they ... confirmed the word with signs following”). 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”).

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 everyone of every disease one hundred percent of the time (Acts 5:15-16), and since they raised the dead (Acts 9:40; Acts 20:9-11). Furthermore, 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 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 of Scripture.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit & Speaking in Tongues

It has long been taught that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an experience that one receives after their conversion or salvation and that speaking in tongues becomes the outward visible manifestation or sign of this Spirit baptism. To many the baptism of the Spirit is viewed as a post-conversion experience that involves some kind of emotional experience accompanied by so-called tongue speaking. This is sometimes called the second blessing or a second work of grace. These conclusions are antibiblical. It's a mistake to assume that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is accompanied with the experience of speaking in tongues.

In the first place, when the gift of speaking in foreign languages was given to the early Church it was never intended to be a gift that was granted to everyone.

1 Corinthians 12:30

“Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?”

This is rhetorical question. The answer is understood. Not everyone is expected to speak in tongues. We have already seen that the genuine gift of tongues has already ceased. However, when the gift was still operative in the original outreach and expansion of the early Church Paul makes it very clear that not everyone had this gift. We might add that nowhere in the entire Bible are we told to seek the gift of tongues or any gift. The Bible says the Holy Spirit sovereignly gives gifts to the body and all these gifts differ (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). Therefore, it's unbiblical and illogical to assume that everyone at one point of their lives must receive some kind of emotional experience accompanied by speaking in tongues. This was true even when the gift of tongues was being given within the early church.

Second, Paul makes it very clear that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a post conversion experience but the very work of God that saves a person by placing them in the body of Christ – the New Testament Church.

1 Corinthians 12:13

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

The Scriptures are very clear about this. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is when the Holy Spirit takes the believing sinner and baptizes them (immerses them) into Christ's body. This saving action means that the Holy Spirit spiritually joins or unites a person to Christ in an indissoluble union that can never be lost (John 14:20; Romans 6:3-6; Col. 2:12-13). The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a saving work – not an emotional experience that is accompanied by speaking in some kind of ecstatic utterance. It is a serious theological error to equate the baptism of the Holy Spirit with tongue speaking. One can readily see in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that every believer is baptized by the Spirit but not every believer spoke in tongues (1 Cor. 12:30). *There was no generic practice of speaking in tongues by all the Christians.* Therefore, it becomes error to teach that the baptism of the Spirit is

some kind of emotional experience that a person encounters after they are saved.

Actually, the disciples on the Day of Pentecost spoke in tongues (languages) as a result of the Spirit's filling ministry (Acts 2:4). Many fail to see this. They confuse the baptism of the Spirit which happens at salvation with the filling of the Spirit which takes place repeatedly throughout one's life (Eph. 5:18). There is a simple cliché that one can remember that will help them to understand the truth concerning the Spirit's work. **There is one baptism but many fillings.** There is only one baptism of the Holy Spirit. It's a baptism that saves a person by placing him in union with Jesus Christ. However, there are many fillings that believers experience throughout their lives. When a believer sins he must confess his sin (1 John 1:9) and allow the Spirit to control his life once again.

Not only is it a mistake to assume that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is accompanied by the speaking of tongues but also that the filling of the Spirit and Spirit-filled life is accompanied by tongue speaking. Many claim that a person cannot be Spirit-filled unless they speak in tongues. This certainly does not square with what the Bible says. Ephesians 5:18 says we are to be filled (controlled) by the Spirit, but nowhere in this Scripture of the epistles are we commanded to speak in tongues as a sign of the Spirit's filling in our life.

It is true that on the Day of Pentecost the disciples spoke in tongues and this was a sign of the Spirit's filling (Acts 2:4, 16). The filling of the Spirit in the lives of the disciples was in this particular instance evidenced through their languages. They became a sign to the unbelieving Jews that Jesus was the true Messiah at God's right hand and that He had sent the Holy Spirit to form the Church – the new people of God (Acts 2:32-36). So this instance of tongue speaking, which was an outward expression of the Spirit's filling, had a definite purpose. It was to be a sign to national Israel. This was true concerning every instance of tongue speaking in the book of Acts.

Many fail to realize that the filling of the Spirit, with the accompanying sign of speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost and throughout the early days of the Church, was given to fulfill a historic purpose. It was not given to be a lasting

sign of spirituality and the Spirit-filled life. Speaking in a different language was designed to be a sign to the nation of Israel (1 Cor. 14: 22). Since God has temporarily set aside Israel from His plan (Rom. 11:10-15) the purpose for tongues and the practice of tongues has ceased (1 Cor. 13:8). Therefore, speaking in tongues was never intended to be a continuing sign of spirituality and the Spirit's work in a person's life. However, the Bible does mention several lasting and enduring signs that demonstrate the filling of the Spirit in one's life (Ephesians 5:18-21). The signs of the Spirit's controlling power are evidenced in a person's life when he lives victoriously, joyfully, thankfully, submissively, and harmoniously with others. Nothing in these verses deals with tongues as being a sign of the Spirit's filling. This is because speaking in tongues was never intended to be a continuing sign of the Spirit's ministry in one's life.

