

The background of the entire page is a purple-tinted photograph. It features a microscope in the foreground, slightly out of focus, and several petri dishes scattered around it. The lighting is soft, creating a scientific and analytical atmosphere.

UNDER THE SCOPE

A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF
THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

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CHAPTER 1

THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT: ASKING QUESTIONS

John Dennison

Satan is never more dangerous than when he has a Bible in his hand” (C. H. Spurgeon). The devil himself quoted the Word of God in Eden and in the temptation of the Lord Jesus; he has many millennia of experience on his side. Therefore, today, the toughest challenge for many believers will be to evaluate those who say they are “saved by grace” and point their fingers to Bible verses as the basis for what they believe and practice, and yet are in doctrinal error.

In the early 1900s in the heart of the USA, the modern charismatic movement was born and has since spread like wildfire around the world. Today it has wormed its way into thousands of denominations and is even becoming an attraction for some assembly believers.

Paul prayed that the Philippians would have all “discernment so that ye may approve what is excellent” (Phil 1:9-10 ESV). Spiritual 20/20 vision is especially needed in our day since we are surrounded with so much charismatic and Pentecostal teaching which can sound Christian and Biblical. We must be able to identify truth and error and be ready to give an answer for our faith according to the Word of God.

So what is the big attraction? Why is it one of the fastest growing religious movements in the world? What draws people to charismatic teaching?

ITS INFLUENCE

Listen to what it offers. You might experience the emotional thrill of holy laughter, the release through weeping in the Spirit, the excitement of speaking in tongues, or the catharsis of the filling of the Spirit. You might see visions, receive fresh revelations, enjoy healing, or witness a casting out of demons. There are frequent promises of health and wealth for you and your family. Who wouldn't be drawn to all that? Everyone wants to feel something good, so who wouldn't feel a natural pull to something that fantastic?

But does a sensational experience and something that makes us feel good really mean it is of God?

ITS IMPRESSIVENESS

The largest single congregation in the world today is the charismatic Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea with over 800,000 members. The sixth largest religious body in the world is the Assemblies of God denomination. Currently, 43 percent of people who identify themselves as Christians in the USA believe that charismatic gifts such as tongues and healing are active today.

Everyone wants to belong, and no one likes to be with the numerical minority. But just because it is a religious (even evangelical) movement, does that automatically mean it is of God?

ITS INCREASE

In 1900, there were 20,000 charismatics in the world. In 2000, there were estimated to be 80 million charismatics just in the USA where one out of every four Protestant churches is a charismatic congregation. Now, just 10 years later, conservative estimates are at 800 million charismatics in the world, of which two-thirds live in third world countries. With an increasing growth rate of about 20 million per year worldwide right now, it is predicted that there will be over 800,000,000 charismatics by 2025.

But, just because something is growing, does that really indicate it is of God?

ITS INTERMINGLING

One of the difficulties in quantifying exactly how many “charismatic” people there are in the world is that some types of charismatic teaching and practices appear in most denominations. In the spring of 1998, Christian History reported that there were about 11,000 different Pentecostal or charismatic denominations worldwide. Some estimates indicate that half of the people involved in charismatic practices are Catholics. But just because it is an accepted and common practice in so many denominations and churches, does that automatically mean it must be of God?

ITS INCEPTION

In the New Testament, the Greek word charisma means “a gift of grace” (Vine). This is a general word used 17 times of which 10 times it would more specifically refer to “grace or gifts denoting extraordinary powers,

distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating on their souls by the Holy Spirit” (Thayer). The Spirit of God gave these special abilities as gifts to believers for specific purposes to be used under His direction and control.

There is no question that God gave these gifts to Christians. Just because He did it in the New Testament, does that automatically mean that what we see and hear today is really from God as well?

ITS INSTRUCTION

The Lord Jesus promised some of the charismatic gifts in Mark 16:17-18. The first recorded appearance of the gifts is in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended to earth and began to indwell believers. In the book of Acts there are three recorded occasions of people speaking in tongues, eight recorded healings, three times when demons were cast out, and five cases of unspecified miracles, signs, and wonders. In the epistles, there is teaching on the subject of charismatic gifts in Romans 12:1-8, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Ephesians 4:11-14, and 1 Peter 4:10-11.

Clearly, speaking in tongues, healing, and other miracles, were an amazing confirmation to the gospel after the death and resurrection of our Lord. It was God’s plan for the beginning of the Church age, but does that necessarily mean it is still His plan for us today?

CONCLUSION

Any truth should be able to stand the test of the Word of God. Therefore, when the great apostle Paul arrived in Berea, “they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). The measuring stick of validity is the Scripture itself.

You likely have family, neighbors, friends, fellow students, or coworkers who are involved with charismatic belief and practice. If not, stand by, there will likely be a charismatic church on a corner near you very soon.

In the following series of articles, we intend to look at the subjects of speaking in tongues, healing, casting out demons, and prophesying. All of these charismatic subjects will be passed under the microscope of Scripture. May the Lord help us to be honest and not biased and to be courageous and not cowardly. Above all, our prayer is that this series will instruct us to be true to our Lord, “holding fast the faithful Word” (Titus 1:9).

CHAPTER 2

THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT: GETTING ANSWERS

John Dennison

I am 14 feet tall. I even measured myself with a ruler. Intuitively, you know I am not, but how could you prove it? If you measured me with a ruler you would find I am five feet ten inches tall. What is the difference? The ruler I used came from a child's toy tool box and according to that ruler I am truthfully 14 feet tall. The wrong ruler, or standard, produces wrong conclusions.

The believers in Berea used their ruler to see if the Apostle Paul's teaching measured up. Luke says, "These ... received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). They did not use their feelings, their experiences, or traditions of the church to evaluate the preaching of Paul.

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther pounded a placard with 95 theses to the door of the Catholic church in Wittenberg, Germany. This was his great declaration of truths he had discovered resulting from his appreciation of "sola scriptura." When challenged by the emperor to recant at the famous Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther responded, "Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason, I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen."

"Sola scriptura" became the key guiding principle in the Protestant Reformation. The great John Wesley called himself a *homo unius libri*, a man of one book. Today is no different; we must limit and discipline the basis of our spiritual convictions to "sola scriptura."

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SCRIPTURE: CONTEXTUAL TEACHING

How can two people with opposite views quote the same Bible? Let us be clear; it is not a flaw in Scripture, but the mistreatment of it by the reader. So how must we approach the Bible, to arrive at proper interpretations on all issues, and especially those involved in Charismatic teaching and practice?

Imagine that Bob talks with his neighbor Barney, whose wife is pregnant.

Bob: “Barney, you and your wife Beatrice are such a nice looking couple. If you folks have an ugly baby, I’ll eat my hat!”

The next day, Barney Jr. is born and Barney says to his wife, “Did you know that our neighbor Bob told me that we have an ugly baby?”

True, Bob said those specific words. However, taking only part of what a person says can be hurtful, misleading, and dangerous. It is very easy to commit this same mistake with the Bible. For example, Ephesians 4:28 says, “Let him that stole, steal no more.” I could use this very text to teach that the Bible commands Christians to steal. After all, doesn’t the verse say, “Let him that stole, steal!” Yes, those words are there, but the immediate context of the rest of the verse gives the opposite meaning.

Every text is packaged in a context. We must take into account the sentence, the paragraph, the book, and even the Testament in which it is found to conclude what is the significance and meaning of any part of Scripture. Much of the confusion in the Charismatic movement is simply due to not applying this essential principle of “context” in Bible interpretation.

THE SUM OF SCRIPTURE: TOTAL TEACHING

Gertrude shares her secret Banana Bran Bars recipe with Georgette. Georgette mixes bananas, bran, and water, pours the goop in a pan and shoves it in the oven. She is doomed to a culinary disaster simply because she did not include all the ingredients in the recipe and did not follow the progressive instructions.

Many a spiritual disaster has also been cooked up by the same error. God says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable” (2Tim 3:16). That means that every word in the Bible has equal authority. The words of Christ in red do not override the words of Paul in black. All Scripture is equal; we are obligated to take all the Bible into account when we identify our doctrine and practice.

The Bible is a progressive revelation. Charismatic teaching focuses on one Scripture and ignores others. For, example, many use Acts 2:38 to teach that forgiveness of sins depends on baptism in Jesus’ name. That verse alone may sound that way, yet there are approximately 150 verses in the New Testament that stress salvation is by faith alone. Suddenly, we are brought to a different conclusion. Salvation is “not of works” (Eph 2:9), including baptism.

THE SPIRIT AND THE SCRIPTURE: HARMONIOUS TEACHING

The third principle that guides us in interpreting Scripture is the principle of harmony. God cannot contradict Himself and neither can His Word. Jude says that the Bible is “The faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” Therefore, we have all the Bible we are going to get and all the Bible we are going to need.

God’s written Word says, “God cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). The Bible is infallible; not one part contradicts another. A consistent God speaks consistently; a perfect God speaks perfectly. Therefore, our interpretation of any passage must be consistent with the rest of Scripture. We must never ignore some parts and emphasize others. We must read, study, and apply all of this precious volume giving all of it equal authority.

Many Charismatics attribute their spectacular experiences and feelings to the Spirit of God. The Lord Jesus said, “Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). Could the Spirit of truth ever make a believer do or feel anything that is against Scripture? Impossible! Therefore, if any belief, practice, feeling, or experience contradicts the Word of God, it is not of the Holy Spirit of God.

THE SENSES AND THE SCRIPTURE: OBJECTIVE TEACHING

Emotion is not wrong, but it is not reliable. For example, suppose I say, “I feel like a tomato.” Nobody can prove I do not because it is so personal and subjective. But feelings vary and tomorrow I might feel like a zucchini. It is also difficult, because how could someone else know if they have the same feeling? Facts, on the other hand, are concrete, provable, and repeatable. If I say maple syrup comes from trees, this is a fact that can be tested and observed by others. Now suppose I am a bit sappy and feel happy about this fact. Whether I feel happy or not, the fact that maple syrup comes from trees does not change. Facts must determine emotion rather than emotion determining facts.