In Galatians 5:22-23 tongues are not mentioned (nor any gift) as a sign of the Spirit's fruit. The Christian who is filled with the Spirit will manifest the fruit of the Spirit in his life apart from speaking in tongues. Spirituality does not depend on speaking in tongues. It is simply erroneous to conclude that speaking in tongues is the needed sign of the Spirit's filling. Let us remember that a person in the early church could speak in tongues and still be carnal (1 Cor. 3:1-3), unspiritual (1 Cor. 3:1), unlearned (1 Cor. 3:2), ignorant (1 Cor. 12:1), undisciplined (1 Cor. 5:1), unclean (1 Cor. 6:18), unkind (1 Cor. 11:17-21), unloving (1 Cor. 13:1-3), immature (1 Cor. 14:20), out of order (1 Cor. 14:40) and unedifying (1 Cor. 14:26) to each other. This proves to us that speaking in tongues was not necessarily a sign of spirituality.

The truth is this. First, there were numerous instances when the disciples were filled with the Spirit but did not speak in tongues (Acts 4:31; 9:3-18; 13:9-11). To be Spirit-filled really means to be Spirit-controlled (Eph. 5:18). We can be controlled by the Spirit without possessing or displaying the spectacular evidence of speaking in tongues. 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? Were 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! Was not Jesus Spirit-filled? John the Baptizer was filled with the Spirit (Luke 1:15), yet this Spirit-filled man did no miracles, and never spoke in tongues (John 10:41). It is simply an erroneous error to equate spirituality and Spirit-filled living with speaking in tongues. Second, not everybody was gifted to speak in tongues in the early church (1 Cor. 12:30). Third, people could be carnal and still speak in tongues (1 Cor. 3:1-2). Fourth, the gift of tongues has ceased (1 Cor. 13:8). Fifth, Jesus saw no need to speak in tongues and He received the Spirit without measure or limitation (John 3:34).

The Book of Acts (Transition Period)

The book of Acts is transitional in character. This means that Acts is actually spanning the years between the synagogue and the Church, from law to grace, from Judaism to Christianity. During this transitional period of time Old Testament saints would become New Testament Saints where there is neither Jew nor Gentile (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28). **If the transitional nature of the book of Acts is taken into consideration much of the confusion regarding the miraculous, tongues, and unique experiences that some people encountered would be understood as temporary and unique to the time of transition.**

People should not look for their own personal Pentecost, seek to speak in tongues, and seek to receive the Holy Spirit after salvation. Since Acts is transitional in nature certain unique events and miraculous happenings would occur to demonstrate that God was changing from the Old Testament to the New Testament, from the Law dispensation to the Church dispensation, and bringing Old Testament saints into their blessings and privileges as New Testament saints. It is important to understand that certain events, experiences, and practices belong to the time of transition or period of change from the Old Testament to the New Testament *which is not the norm for today*. The miraculous and unique events occurred to illustrate God's new working and purposes in the world.

We could view the book of Acts as a bridge between the Old Testament and New Testament. Upon this bridge certain events or

happenings occurred *which are not the norm for today*. In other words, there were a group of believers who actually had the unique privilege to walk across this bridge, from the Old Testament to the New Testament. As they were walking across the bridge, they experienced certain things which could only occur on the bridge, in their transition from an Old Testament saint to a New Testament saint, in their journey from the Old Testament economy into the New Testament economy. God did many miraculous things on the bridge to confirm His change of plans. Various miraculous happenings and unique events took place on the bridge that would not be the norm after the transition had been made.

Today's Christians are no longer on the bridge passing between Old and New Testament dispensations. We have long passed over the bridge (the transition period of time) into this New Testament dispensation. We are on the other side of the bridge. Therefore, unique occurrences and miraculous happenings used to authenticate the changes in God's dispensational program are no longer necessary. During the transition time waiting for the initial arrival of the Holy Spirit was necessary (Acts 1:4-5).

Speaking in tongues to validate that God had turned to the Gentiles and was now blessing them in the Church was also necessary (Acts 2:1-13; 10:46; 19:6). Apostles and miraculous healings that were designed to authenticate new truth were necessary as people crossed over the bridge (Acts 2:43; 5:12-16; 3:6-8; 8:5-7; 9:40; 20:9-11; Mark 16:20). Unique occurrences took place such as receiving the Holy Spirit after salvation as Old Testament saints crossed the bridge and became New Testament saints (Acts 1:4; 2:1-15; 8:12-17; 10:44-48; 19:1-7). Visions regarding the new revelatory truth of God's changing program were also given on rare occasions (Acts 10:1-3, 11-16, 28, 34-35; 16:9-10; 18:9).

Let's restate what we have said. **All these miraculous events and unique happenings occurred on the bridge or during the transitional period of time when God was changing His program from the Old to the New Testament.** None of these miraculous happenings or unique occurrences were intended to be lasting signs and experiences on the other side of the bridge after the New Testament Scriptures were complete and God's truth was settled (1

Cor. 13:8-10; Jude vs. 3). This is why the epistles, which are directed to the churches throughout the continuing Church age, never speak about waiting for the arrival of the Holy Spirit, receiving the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, or receiving the Holy Spirit after salvation. This is why it has been proven that the miraculous gifts began to cease even when the later epistles were being written. Their purpose would be fulfilled when the Scriptures were canonized and therefore their cessation was imminent. *It has wisely been said that one should check their doctrine by the epistles and not by the book of Acts.*

This does not mean the book of Acts was not inspired. It simply means that many of the occurrences recorded in the book of Acts were temporary and transitional in nature. The epistles are God's final word on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. All Christians have the Holy Spirit (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:9), 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.

Perhaps a chart will help you to see the transitional nature of the book of Acts and confirm in your own mind why certain unique occurrences were confined to the transitional period and could only take place on the bridge which spanned from the Old Testament into the New Testament.

*** Please view chart on next page ***

THE BOOK OF ACTS (Transitional Period)

“The way of God (Acts 18:26) more perfectly.”

<u>Old Testament</u>	<u>The Bridge Between:</u>	<u>New Testament</u>
<p>Law (Judaism)</p> <p>Exodus 19:5-8 20:1-21</p> <p>Galatians 4:1-7</p>	<p>Old Testament to New Testament</p> <p>Synagogue to Church</p> <p>Law to Grace</p> <p>Judaism to Christianity</p> <p>Old Testament Saints to New Testament Saints</p>	<p>Grace (Christianity)</p> <p>Romans 6:14; 7:6; 8:2</p> <p>Ephesians 2:15</p> <p>Hebrews 7:12</p>
<p>The Old Testament law was bondage, fear, and condemnation.</p>	<p>Only those people born during Old Testament times and before the church dispensation could actually walk across this bridge or transition! We cannot walk this bridge today.</p>	<p>The Old Testament law as a unit has been cancelled.</p>
<p>Holy Spirit before Pentecost</p> <p>John 14:17</p> <p>Psalms 51:11</p> <p>Temporary Indwelling</p>	<p>Turning to the Gentiles in order to form the Church (Jew and Gentile together in the body of Christ – Eph. 3:1-11).</p> <p>Acts 1:8; 9:15; 10:28, 34-35; 11:16-18; 20:21; 13:46-47; 26:19-20; 15:1-18</p> <p>-Tongues (Acts 2:1-13; 10:46; 19:6) -Pentecost (Acts 2) -Waiting for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5) -Receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2; 8:14; 19:6) -Apostles and miraculous healings (Acts 2:43; 5:12-16; 3:6-8; 8:5-7; 9:40; 20:9-11)</p> <p>All of these events were unique to the crossover (transition).</p>	<p>Holy Spirit Baptism into the Church</p> <p>John 14:17</p> <p>I Corinthians 12:13</p> <p>Permanent Indwelling</p>
<p>John's Baptism (for Kingdom)</p>		<p>Christian Baptism (for Church)</p>
<p>Messiah rejected</p> <p>Acts 13:44-48</p>		<p>Messiah within us</p> <p>Colossians 1:27</p>
<p>Different Dispensation (Law)</p> <p>Not for today</p>	<p>Bridge or Transition Verses to Prove the Change from Old Testament to the New Testament:</p> <p><u>Verses Concerning: The Miraculous</u> (2:42-43; 5:12-16; 8:6-7; 9:40-42; 14:3-4; 19:11-12; 20:9-12; 28:7-9; used to prove that the Apostles and their New Testament message were genuine – Mark 16:20)</p> <p><u>Verses Concerning: Visions</u> (10:1-3, 11-16, 28, 34-35; 16:9-10; 18:9; used to inform the Apostles concerning New Testament truth)</p> <p><u>Verses Concerning Unique Occurrences</u> (1:4; 2:1-15; 8:12-17; 10:44-48; 19:1-7; to bridge the gap)</p> <p>*Not the norm today*</p>	<p>New Dispensation (Grace)</p> <p>Normal</p>