Those who have spoken in tongues, been slain in the Spirit, prophesied, or had visions claim that the experiences and feelings are sensational. The natural tendency is to give precedence to feelings over facts because emotion has an immediate and profound impact. Thus the bumper sticker that says, “I feel I am right, don’t confuse me with the facts.”

We must never elevate emotion and experience above Scripture. Salvation is based on written facts (1John 5:13), not on personal feelings and so should every other doctrine and practice. The articles which follow in this series will evaluate the teachings and practices of the modern Charismatic movement in light of God’s standard - His Word.

CHAPTER 3

THE PROMISE OF TONGUES

Marcus Cain

The Lord Jesus was about to be received up into heaven and leave His apostles behind. He had delivered to these 11 very human apostles an overwhelming commission: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). How would they be able to fulfill such a large responsibility? How would they be able to convince “every creature” that the message they were preaching was true? Only a very small group of people had witnessed the Lord’s miracles during His earthly ministry. Perhaps as they listened to the Lord Jesus charge them with this great work of preaching the gospel they pondered these questions. What would they do without Him?

THE COMMENCEMENT

Mark, the gospel of the Perfect Servant, begins with these words: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (1:1). What a wonderful proclamation! As we move down the chapter, we quickly find that the Father confirms the Sonship of Jesus Christ, declaring from heaven: “Thou art My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased” (1:11), with the Spirit descending like a dove, giving double testimony. But at the end of Mark’s gospel we find that the apostles are preaching “everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following” (16:20). They continued the work that the Lord Jesus had begun while in the world, but not without His power.

THE CONCEPT

The Lord said that “signs shall follow them that believe,” but we need to ask ourselves, what is a sign? Why were signs necessary during the earthly ministry of Christ? John frequently mentions signs in his gospel and he perhaps sums it up very well for us: “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” (John 20:30-31).

In Mark 16:14, He has just upbraided these same men for their unbelief

and hardness of heart. So, a sign was not just a miracle for the sake of doing a miracle and manifesting His power over sickness and disease, nature, demons, or even death itself, but rather a specific act to bring people to faith in Him. Mankind was to understand, upon witnessing a miracle, that God was validating the Man Who had performed it and the message that accompanied the miracle. Consider Moses as he was sent by God to save the nation from slavery in Egypt, or Elijah and Elisha as they told the nation that they had departed from the true God. Signs were given to authenticate the man who was sent from God with a message from God.

THE CONFIRMATION

“The Jews require a sign” is what Paul writes to the Corinthians (1:22). Is this not what we see as we read through the gospels as well? The Pharisees came to the Lord Jesus in Mark 8, “seeking of Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him” (8:11). It grieved the Lord to see such unbelief, and “He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, ‘Why doth this generation seek after a sign?’” (8:12). Four of His own apostles asked Him on the Mount of Olives, “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall come to be fulfilled?” (Mark 13:4). John, whose gospel records many signs, also mentions that the result was faith in the Lord Jesus. “This beginning of miracles (signs) did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him” (John 2:11). “Many believed in His Name, when they saw the miracles (signs) which He did” (John 2:23). The apostles had witnessed many signs during the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus, and as they anticipated fulfilling His commission, the promise of the Lord Jesus that they would be able to perform signs as well would be a wonderful encouragement to them.

THE CONTINUATION

All through the gospel of Mark, the Lord Jesus performs miracles. As we move through this fast-paced gospel, the Lord is presented and confirmed as the Son of God, both by the affirmation of the Father from heaven on two occasions as well as by the many miracles He does. Now the disciples will go into all the world, starting in Jerusalem and all Judæa, with signs accompanying them. Among these signs we will find them “speaking with new tongues.” We must remember that “tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers” (1Cor 14:22). We will see that new tongues will be very necessary in a few days when Jewish unbelievers from many different areas will be present in Jerusalem.

The nature of this promise in regard to accompanying signs is temporary, not something that will continue until the end of the age. In Matthew's gospel, "the end of the age" is in view and there is no mention of signs, but rather the authority of the Lord Jesus and the need of teaching the new believers to observe all that He had taught the apostles. In Mark's gospel we find "the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following" (Mark 16:20). Helping us to understand the temporary nature of the different signs mentioned in Mark 16, the writer to the Hebrews tells us that this great salvation of which we have been made partakers at first was "spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost" (Heb 2:3-4). God tells us that those who heard the Lord Jesus gave special witness by means of signs, including the use of new tongues. It is obvious, then, that the need for the sign of tongues had to do especially with the Jewish nation, and that the apostles would have the great joy of being conscious of the Lord working with them as they traveled and preached the gospel. God's immeasurable interest in the well-being of souls is seen as Christ promises confirmation of the message of the gospel of the grace of God by means of these signs. What anticipation as the apostles contemplate the great commission!

We must remember that we are responsible to continue the fulfillment of the great commission even today. Even though we no longer have these sign gifts, we have the full confidence that God is still intensely interested in the salvation of souls, and that Christ is still completely able to save.

CHAPTER 4

THE PRACTICE OF TONGUES

Dan Harvey

ACTS 2: INITIATION

Few days stand out in Scripture with such pent-up anticipation as the Day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2. The promised gift of the Holy Spirit was given to permanently indwell and empower believers, the Church was born, and the dispensation of the day of grace was ushered into existence. It was also the first time that God's provision and power were manifested

by way of the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues. No wonder the recorded response and question of Acts 2:12, “And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, ‘What meaneth this?’” It was indeed a tremendous day that altered the course of history. We will examine the practice of tongues but will need to confine ourselves to the events of Acts 2.

The ability to speak in a foreign tongue was a spiritual gift and, like all spiritual gifts, was given for the building up of the body, the Church, comprised of every believer from the day of Pentecost until the Rapture. These spiritual gifts are given by God and are not obtained by simply desiring to have them; they are God-given. The Ephesian epistle teaches us an important principle about the function and purpose of gifts that sheds light upon their use and existence today. We learn that they are given for, and particularly suited to, a specific stage in the development and perfecting of the Church (Eph 4:12). Apostles and prophets, for example, are part of the foundation (Eph 2:20). After the body of doctrine was given (Jude 3), and revelation of the canon of Scripture was complete, the need for these foundational gifts ended (1Cor 13:8-10). The same will be true of each gift, culminating in a day when as believers our gifts will no longer be needed (Eph 4:13). We recognize, however, the current and ongoing need for the gathering gift of evangelists, and the establishing gifts of pastors and teachers. It stands, therefore, that any gift that continues to this day does so for a reason, given that its purpose has not yet been fully realized. So, what was the gift given in Acts chapter two, and what was its purpose and effect on the day of Pentecost, and has that purpose now been realized?

The often misunderstood gift of Acts 2 was the gift of tongues, the supernatural enablement to speak in an existing foreign language without ever having studied or learned that language previously. Acts 2:6, 8, and 11 confirm that speaking in tongues was not some form of ecstatic utterance, gibberish, or heavenly language but, rather, recognizable and understandable human languages. In every occurrence of the translated word “tongue” or “language” in Scripture (the words *glossa* and *dialektos* are used synonymously in the NT), the reference is always to either the physical organ we each possess, or the use of it in speaking a known language. While some well-intentioned individuals in the charismatic movement today will claim to have had an experience of ecstatic utterance, the genuineness of their experience or strength of their emotion is not the test. The only test for truth is the Word of God. The real question then, is not, “Was my experience real?” but rather, “Was my experience Scriptural?” Even with the powerful demonstration of such visible and audible signs accom-

panying the giving of the Holy Spirit (cloven tongues like as of fire and the sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind), the Apostle Peter still goes to Scripture to show the basis for what these visitors in Jerusalem were witnessing. Peter says, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). Therefore, the first thing the Bible teaches us in Acts 2 is that the gift of tongues involved known languages, thus Biblically ruling out every other experiential claim to the contrary given by the modern day charismatic movement. The second lesson is that Scripture always takes precedence over experience, and experience must be understood in the light of Scripture; not the other way around.

But what was the purpose of the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost? Could not the Holy Spirit have been given without the accompanying visible and audible signs? When Peter stood up to preach, he did not utilize a foreign language but, as on every future occasion of the preaching of the gospel, he heralded the gospel with clarity and simplicity in the language known and understood by all present. So, why is Peter's message preceded by the introduction of foreign languages through the gift of speaking in tongues?

In Acts 2 God was supernaturally signaling the commencement of something new, the dispensation of the day of grace and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers, and with that He gave a spectacular sign of authentication. Hebrews 2:4 says that during the presentation of the gospel by the apostles, God was "bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will." A new day had arrived. Quoting Isaiah 28, Paul says to the Corinthians, "With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (1Cor 14:21-22). The Spirit of God is careful to underscore that it is to "this people," to the Jews, that God would speak via a foreign tongue. To the Jewish ear, the sound of a foreign tongue in their own land was a certain sign of judgment, of impending captivity. And so it was on that day of Pentecost when those that dwelt in Jerusalem heard their fellow countrymen speak in foreign languages. It was a confirmatory and condemnatory sign and message from God to an unbelieving nation; how encouraging to see the response of some to the clear gospel message that followed. "They were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:37). We stand in awe as some 3,000 souls showing genuine repentance toward God and faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ are brought into the kingdom,

and the Lord Jesus commences to build His Church. Truly, the Lord was working with them and confirming the Word with signs following (Mark 16:20). Today, with the completed Scriptures in hand, with saved Jews and Gentiles united together in one body, and with the dispensation of grace well underway and likely nearing its completion, we look back and appreciate that the purpose of tongues has been fulfilled, taking its place in the foundation of the Church, but with no need to function any longer.

CHAPTER 5

THE PATTERN OF TONGUES

Jason Wahls

The reception of the Holy Spirit by three distinct companies is found in Acts 2, 10, and 19. Speaking in tongues on these three occasions was a physical manifestation or “sign” that each individual of the particular company had in fact received the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2 (dealt with in a previous article) the apostles who had gathered with Christ in chapter 1 received the Holy Spirit as had been indicated by the Lord’s teaching prior to His ascension. Peter and other Jewish believers marveled “because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 10:45). In Acts 19:2, Paul asks a small group of individuals who only knew the baptism of John, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?”

Consequently, it is noted that it was only the “first Jews,” “the first Gentiles,” and “the group that only knew the baptism of John” that spoke in tongues upon receiving the Holy Spirit. This is why in Acts 2:38 Peter promised to the Jews (Acts 2:5) who had gathered when they heard the apostles speaking in tongues, that they too would “receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” if they repented and were baptized. Later, we read that three thousand souls received His Word and were baptized, but we do not read that they spoke in tongues. When the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit it is not recorded that they spoke in tongues either, thus nullifying the idea that one must speak in tongues as evidence of the reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:16-17).

In these three instances, at no time did the individuals who received the Holy Spirit actively seek to receive Him. In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit “filled” the believers as they waited obediently. In Acts 10:44 “the Holy Ghost fell

on all them which heard the Word,” while in chapter 19 the new believers received the Holy Spirit when Paul laid hands on them. Thus the individuals did not actively solicit the Holy Spirit, but rather He “filled” or “fell” upon them without any request from them.

ACTS 10: THE GENTILES RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

As Peter reached the culmination of his message, he proclaimed the remission of sins for all those who would believe in Him (10:43). Previously, on the day of Pentecost he had concluded his message in a similar fashion, with reference to the remission of sins, but had added, “and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). But on this occasion Peter makes no reference to the Holy Spirit. Possibly he did not have opportunity because the entire company believed on Christ and “the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word” (10:44) or, possibly because Peter was not expecting the Gentiles to receive the Holy Spirit.

To Peter’s astonishment, and that of his Jewish companions and fellow believers, the newly converted Gentiles began to “speak with tongues and magnify God” (Acts 10:46). It is clear that Peter and the other Jewish believers understood what those speaking with tongues were saying as they magnified God. Also, the significance of the Gentiles speaking in tongues was a sign that they had “received the Holy Ghost as well as we” (Acts 10:47).

This instance, when the Gentiles spoke with tongues, would be important in future events as an indication of the authenticity of the conversion of the Gentiles and their equality in the body of Christ. In Acts 11, as Peter would relate the events of chapter 10 to the apostles and brethren in Judea, he would make reference to this great event when the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit to authenticate their conversion (Acts 11:15-18). The result was that his audience glorified God because He had granted repentance unto life to the Gentiles as well.

Later, when dissension arose over the necessity of the circumcision of the Gentiles in Acts 15, Peter again made reference to the event of chapter 10 as proof of the equality of the Gentiles in the body of Christ, declaring that there is “no difference between us and them” (Acts 15:8, 9).

Acts 19: People who only knew the baptism of John receive the Holy Spirit

In Acts 19 we have the third and final company that is recorded as having spoken in tongues. It is a most interesting and unique group, being identified as “certain disciples” who had only been baptized with the baptism of

John. They were, as A. M. S. Gooding remarks, “a group with a pre-cross experience living in post-cross days.”

To probe the depth of their understanding of the Holy Spirit Paul asks, “Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when you had believed?” (JND). The apostle Paul expected that believers received the Holy Spirit upon believing and not via a second experience. It is apparent that they were unaware of the existence of the Holy Spirit (19:2) and that they had not yet believed on Christ (19:4). Thus when Paul expounded the need to “believe on Him which should come after him (John the Baptist), that is, on Christ Jesus” they consequently believed and were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. As Paul then laid hands upon them “the Holy Ghost came upon them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied.” It was not the first time that believers had received the Holy Spirit at the laying on of hands (Acts 8:17), but this is the only occasion of the three that speaking with tongues was accompanied by prophesying. This is the final time that speaking with tongues is mentioned in the book of the Acts.

CONCLUSIONS

The three recorded instances in Acts of believers speaking in tongues were signs to indicate the reception of the Holy Spirit by three distinct companies of believers.

Those who listened to the believers as they spoke in tongues understood what was being said.

Many believers in the book of the Acts received the Holy Spirit without speaking in tongues; thus speaking in tongues is not essential as evidence of the reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 8:17).

Apart from these three occasions and Acts 8, the reception of the Holy Spirit is by faith upon conversation (Acts 2:38; 19:2).

CHAPTER 6

THE PRIORITY OF TONGUES

Shad Kember, Jr.

The longest section in the New Testament that addresses the subject of speaking in tongues is 1 Corinthians 12-14. The Corinthians were giving

undue priority to speaking in tongues. So masterful are Paul's arguments that even a cursory consideration of only a few of them would nearly shut down overnight the so-called speaking in tongues movement of our day. The principles laid down apply to those gifts that remain and therefore are invaluable to Biblically gathered companies of believers worldwide today.

THE INTRODUCTION:

TONGUES COMPARED WITH THE PAST (12:1-3)

Speaking in tongues should be governed by Biblical knowledge, Holy Spirit guidance, a God Who communicates truth, and the Lordship of Christ. The statements, "I do not want you to be uninformed" and "I wish you to understand" highlight a cause of much doctrinal error – a lack of Biblical knowledge. Contrasts between their pre-conversion and post-conversion spiritual activities are striking. Notice "led astray ... however you were led" and "mute idols." Did speaking in tongues or the abuse of them have anything in common with this? Yes, they were being led astray by their own spirit, or another, but not the Holy Spirit. It was random, "however you were led" and it might as well have been mute for they were not being interpreted. Verse three reminds us perhaps of the core Jewish issues in reception or rejection of salvation – is Jesus accursed? (Gal 3:13), or is Jesus Lord? (Rom 10:9; Acts 9:5). The Corinthians were using tongues to exalt self. The Spirit will do in the congregation what He did at conversion – exalt Jesus as Lord.

THE INTERACTING OF DIVINE PERSONS:

TONGUES COMPARED WITH THE TRINITY (12:4-7)

Here we learn that the Holy Spirit, Christ, and God the Father, are the source of true spiritual manifestations (1Cor 12:1 Darby) They move as one, each with His own role to play, producing a "common good" for all. When the Corinthians used the gifts, they needed to reflect the unity and harmonious character of the Triune God Who graciously gave (charismata, v4) the ability (v4), opportunity (v5), and energy (v6) for their employ. The misuse of tongues at Corinth was a dishonor to God and a far cry from the way the persons of the Godhead interacted. While ample emphasis is given to the Holy Spirit in this chapter, speaking in tongues or any other form of prayer is never addressed to Him anywhere in Scripture.

THE INDEXES OF GIFTS:

TONGUES COMPARED WITH OTHER GIFTS (12:8-10; 28-30)

There are three lists of gifts in this chapter which put tongues last instead

of first. In the body illustration, the tongue is not even mentioned. Undue emphasis on one gift to the exclusion of others would be like reducing the body to one member. Imagine a body sized eye bouncing down the sidewalk toward you. No member should feel inferior (vv14-18), nor sufficient and superior to the others (vv19-26). The body illustrates mutual dependency, relationship, interaction, need, respect, care, sympathy, and joy. The “weaker members” should be regarded with greater esteem. God “composed” the physical body with the same pattern and plan as the assembly: “that there should be no division ... but that the members may have the same care one for another.” At the end (v30), Paul queries, “Do all speak with tongues?” The answer is, “No.” “Eagerly desire the higher gifts” doesn’t mean to desire them for one’s self, but for the assembly. The “higher gifts” would not include tongues, nor any other miraculous “sign” gifts.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BODY TRUTH: TONGUES AND THE BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT (12:12, 13)

The baptism in the Spirit formed the body of Christ. All souls saved since Pentecost until the rapture are in it: “In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (v13). The baptism in the Spirit happened only once, on the day of Pentecost, in Jerusalem, and was carried out by Christ (Matt 3:11), not the Spirit. No believer is said to have been baptized in the Spirit at conversion. Neither Calvary nor Pentecost is repeated at every conversion, yet the benefits are still obtained. At Pentecost, only the 120 in the upper room literally experienced being baptized in the Spirit. The 3,000 saved the same day didn’t literally experience it, but were still part of the body of Christ. They (and all other believers since) came into the good of it upon accepting Christ. All are viewed as baptized in the Spirit, but not all speak in tongues (v30), therefore speaking in tongues is not the evidence of the baptism in the Spirit (taken in part from J. Hunter, *What the Bible Teaches*, pp. 146-148).

INTERNAL CHARACTER AND SPEAKING IN TONGUES: TONGUES COMPARED TO LOVE (12:31-13:13)

Performance based Christianity genders pride and rivalry, not humility and unity. The first and foremost feature of the fruit of the Spirit, love, is not the only measure of what is “spiritual,” but it is “a way of life that transcends all others” (Weymouth). This section is so eloquent and moving, its beauty so outstanding, that it cannot be pondered without compelling us to both think of Christ, and want to be more like Him. Love, this hallmark par excellence of Christian grace, must be pursued both before and

during any meeting of the assembly. Love is like a driver's license; it is illegal to use gift without it. The Corinthian failure in this led to one of the most powerful, but loving, rebukes in the entire New Testament. Love is the "way of more surpassing excellence" (12:31 Darby). Tongues do not measure spirituality, but love does. Unlike tongues, all could and should have this grace. Unlike tongues, true love cannot be given too much priority. Unlike tongues, which have ceased, love abides. Unlike tongues which were inferior compared to other gifts, love is supreme among the graces.

CHAPTER 7

THE PARAMETERS OF TONGUES

John Dennison

The meeting is about to start. All the church members look like sprinters in the block. Each one has come with a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, or an interpretation (v26). First, a brother leads everyone in a hymn. Quickly, another follows with prayer. Before he finishes, another breaks into some strange language. Then a woman begins praising in a second language. The fervor spreads and soon it sounds like a bunch of radios playing, but all on different stations. Likely the Corinthians would have left the meetings feeling "spiritually energized" while visitors would walk out frightened, confused, or, even hoping these Christians could get some psychiatric help (v23).

Today, many sincere believers feel their charismatic experiences are of God, sensing the spiritual "baptism of fire." However, visiting believers or unbelievers may find charismatic gatherings a bit scary, disorderly, and confusing. Some would claim it is all emotion and not of God at all. Who is right?

When opinions differ, we must be like the Bereans who "received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). One overriding principle is that the Holy Spirit CANNOT and thus WILL NOT guide a believer to do anything that would be against the Word of God.

REASONS FOR SPEAKING IN TONGUES

REASON 1: UPBUILDING

In 1 Corinthians 14:1-12, Paul introduces the first reason for the use of all

gifts: “that the church may receive edifying” (v5). He contrasts prophecy (revelation taught in the language of the people), with tongues (revelation taught in a foreign language). The first would build up the church because it is in their language, whereas the second, even if it were the speaking out of a mystery, something previously unrevealed (v4), because it is in an unknown language, would have no edifying influence whatsoever. He then uses the illustrations of pipes, harps, and trumpets, each with a distinguishable sound unlike the cacophony of participant voices in Corinth. Messages sent to military troops by the trumpet had to be clearly identifiable. By contrast, divinely sent messages were being lost in all the noise in the Corinthian meetings. Paul then segues to human conversation and the equal value of all human languages, but speaks of the frustration and futility when the message cannot get through due to language barriers. Therefore, he concludes that regardless of what participants might feel or experience, “seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church” (v12).

REASON 2: UNDERSTANDING

When a believer participated in Corinth, many times he did not even understand what he himself was saying. Paul stresses understanding so strongly that he says this believer should first pray to be able to interpret (v13) because it would be a waste of time to be speaking something that not even the speaker understands much less anyone else (v14). Thus, whether a participant is praying or singing, he must achieve understanding by being able to interpret it himself or by the Lord providing an interpreter. The goal is that everyone should be able to be in agreement and say, “Amen!” However, no one can intelligently say “Amen!” to what sounds like childish gibberish (v16). Thus, Paul appeals for spiritual maturity, “but in understanding, be men” (v20).

REGULATIONS FOR SPEAKING IN TONGUES

Paul then gives a very clear list of requirements that must be met if it is to be Spirit-directed participation. We can and must apply these tests to all religious gatherings today where people claim to be speaking in tongues.

First, Paul says, “If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three” (v27). Speaking by interpretation requires greater concentration, so, to maintain the focus of understanding and upbuilding, the first guideline is to limit the number of participants to two or three. Any more participants in a foreign language would put in doubt if the messages or prayers were really of God. Why? The Spirit would not contradict His Word on this guideline.

Secondly, He would not contradict the next regulation which is, "... and that by course" (v27b). Not only was there to be limited participation in foreign languages, but when there was, they were to take turns. God knows that humans cannot multitask when it comes to hearing. When God picks up human instruments to convey truth in an assembly, He may use a variety of men, but He will always use them one at a time.

The third stipulation is "and let one interpret" (v27c). If a man did not know what he was about to say because it was in a foreign language, first of all he was to pray for understanding for himself. If he did not receive that understanding personally, then he would have to check to make sure someone else could interpret it. Spiritually-given gifts never imply that men lose control of themselves and the Spirit turns them into robots so that they cannot stop what they are saying. The teaching is that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (v32). If there is no interpreter, let them keep silent (v28). The Spirit would never force someone to speak when there is no interpreter; the Spirit would never violate this inspired guideline.

The fourth limitation is equally important today. Paul writes, "Let your women keep silence" (v34). This is not a cultural norm or an insult to women. Paul's teachings to women and about women elevate them, allowing their maximum usefulness and fulfillment in their divinely given role. The Holy Spirit would never motivate a woman to take part in a public service of a New Testament church because it would be in violation of His own Word.

If you took this simple four-point checklist to any modern charismatic gathering today, you would find violation after violation. Participants can speak of how good it feels, how much power they sense, or how beneficial it is, but our responsibility is to be Biblical. Being assured that the Spirit cannot contradict the Word of God gives us clear discernment in these cases.

RESULTS OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES

CRAZINESS OR CONVICTION?

Paul delineated three categories of people present at the general meetings of an assembly: members of the church, unbelievers, and believers who have not yet learned or accepted the apostle's doctrine. In all assembly gatherings, we are being observed. If someone has little understanding or is an unbeliever, what will they think if they hear people speaking in languages or sounds they do not understand? Will they think it is a conviction of God? Paul warns that more likely they will think the believers in the local church are crazy (v23).

But if they were to hear and understand the truth by someone speaking (prophesying) in their own language or speaking in tongues with interpretation, the Word of God in all its power might make them fall on their faces in worship and say, “God is in you of a truth (v25).” The result we seek is conviction of sin and ignorance, rather than confusion or questioning if church participants are mentally stable.

GLORIFICATION OR GRATIFICATION?

Paul said he would sooner speak five words with understanding rather than 10,000 words in an unknown tongue (v19). For him, it was never about self-gratification or to make him feel in touch with God or empowered by the Spirit. Instead, it was a means to reach unbelieving souls with the gospel, especially his own Jewish people (vv21-22). Ultimately, Paul longed that God should be glorified through assembly believers being edified, unbelievers being saved, and unlearned believers being instructed.

BLURRING OR BLESSING?

Assemblies are to be like mirrors that reflect the character of our God. Since “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace” (v33), the Corinthian assembly was not accurately representing God with all the noise and disorder in their meetings. To properly reflect their God of peace, Paul warns, “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

First Corinthians 14 then provides specific and objective criteria to evaluate the modern speaking-in-tongues movement. May God give grace and courage to not substitute feelings or experiences for divine standards and to bow to what is right - church participation in agreement with the Word of God.

CHAPTER 8

THE PASSING OF TONGUES

Daniel D. Shutt

Some things are inevitable, we often say, like death and taxes. Of course that doesn't make it so, but unlike ourselves, when God speaks, the thing that He has declared will surely come to pass. And when it comes to the gift of tongues, God has made Himself abundantly clear:

“As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away” (1Cor 13:8 ESV).

Assuming, then, that the reader accepts the absolute veracity of God, there is no legitimate question about the inevitable cessation of tongue gifts; there is only the question of when God’s Word was (or will be) carried out.

THE CHRONOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The chronology of the New Testament, while not entirely or perfectly understood by scholars, does yield some broad clues regarding the general ebb and flow of early church history. A careful ordering of known events brings some facts about tongue gifts into sharp focus.

Beginning with the Gospels, a subtle but interesting detail is found in comparing the two records of the great commission. Matthew and Mark both record the words of the risen Christ to His disciples. It is of more than passing interest that Mark, who alone records the use of signs (Mark 16:15-18), omits Matthew’s benediction: “Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:18-20, Newberry). Preaching the gospel, baptizing converts, and teaching the Scriptures are to be permanent fixtures of the age. The initial sign gifts (including the gift of tongues) were, at least by inference, temporary.

The book of Acts records three events in which the use of tongue gifts is evident. The first, and best known, is the dramatic event on the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after the resurrection of Christ. God’s approval of this weighty event was seen in the exercise of a unique gift; the Spirit-given ability of men among the 120 disciples to speak in 12 or 15 (or possibly more) different foreign languages. How amazing! For those who mocked, it was the promised sign of national judgment (Deut 28:49; Isa 28:11, 33:19; Jer 5:15). For those who would hear, it fulfilled Christ’s promise of “new tongues” (Mark 16:17), a harbinger of the new dispensation in which the Lord was “confirming the word with signs following.”

Leaving aside the second event, described in Acts 10:46, the last mention of tongues, the gift of speaking in an actual foreign language, is in Acts 19:6. The careful reader will note that this closes the topic, so far as the historical books of the NT are concerned. Even the overview of the church age, intimated by the letters of Revelation 2-3, has no hint of any ongoing exercise of sign gifts.

Moving forward to the epistles, it is of great interest to us that the events

of Acts 19 and the first letter to the Corinthians are historically analogous, both occurring very early in the church age (c. 55 - c. 56). In the only epistle to address the historical operation of tongue gifts, Paul underlines the inferiority of this gift (he lists tongues and the interpretation of tongues last in both lists in 1Cor 12:10, 28-30), and teaches the folly of its exercise outside of very limited parameters.

Here's the important part: we must note that no subsequent epistle, including 2 Corinthians which was written mere months after the first letter, mentions tongue gifts. Even in the later gift lists found in Romans 12 (written c. 57) and Ephesians 4 (c. 61- c. 62), there is no mention of tongues. Paul wrote at least eight epistles after 1 Corinthians and never mentioned tongues again; neither did Peter, James, John, or Jude. Odd indeed, unless they had ceased to function.

For those who wish to dig deeper, we might add that the author of the book of Hebrews, (written c. 68), implies that the corroborative work of the sign gifts was completed. A careful look at the tenses used in Hebrews 2:3-4 indicates that by that date, both the role of the eyewitnesses and the sign-confirmation were completed and were in the past.

To state the case simply—we know of no Biblical evidence to deny that the activity of tongues was fulfilled by the end of the first century. The day of language gifts had ceased.

THE HISTORICAL ARGUMENT

Turning to the events that follow the end of the New Testament record, we listen to the words of the Christian leaders who were the spiritual descendants of the Apostles. Justin Martyr, midway through the second century, listed the spiritual gifts operating in the contemporary church; unsurprisingly, there is a total absence of any reference to tongue gifts.

As is well documented, Origen in the third century, Chrysostem in the fourth, and Augustine in the early fifth century, all concluded that the gift of tongues, as legitimately practiced in the Acts, had ceased. It is Chrysostem who first gave us the word “cessation,” and Augustine who said that “[tongues] were signs adapted to the time [of the Apostles] ... and it passed away.”

So does that mean that there were no subsequent instances of speaking in tongues? Actually, there were many, but it is important to note that they were judged by Christian leaders to be unorthodox and heretical. Irenaeus

(c. 180) and Tertullian (c. 207) both mention them, but as we will see, they were not the Biblical tongue gifts of the New Testament.

One of the first major errors to arise after the death of the Apostles was the heresy of Montanism in the second century. Named after its founder Montanus, a convert from Phrygia in Asia Minor, he was linked with two women, Prisca and Maximilla, who joined in his error. Despite a large following, he was denounced as a false prophet, based on the reports that “he would fall into a frenzy and convulsions . . . and prophesy contrary to that which was the custom from the beginning of the church. Those who heard him were convinced that he was possessed, a demoniac in the grip of a spirit of error” (Eusebius). Sadly, his “raving and babbling” are now claimed by some to show that the gift of tongues was still operating. To all but his devoted followers, his contemporaries judged him heretical and deranged. Reports of his suicide by hanging, along with Maximilla in a spirit of frenzy, led many to conclude that he was not unlike the traitor Judas.

While there are isolated reports of outbreaks of so-called tongue gifts throughout history, the next major era that we want to examine is the nineteenth century. It is evident that this was an era when God was working mightily in restoring Biblical truth. Men like J. N. Darby, William Kelly, and C. H. Mackintosh, as well as Donald Ross, Donald Munro, John Ritchie, and others were powerfully used by God. Around the world, the gospel was preached, converts were baptized, and local churches were formed.

But when God is active, the devil is also busy with spiritual counterfeits. In Great Britain in the 1830s, a Church of Scotland preacher, Edward Irving, was introduced to speaking in tongues by Mary Campbell of Fernicarry and Margaret McDonald of Port Glasgow. These young women attracted a large following, so much so that early brethren like J. N. Darby and Benjamin Newton personally investigated the phenomenon (they concluded that they were demonic). Having fully embraced this new doctrine, Irving was forced from his Regent’s Square Church in London and founded his own Catholic Apostolic Church where speaking in tongues and other ecstatic behaviors were on full display. Though popular for a brief period, the simplest summary by the Church of Scotland might be the best: “[He] altogether presents a melancholy and fearful exhibition of mental derangement and presumptuous infatuation.”

In the United States, nineteenth century movements presaged today’s interest in the gift of tongues. Both Joseph Smith of the Mormons and “Mother” Ann Lee of the Shakers, who claimed to speak 72 foreign languages, em-

braced this gift. The Shakers, a radical English Quaker sect who came to the US in 1774, felt a spiritual connection with the Montanists of post-apostolic times. Like the earlier heretics, they had perverse views of Christ; Ann Lee claimed to be the “female aspect of God’s dual nature as the second incarnation of Christ” (whatever that means!). Contemporary observers were not sympathetic; they described the Shaker practice of speaking in tongues as “unintelligible jargon, mere gibberish, and perfect nonsense.”

Lastly, and most importantly for us today, is the beginning of the modern Pentecostal Movement. At its foundation is Charles Parham, who purchased “Stone’s Folly,” in Topeka, KS., and there founded a Bible School in October 1900 to teach his theories of “divine healing” and to encourage missionary work. On January 1, 1901, during an evening Watch Night service, a 30 year-old woman, Agnes N. Ozman, claimed to lose her ability to speak English and spoke in “Chinese” for three days. This was followed, two days later, by 12 ministers who claimed to speak in tongues, and later by Parham, himself. He said “right then and there came a slight twist in my throat, a glory fell over me and I began to worship God in the Swedish tongue, which later changed to other languages and continued so until morning.”

This teaching rapidly spread to the Azuza Street Mission in Los Angeles, and the modern Pentecostal movement was underway. Ironically, Parham’s own profound mental, moral, and sociological disorders robbed him of the leadership of this movement, but his assessment of the Azuza work was particularly acute. Dismissing it as “fanaticism,” he wrote “I found hypnotic influences, familiar spirit influences, spiritualistic influences, mesmeric influences, and all kinds of spells, spasms, falling in trances, etc.” It was not a glowing endorsement from a man who certainly knew disorder when he saw it.

Oddly, none of Parham’s missionaries ever tested their “tongues” in foreign fields. In spite of some early (and unreliable) reports of independent testing of their ability to speak a foreign language, the movement quickly devolved into the meaningless babble of ecstatic speech, and any claims of genuine foreign languages were quickly forgotten. One can hardly square these events with the carefully prescribed gift of tongues described by the Apostle Paul.

One more point. While it is seldom, if ever, mentioned in the literature of this subject, the history of post-apostolic tongue gifts has a remarkable theme; in almost every instance, women are found at the root of the practice. In ancient Montanism, it was Prisca and Maximilla, who abandoned their husbands and claimed to see Christ “in female form.” In more mod-

ern times, we find Mary Campbell and Margaret McDonald at the heart of the Irvingite movement in Great Britain. Here in North America, the Shaker movement was founded by “Mother” Ann Lee, and the modern Pentecostal movement, ostensibly the birthright of Charles Parham, cannot conceal the foundational role of women, particularly Agnes Ozman.

Against all this is the simple fact there is no record in the New Testament of women speaking in tongues. Like all public gifts, the divine order of headship in the local church reserves their operation to males. Of course, our feminist-driven society has seized on the account of Philip’s daughters and their prophesying (Acts 21:9) as a pretext for overturning this truth, but even a casual reader can discern that there was nothing public about their gift. They evidently ministered to each other, and possibly to other women, but a broader exercise cannot be imagined from the text. The need for Agabus to come from Judea to prophecy to the Apostle clinches the argument.

Neither the Biblical record nor the historical one gives any hint of a legitimate, Spirit-filled exercise of the gift of tongues after the first century. The promise that “tongues will cease” has been fulfilled in exact detail. May God help us to evaluate all modern claims in that light, and “hold fast to that which is good;” the eternal, unchanging, inerrant Word of God.

CHAPTER 9

THE POLEMIC OF TONGUES

David Alves, Sr.

The gift of tongues is certainly an invigorating manifestation of the Spirit, yet, is it necessary or even in effect today?

Throughout the course of Paul’s epistles, spiritual gifts are listed five times. Relative to the development of the New Testament canon, 1 Corinthians 12 appeared first, then Romans 12, and lastly Ephesians 4. The gift of tongues appears three times in the earliest of these chapters: 1 Corinthians 12 (vv8-10, 28, 29-30).

The Biblical use of the gift of tongues has ceased but certain passages make sincere inquirers wonder if what charismatic circles practice today equates with the tongues spoken in early apostolic times. These puzzling passages need to be considered.

“And these signs shall follow them that believe; in My name ... they shall speak with new tongues” (Mark 16:17). Are these “new tongues” the untranslatable utterances that are spoken today?

The word “new” (*kainos*) means that the tongues to be spoken would be a fresh experience for the speakers. These were languages that, although unknown to the speakers, were comprehended and familiar to the hearers. Acts 2 (vv6-8) proves this; the tongues spoken at Pentecost were ordinary languages clearly understood by proselyte Jews that converged on Jerusalem for that feast. The companion gift of interpretation of tongues was not needed in Acts 2. That multilingual crowd heard messages in their own “old” mother tongues, spoken fluently by men to whom these languages were “new,” having never previously studied them.

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels ...” (1Cor 13:1). Does the gift of tongues employ angelic languages today? Paul uses several hypothetical and extreme examples (i.e., knowing all human languages and tongues of angels, understanding all mysteries and all knowledge, having all faith) to emphasize that even if all this were possible, it would be worthless without love. Furthermore, throughout the entire Bible, angelic communication with humans from Genesis (16:7-12) to Revelation (22:8-11) was always in a recognizable earthly language.

“For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him” (1Cor 14:2, 4; also vv13, 14, 19, 27). Could the expression “unknown tongue” refer to the incoherent garble we hear today?

Every occurrence of the word “unknown” in chapter 14 is in italics (KJV), indicating that translators supplied the English word although it is not in the Greek text. This expression has been used erroneously to teach that Paul was dealing with something foreign to the Pentecost experience. The languages represented in the local church at Corinth were fewer; likely Greek was spoken by the majority, Hebrew and Aramaic were spoken by Jews (16:12), and Latin by Roman saints (16:17).

If a Corinthian brother began to speak, for example, in Egyptian, it is more than likely that he would need someone with the divine gift of interpretation to communicate the message to his audience. The gift of interpretation for Egyptian was not needed in Jerusalem (Acts 2:10), but it would be needed in Corinth (1Cor 12:10, 30; 14:5, 13, 26, 27, 28).

In the absence of an interpreter, if a brother were to speak in tongues he

would be speaking only to God and would, with the Spirit's help, edify only himself (v4). Only God and he would understand, even though he was speaking in a recognizable earthly language. In verse 14 the apostle seems to contradict himself when he states that "if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful." The same Spirit Who enabled the man to speak a language he had not spoken before, also revealed to that man the meaning of the truth freshly communicated to him. However, his words were unfruitful because they did not edify the listeners who, without an interpreter, failed to understand his prayer.

"Unknown tongues" do not refer to jumbled babblings in private devotion, nor should ecstatic gibberish ever be used in Biblical church gatherings.

"Wherefore, brethren ... forbid not to speak with tongues" (1Cor 14:39). Does this verse teach that it is wrong to forbid the use of tongues today?

This epistle to the Corinthians was written by Paul about the year A.D. 55. The Old Testament was being used in Corinth but the New Testament was still incomplete with likely only James, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and Galatians in circulation. Another 50 years would have to pass until the Bible would be completed. In the meantime, the gift of tongues and other sign gifts, which were of a temporary nature, would give credence to the message preached until the canon of Scripture was completed (1Cor 13:10; Jude 3), thus rendering the sign gifts unnecessary. However, Corinthian believers in the middle of the first century were not to forbid its use ahead of God's timing.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues" (Acts 2:4). Is the gift of tongues a necessary proof that a believer has experienced the baptism of the Spirit?

The baptism in the Spirit (not "of," or "with" the Spirit) was an event that happened once-for-all at Pentecost (1Cor 12:13), joining all believers alive on earth that day into the Church which is the body of Christ. Since that day, every other believer becomes a member of this body at the moment of conversion. But Jerusalem believers, specifically, in the upper room were also filled with the Spirit that day. Those who make much of the reference to tongues in Acts 2 forget that there was also "a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" and "the appearance of cloven tongues like as of fire" that sat upon those in the upper room (vv2-3). Nowhere in the Scriptures is the gift of tongues stated as being the primary evidence that the indwelling of the Spirit has taken place in a believer (Eph 1:13).

"With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people"

(1Cor 14:21). Is not this quotation from Isaiah 28:11, 12 proof that what we hear today is the fulfillment of prophecy?

In Genesis 11 and in Isaiah 28, God's use of languages not understood, was a sign of judgment because of unbelief. "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (1Cor 14:22). A look at the three historical instances of tongues used in the New Testament (Acts 2, 10 and 19) will show that unbelieving Jewish audiences were present. As in Isaiah 28, the use of tongues in the New Testament was a sign of judgment upon the unbelieving Jews. The strange notion that the gift of tongues could or should be a blessing for believers today contradicts the sufficient Word of God.

CHAPTER 10

THE PROPERTIES AND POSSIBILITIES OF DIVINE HEALINGS

Dr. John Thropay

Aside from Jeremiah, there is probably no other servant of the Lord who has been tortured more, so afflicted by illnesses, suffered continuously more exhaustion and fatigue for doing the work of the Lord, or sustained more humiliation and rejection by his own countrymen, his children in the faith, and the Roman Empire, than the apostle Paul (Acts 9:16).

Paul was raised in relative affluence and with a noble upbringing at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). He experienced special miracle signs of healing, miraculously rose up on his own power after being stoned and left for dead, and had his life turned inside out with pain and suffering for his love of Christ. He teaches us that it was his illness and suffering that gave him the power to serve God, to learn humility, to marvel at the grace of God, to become a stronger Christian by perfecting His strength (2Cor 12:9), and to glory more in the Lord alone (2Cor 11:30). Just like illness, suffering, and humiliation, divine healing can also be a blessing from the Lord.

There are two types of divine healing. There are the miraculous healings connected with the signs and wonders of the early church, and there are natural healings that occur by virtue of prayer and medication. In certain cases, the latter is sometimes considered miraculous because of the rarity of the occurrence. On the other hand, it may have been considered mirac-

ulous because of the fortuitous coincidence of the events. The combination of events may involve the timing, the presence or absence of certain persons, the location of the event, and its coincidence with other events. Even the most remarkable serendipitous collection of events called a miracle today still does not even begin to equate with the “signs and wonders” types of miraculous healings done by Christ and by the apostles during the early apostolic days.

A “sign and wonder” may be defined as something that is accomplished contrary to nature, instantaneously, or within the hour (Matt 8:13), and where it can only result in giving glory to God regardless of the lack of faith of the recipient or the disbelief of the onlookers (Acts 3:1-22; 9:32-35). Raising someone from the dead, for example, cannot depend on the faith of the defunct since it is impossible to exercise faith of any kind. In addition, resurrection has a zero probability of occurring outside of the life-giving power of God. The healing sign can be further divided into the unique miracles of Christ and the special miracles of Peter and Paul.

The character of the person performing the healing sign further distinguishes the “wonder.” Christ uniquely performed a miracle numerous times (Matt 11:15; Luke 7:21). This miracle is individually described on seven occasions and is in the exclusive providence of Jehovah according to the Law of Moses (Exo 4:11). This unique miracle was proclaimed prophetically by Isaiah in 29:18, 35:5, 42:7. Creating a new eye is the exclusive prerogative of God Himself and therefore, only our Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, could do such a miracle. The latter is to be distinguished from resurrecting or re-injecting life into an eye that was already functioning normally. No OT or NT saint could ever perform such a miracle.

“Special,” but not “unique,” miracles of healing in the early apostolic days were performed by two of the Lord’s servants. God used the shadow of Peter (Acts 5:15), and the handkerchiefs or aprons of Paul (Acts 19:11-12), to heal every one that was ill or demon possessed (Acts 5:16).

The healings classified as signs and wonders are no longer occurring. This is evidenced Scripturally in various ways. First, we will consider the historical evidence of Paul’s life.

We can note Paul’s miraculous recovery from stoning in Acts 14:19 (A.D. 46) in contrast to the lack of healing from the thorn in the flesh in 2 Corinthians 12:5-10 (A.D. 57). Paul was “immune” to snake bites and able to heal Publius of the bloody flux (dysentery) as well as many others with various other diseases on the island of Melita in Acts 28 (about A.D. 60).

However, later, he had to leave Trophimus in Miletum sick (2Tim 4:20). He also advised Timothy to take medication for his gastric ailments (1Tim 5:23, A.D. 64). Thus, if the dating is accurate, the gift of healing as a sign and wonder for the apostle Paul waned and then expired between A.D. 57-60. The last miracles of Paul on the island of Melita probably occurred as a sign for those who were newly exposed to Christianity.

In the epistle, we note the unusual Corinthian assembly which still had the miraculous gift of healing (1Cor 12:28). Nevertheless they still had “many ... weak and sickly” among them (1Cor 11:30). Evidently, the sign gift of healing (along with other sign gifts) was waning and was only manifested on a sporadic basis in view of the significant number of sick persons in their assembly (A.D. 57). In 2 Corinthians 4:16, the gift of miraculous healing is not even mentioned.

The writer to the Hebrews notes that the sign gifts belonged to the prior generation of Christians and those who heard Him (Heb 2:3, 4). His generation was sustaining infirmities (Heb 4:5).

The causes for illnesses and suffering were many. Epaphroditus cared more for the Christians than he did for his own health. It was for their cause that he nearly died, but the Lord in mercy brought back his strength (Phil 2:27). Illness and suffering can be the result of personal physical persecution and torture for the name of Christ (2Cor 11:30), or from sin in the assembly in general, not necessarily from one’s own personal sins (1Cor 11:30). It can occur from Satan buffeting a Christian (2Cor 12:7); from natural causes due the frailty of the human body (Phil 2:30; 2Tim 4:20; 1Tim 5:23); from congenital abnormalities, (Acts 3, John 9); from parasites, bacteria, and other vectors (Acts 12:23; Acts 28:7); and from accidents, (Acts 20:9-10). Time and chance (Eccl 9:11,12) happen to all as in the case of Luke 13:4 with the tower of Siloam. Also, there can be psychological and/or spiritual causes, (Acts 13:11), and demon possession (Matt 12:22).

Five out of the seven times that infirmity and sickness are mentioned in Scripture, they are associated with prayer. This is the Christian’s first resource. Another treatment is rest and cessation from travel, as in the case of Trophimus whom Paul left at Miletus sick. Medicinal oil (not the oil for temple rites) is mentioned by our Lord in Luke 10:34 and by James in 5:14. Wine as a medicine is mentioned by our Lord in Luke 10:34 and by Paul for the ailments of Timothy. Our Lord recommends an eye salve for the Laodiceans’ blindness, figuratively speaking, in Revelation 3:18. Thus, rest, prayer, and medications are the Biblical methods for treating illnesses today.

Just as the apostle Paul has become a blessing to many, so we, through our sicknesses and afflictions, can become a fountain of blessing to those whom we love in the Lord and to all who are around us. We can also reap a greater reward of spiritual peace and knowledge of Christ's glory now, as well as a greater reward in heaven later (Phil 4:8-11; 2Cor 4:17). Through illness we can obtain a more abundant life in Christ now as the physical body fades away so that we can later be clothed from above (2Cor 5:1-4).

CHAPTER 11

THE PROMINENCE OF EXORCISM

David Petterson

“A STRONGER THAN HE SHALL COME”

It would be difficult to exaggerate any description of the power and control held by Satan. Extreme cases are found in the Gospel records and expressed as “possession” (Gk, *daimonizomai*, literally, “demonized”). Alex Konya, in his book entitled *Demons: A Biblically Based Perspective*, defines demon possession as “the invasion of a victim’s body by a demon, in which the demon exercises living and sovereign control over the victim, which the victim cannot successfully resist.” Demon possession often resulted in self-inflicted torture, suicidal attempts, mental and physical disorders, and a general desire to destroy. Perhaps the best and most fitting word used to describe what demons did to their victims is “torment” (Mt.8:29; Mk.5:7), the very word used to describe Satan’s ultimate demise (Rev.20:10).

A search for examples of demon possession in the Old Testament will produce very little. There are no clear undisputed references to demons being cast out of people in Old Testament times. So why is there such a high concentration of demonic activity in the Gospels and in the early days of the Church? And what purposes were these exorcisms intended to convey?

THESE EXORCISMS ANNOUNCED THE ARRIVAL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus said, “if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.” (Lk.11:20). It is significant that as soon as Jesus was anointed by the Spirit at His baptism to begin His public minis-

try, that the Spirit drove Him to where He would confront the King of the demons himself, Satan. And what was the devil's offer? It was to take the kingdoms of this world. But Jesus had come to inaugurate a new kingdom - the kingdom of God.

There are other connections between the arrival of the kingdom of God and heightened demonic activity. When the seventy disciples were commissioned, they were told to give this message: "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." (Lk.10:9) When they returned they said, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" (Lk.10:17, ESV). The same commission was given to the twelve disciples by Jesus: "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mt.10:7) The very first thing said about the twelve Jesus chose was that "he gave them power against unclean spirits" (Mt.10:1; Mk.6:7).

THESE EXORCISMS AFFIRMED THE POWER AND DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

One of the declared purposes of Christ's coming in the flesh was to "destroy the works of the devil." (1 Jn.3:8) The first promise of the Messiah's coming included the announcement of "enmity" between the serpent and his seed, and the Seed of the woman (Gen.3:15). Bernard Schneider says in *The World of Unseen Spirits*, "When Christ finally appeared, Satan marshaled all his forces to oppose and hinder the Son of God. Demons could not attack Christ personally, but they centered their activities on the inhabitants of the region where He worked." It should come as no surprise that when Jesus comes again to reign, the work of demons will be prevalent yet again (Rev.9:1-11; 12:7-9; 16:13-14).

Jesus' power and deity were not only demonstrated in casting demons out of individuals, but by what the demons did and said when He approached them. First, they knew who Jesus was. On a Sabbath day in the synagogue, the demons addressed Him: "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth...I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." (Mk.1:24) It is also evident that they knew the extent of Jesus' power by asking in the same verse, "Art thou come to destroy us?" Doubtless the demons' reference was to Jesus' coming to earth, not just to his arrival in the synagogue in Capernaum. The implication is that the demons expected their kingdom to be destroyed by Jesus.

In Luke 11, Jesus described the power of Satan over his victim as follows: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But

when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.” (vv.21,22) Satan was the “strong man,” but Jesus was “a stronger than he.” And on every occasion when He confronted a demon, he affirmed His superior might and deity.

THESE EXORCISMS ASSERTED THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST’S APOSTLES

The English word “exorcist” is derived from the Greek verb *exorkizo* which is found only in Matt.26:63. The word has the sense of adjuring or charging with an oath. The noun form is used only once in Acts 19:13 to describe a failed attempt by Jewish “exorcists” to cast out demons. The word is never used to describe the work of Christ or His apostles in delivering people from demons. Casting out demons in New Testament times was closely related to “gifts of healing” (literally, “gifts of healings,” 1 Cor.12:9). The Greek verb *iaomai*, “to heal” is used in the Synoptics and the Acts in association with the casting out of demons (Matt.15:28; Lk.9:42; Acts 10:38). Because of this, it is neither logical nor consistent with the New Testament pattern to separate the ability to cast out demons from the ability to miraculously heal the sick in general. Jesus, the seventy disciples, the twelve apostles, Philip (Acts 8:6-7), and Paul (Acts 19:11-12) were all able to heal diseases and cast out demons. An examination of Acts 5:12,16 will show that, indeed, the ability to cast out demons was one of the many sign gifts intended to assert the authority of Christ’s apostles as they preached the gospel of the kingdom in obedience to the command of Jesus. So is this gift still prevalent today? Robert Lightner makes an excellent point in his book *Angels, Satan, and Demons*: “If the ability to cast out demons is still present, then so is the gift of healings. However, the sign gifts were already past for second-generation Christians (Heb.2:3-4).”

CHAPTER 12

THE PRECEPTS OF EXORCISM

Joseph Dennison, Jr.

The devotion of Mary Magdalene and the evangelism of the Gadarean man and their radically changed lives are testimonies to the power of Christ to free the demon possessed. The disciples also were empowered on

occasion to cast out demons. But what about today? Are exorcisms part of the gospel? How and when should exorcisms be conducted?

MULTIPLE EXORCISMS

Demonic exorcisms in the apostolic era were unusual occurrences rather than the norm. There are only three occasions recorded in Acts where exorcisms occurred in mass.

Location	Audience	Reference	Apostle
Jerusalem	Jews	Acts 5:16	Peter
Samaria	Samaritan	Acts 8:7	Philip
Ephesus	Gentile	Acts 19:12	Paul

Notice these periods of exorcism were linked with a specific apostle. One of the “signs of an apostle” (2Cor 12:12) was the ability to perform miracles. In writing Acts, Luke carefully balances the recorded miracles of both Peter and Paul to symbolically equate their apostolic authority. Likewise, these exorcisms authenticate the apostolic credentials of Peter, Philip, and Paul.

Secondly, these three occasions were associated with the spreading of the gospel into a new area; first in Jerusalem among the Jews, then to Samaria, and finally into Ephesus among the Gentiles. Each of these localities was a hotbed of demonic activity. During the ministry of Christ there had been a dramatic increase in demonic activity in Judea. In Samaria, Philip encountered a sorcerer named Simon who used “sorcery and bewitched the people of Samaria” (Acts 8:9). In Ephesus the occult arts flourished so that the Ephesian converts burned their magic books upon conversion.

These brief periods of exorcisms were intended by God to authenticate the gospel message as it moved into new areas by demonstrating the apostles’ authority over the demonic forces operating in these localities. This is consistent with the purpose of the exorcisms performed by Christ Himself. “But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Luke 11:20 ESV). Christ’s power over demons authenticated that His message was from God. Likewise, these exorcisms validated the gospel message.

SPECIFIC EXORCISMS

In Acts 16:16-18 we have the only specific account of an exorcism. Paul encountered a “slave girl who had a spirit of divination.” She followed after

them crying out that “these men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” After this continued for many days Paul confronted the spirit possessing the slave girl with the words “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her” - this resulted in the exorcism of the spirit.

Paul appears cautious in performing an exorcism. The spirit’s crying went on for “many days” before he confronted it. Spiritual judgment is necessary to discern the presence of an evil spirit in a person. It is entirely likely that Paul required time to ascertain that it was a spirit speaking and not simply the girl.

By commanding the spirit to come out in the name of Christ Paul acknowledged that the power to cast out the demon came only from Jesus Christ. To invoke the name of Christ is to bring to bear His person and His power. Only divine power is sufficient to break the hold of demonic possession. This is not a magic formula for casting out demons, as the sons of Sceva learned (Acts 19:13-20), but invokes an authority to which evil spirits must respond.

In Acts 13 Paul confronts another man who is controlled by demonic influences. Paul is moving through the island of Cyprus with the gospel when he encounters “a certain magician” named Elymas who opposes the gospel. Paul condemns him as a “son of the devil” and calls down blindness on him. Here Paul “filled with the Holy Spirit” rebukes rather than exorcises the spirit.

From Paul’s experiences then, we learn the need for spiritual discernment, dependence on the power of God, and being controlled by the Holy Spirit in order to help the demon possessed.

APOSTOLIC TEACHING

Turning to the epistles we discover there are virtually no instructions on how or when to cast out demons. There are no exhortations to engage in this ministry. The ability to cast out demons is not on the lists of spiritual gifts. There are no examples of local assemblies involved in exorcisms though many were located in areas of occult activity. Even when Paul writes to the Ephesians about putting on the “whole armor of God,” he is writing about withstanding personal attacks, not conducting exorcisms.

What about Mark 16:17 (ESV) where Christ says that “these signs will accompany those who believe: in My name they will cast out demons”? Leaving aside the arguments against the manuscript authority for these

verses, there is no mandate in these verses to cast out demons. The exhortation is to “proclaim the gospel” not to produce these signs. It is simply a statement that there would be such “signs,” as in fact occurred in Acts.

While exorcisms may occur today, it appears they do not play a central role in Christianity. The lack of instruction supports the conclusion that they were primarily “signs” which occurred in the early Church age to validate the apostolic message.

EXORCISMS TODAY

Demonic possession is real. Demonic activity flourishes in locales where pagan worship is rampant. Yet many in the West have opened the door to demonic possession and influence through drugs, séances, psychic readings, and other occult phenomenon. Recognizing the signs of demonic possession requires discernment. Persons under demon possession are often “oppressed” (Matt 4:24; 8:16 ESV) by the evil spirits causing mental and psychological anguish. (Discernment is required as many mental illnesses can be medically treated and are not from demonic influence). Those possessed by evil spirits often exhibit self-destructive behavior patterns (Luke 8:27; 9:42). The presence of multiple personalities or voices and the possession of superhuman strength (Luke 8) may be indicators of demonic possession.

Can exorcisms occur today? Certainly. Nothing presented in the NT would prohibit us from believing they do. The compassion of Christ for those enslaved by Satan and the power of Christ over Satan’s minions are undiminished. However, the limited use of exorcism and the silence of the epistles would cause us, in prayerful dependence, to seek spiritual discernment and power from God before attempting confrontation with evil spirits.

CHAPTER 13

THE PATTERN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET

John Dennison

The first prophetic statement in the Bible was given by the Lord God Himself. He told Satan, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt

bruise His heel” (Gen 3:15). Enoch (Jude 14-15) followed with his prophecy before Abraham’s time but Abraham was the first man in the Bible to be called a prophet, and that by God (Gen 20:7). While some prophets are not identified, over 25 are specifically named in the Old Testament. Jeremiah receives the honor of being mentioned most often as “the prophet.” Malachi gave us the last written prophecy and John the Baptist, the forerunner, was the last Old Testament prophet before the Lord Jesus. The word is used 315 times in the Old Testament and refers, at times, to a person who tells the future, but more often has a broader use. For example, the second mention of the word is when Aaron was to be Moses’ prophet (Exo 7:1), giving the meaning of a spokesman, or one who would speak on his behalf.

SELECTED PROPHETS AND THEIR MAKEUP

The majority of Old Testament prophets were men of distinguished character such as Moses, Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc. The Biblical principle is that these men were selected or called by God for their character and convictions which gave emphasis to their communication of truth. Luke, Peter, and the holy angel, give light on these men when they describe them as “holy men of God” (Luke 1:70; 2Peter 1:21; Rev 22:6).

SPIRITUAL PROPHETS AND THEIR MESSAGE

Some gave many or long prophecies which, in written form, became known for their length as major prophecies, while others gave shorter prophecies and for that reason alone were called minor prophets. Haggai gave one of the most succinct descriptions of a true prophet as “the Lord’s messenger in the Lord’s message unto the people” (Hag 1:13). Zechariah said that God “spake by the mouth of His holy prophets” (Luke 1:70). So they were God’s instruments to communicate His will to the people. A prophet was also to communicate “in the name of the Lord” (Deut 18:22) or with all the authority of heaven. Peter explained that “No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man” (2Peter 1:20 ESV). A true prophet did not manufacture a message through his own imagination or feelings. Instead, these men became channels for divine revelation and application of truth to real life situations as they were “carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2Peter 1:21). While each prophet communicated a specific message to a specific audience about a specific situation, all written prophecy gives some insight and revelation of the Lord Jesus (Luke 24:27). Sometimes the prophets did not fully understand the message they were giving (1Peter 1:10), but nevertheless they “enquired and searched diligently” with great interest in God and His great program of revealing grace.

SENSITIVE PROPHETS AND THEIR METHODS

Most prophets conveyed revelation from God in the form of a spoken message. Sixteen books in the Old Testament bear the names of the ministry of prophets who likely spoke first, but then wrote later. Others, like Ezekiel (Eze 4:4) and Jeremiah (Jer 27:1-12) gave some of their prophecies in the form of pantomime or symbolic acts, representing a message from the Lord to His people. In all methods, it was incumbent upon each man selected to prophesy to do so with utmost faithfulness.

STONED PROPHETS AND THEIR MISTAKES

In most jobs, there is at least some tolerance for mistakes. However, if a man claimed to be a prophet in Old Testament times, he would want to be very sure that God had called him to that role. “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously” (Deut 18:22). For example, Isaiah prophesied 200 years before it happened that a king called Cyrus would give an edict for captive Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild it. At the time, neither he nor anyone else could tell if he was telling the truth or just imagining or inventing this idea. His credibility for long-term prophecies would depend on the veracity of his short-term prophecies. The divine standard to identify a messenger from God would be 100 percent accuracy. One failure and the people were to reject the prophet and his message. That prophet would end up stone dead.

Fortune tellers and “secular prophets” like Nostradamus and Shirley McClaine, and spiritual prophets like Muhammad, Charles Russell, Joseph Smith, Ellen White, the modern Harold Camping, and others, would not have survived beyond their first failed prophecy. The same would apply to many religious organizations who gave false prophecies such as the Watchtower Society (Jehovah’s Witnesses) and the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons). The modern charismatic movement is also full of “prophecies” and “prophets” in local churches and abroad whose accuracy is less than 100 percent perfect. To avoid this standard, many modern prophecies are vague and general to allow for greater flexibility in the application and interpretation. This is not how God works and shows that this is not Biblical or divinely inspired prophesy.

SNEAKY PROPHETS AND THEIR MOTIVES

No one bothers making counterfeit \$13.00 bills. The reason they print bills of \$20.00, \$50.00, and \$100.00 is because they are only effective if they are

imitating real, genuine bills. Because revelation given to prophets was to be God's authentic way of communicating with His people for 1500 years, God anticipated that the enemy would produce frauds and counterfeits. He told Israel that there would be diviners, observers of times, enchanters, witches, charmers, consultants with familiar spirits, wizards, and necromancers in the nations around them (Deut 18:9-12). Israel was to distance herself from all demonically energized counterfeit communication which was, and still is, particularly repulsive to God.

God also warned (Deut 13:1-5) of the particular deceit of those who would predict events that would actually come to pass and verify their message with miracles. Although this shocking show would mesmerize the multitude, God called Israel to apply the litmus test of motives and results. If in the end it was not intended to draw God's people to Him in obedience and love, they were to take this counterfeit and stone him. Israel was to have a zero-tolerance policy for imitation of authentic divine realities. They were to constantly evaluate all prophets, even down to the objectives and the results of their ministry. Jesus taught the same in the New Testament when He warned of false prophets and teachers. He simply said, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt 7:20).

SERIOUS PROPHETS AND THEIR METICULOUSNESS

Why is God so demanding when it comes to revelation and prophecy? First, He always protects His own character and infallibility. God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), and Israel was responsible to discern when the God of truth was speaking to them and when it was fraudulent so as to never allow anyone to question God's reliability.

God always protects the character and offices of His Son as well. "God, having spoken in many parts and in many ways formerly to the fathers in the prophets, the end of these days has spoken to us in the person of the Son" (Heb 1:2 Darby). Revelation and prophecy were given in limited ways and at limited times, but it was always with the anticipation that last of all God would speak "in" Son. The origin of prophecy, the agent of prophecy, and the fulfillment of the revelation would all be found in one Person. So when Moses gave the Lord's absolute standard for accuracy in prophecy, he also promised that one day He would raise up "a prophet" in Israel (Jewish), like his brethren (a real man), yet like God (the Word became flesh) Who would speak on God's behalf and as God (Deut 18:15). Christ would fulfill the role of prophet in which all others had been functioning through the centuries. Because Christ was the ultimate end in view of

prophecy and prophets, God jealously protected the office and role of the prophet even with the death penalty.

There should be no surprise then that the Bible warns often against “false teachers” and ends with the last mention of a false prophet (Rev 19:20). The devil has wanted the place of worship since his fall (Isa 14:14; Matt 4:9) and will perform an imitation of the incarnation by taking possession and control of the beast, the antichrist. During the Tribulation, an image of the beast will be set up in the Jewish temple with a view to the worship of this man indwelt by Satan himself. To present and propagate this worship, there will be a demonically empowered “false prophet.” The Apostle John saw God’s final response to Satan’s imitation of God’s holy and perfect Prophet. He said that the beast and the false prophet, “both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Rev 19:20).

May God then give us discernment when we consider prophecy in the modern Charismatic Movement. As John wrote, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1John 4:1).

CHAPTER 14

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT PROPHETS

Shawn St. Clair

FINDING A PROPHET

You don’t have to look hard to find prophets and prophetesses in the New Testament. Luke, for example, tells of Anna (2:36), John the Baptist (7:28), and Christ (13:33, 24:19, cf. Deut 18:18). He continues his list in Acts, where the early church prophets included Agabus, Judas, and Silas in Jerusalem (11:28, 15:32); Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul named as prophets and teachers in Antioch (13:1); and Philip’s four daughters who prophesied in Caesarea (21:8). Sadly, along with the faithful we find the false. From Barjesus to Jezebel, the deceivers set out to turn seekers from the gospel, saints from the truth, and the spiritual to the carnal (Acts 13:6; Rev 2:20).

FUNDAMENTALS OF A PROPHET

New Testament prophets received direct revelation from God and communicated it to others, as did their Old Testament counterparts. Divine revelation included the past, present, and future. Christ was recognized as a prophet when He revealed the Samaritan woman's past, just as Nathan revealed David's past (John 4; 2Sam 12). Anna spoke of the present Redeemer as Moses spoke of present salvation (Luke 2; Exo 14). Agabus told of a future famine, just as did Elisha (Acts 11; 2Kings 8). The revelations given to the prophets also introduced new doctrines to be appreciated (Eph 3:5-7), new directions to be followed (1Cor 11:23-34), and new details to be understood (Rev 10:11). In every case, Old or New Testament, true prophets revealed previously unknown truth. This differs from those with the spiritual gift of teaching, who are enabled by God to communicate previously revealed truth (2Tim 2:2).

FOUNDATION OF THE PROPHETS

Like apostles, New Testament prophets were essential. The Church was "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph 2:20). Being foundational, both apostles and prophets provided for needs that existed specifically at the early stage of the building. Apostles, the small group of men who had been eye-witnesses of Christ and who were publically identified and commissioned by Him (Luke 6:13), communicated His words and His will. Prophets, second in importance (1Cor 12:28), were similarly used by God to reveal His will for His people (Eph 3:5), complementing the words of the apostles.

FACING A PROPHET

Unlike apostles, whose authority was established by Christ's direct call, New Testament prophets were to be tested before their words were trusted. Paul wrote, "Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good" (1Thess 5:20-21 ESV). John wrote, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1John 4:1). The indwelling Spirit of God helps believers in every age sense the true and suspect the false (1John 2:20, 27). But God also gave the early church some who were gifted specifically to guard against false prophecies. An orderly assembly allowed two or three prophets to speak, one at a time, and then others "judged" (1Cor 14:29). The others (literally, "other of the same kind") were likely themselves prophets, but also possessors of the gift of discernment (1Cor

12:10). Just as the one who spoke with the gift of a foreign tongue could be understood by the gifted interpreter, the gifted prophet was verified by the gifted discerner (1Cor 14:27-32).

A further test is found in Paul's statement, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1Cor 14:37). A true prophet recognized the authority of the apostles' writings, never contradicting the written Word of God.

A fourth test of any prophet is accuracy. The Lord said to Israel, "When a prophet speaketh ... if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously" (Deut 18:22). The consequences: "The prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak ... even that prophet shall die" (Deut 18:20). While the command to put to death false prophets is not for the church, the accuracy of the Lord's true prophets never changed. They had to get it right 100% of the time. Luke carefully notes the true prophets' predictions "came to pass" (Acts 11:28; 27:44).

FINALITY OF THE PROPHETS

When constructing, the foundation is done long before the building is complete. For the Church, the foundation's completion coincided with the delivery of the New Testament. Jude refers to "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (1:3 Newberry). "The faith" being the sum of the truth—the Scriptures—was "delivered to the saints" and, once complete, are never to be added to. Paul describes this completeness in 1 Corinthians 13: "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (v10). Partial revelations to prophets became pointless as nothing is to be added to the completed revelation. The prophets "passed away" (vv8-10), being replaced by something far superior—the mature, clear, written Word of God (vv11-12).

FALSE PROPHETS

Are there New Testament prophets today? Clearly, the answer is "No." They were part of the foundation, and the foundation is complete. They were used for revelation, and the revelation is complete. In fact, to claim to have the gift of prophecy today contradicts the writings of the apostles, failing a key test of a true prophet—not to mention the need for 100%

accuracy. Could we say kindly, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, please think again”?

FUTURE PROPHETS

Will God send prophets in the future? Yes, but not for the Church. Once the Church is raptured, humanity will be deceived by many false prophets (Matt 24:11, 24; Rev 19:20). Into that scene of judgment God will send two prophets (Rev 11). Their subsequent murder reflects this world’s hatred of everything God has revealed by His prophets in both of His Testaments. Their miraculous resurrection and ascension affirms that “heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away” (Luke 21:33). We thank God for the true prophets He used to communicate the Old and New Testaments, and we rest and rejoice today in the complete, eternal, infallible, unchanging, written Word of God.