

The Gifts Of The Spirit

Introduction. A lot of people today claim to possess the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. Religious programs show televangelists speaking in tongues and healing the sick, but excitement over these gifts is no longer limited to “charismatic” churches. In recent years, members of several mainstream denominations have claimed to have the ability to speak in tongues.

No one can deny that the apostles and some other Christians in the New Testament possessed the ability to perform miracles. The subject that we will address in this lesson is whether or not the Bible teaches that these same gifts exist today.

I. The Gift Of The Spirit And Holy Spirit Baptism

- A. Before discussing the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, a discussion of the “gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38 is necessary.
 - 1. This “gift” is salvation and all of its attendant blessings such as fellowship with God and an eternal inheritance given to ones who believed in Christ (vss. 39-41, 47).
 - 2. The “gift of the Spirit” is similar to the “times of refreshing coming from the presence of the Lord” in Acts 3:19.
- B. Necessary observations of Holy Spirit baptism.
 - 1. Jesus would administer Holy Spirit baptism (Matthew 3:9-12).
 - a) Jesus has power to do everything. He can baptize in the Holy Spirit and baptize with fire.
 - b) These verses do not reveal who receives the baptism; only who would dispense and administer it.
 - 2. Holy Spirit baptism was promised (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5).
 - a) The apostles received it on Pentecost (Acts 1:26-2:4), and Cornelius is the only other example recorded (Acts 10:44-48).
 - b) It reminded Peter of “the beginning” which had been several years earlier on the day of Pentecost (Acts 11:15-17). Why would it remind him of a “like gift” years earlier if all converts had been receiving it all along?
 - 3. Holy Spirit baptism was received directly from heaven.
 - a) No person intervened or assisted (Acts 2:1-4).
 - b) It was accompanied by speaking in tongues (Acts 2:8-11; 10:44-46).
 - 4. Holy Spirit baptism served as God’s witness.
 - a) It proved the apostles were God’s spokesmen (Acts 2:14-16; Hebrews 2:3-4), and it proved that the Gentiles could be saved (Acts 15:7-9).
 - b) Holy Spirit baptism did as much for you and me as it did for Cornelius because it established the fact that the Gentiles could be saved just like the Jews.
 - c) If we were saved only by the Holy Spirit, why was water commanded (Acts 10:47-48; 1 Peter 3:20-21)?
 - 5. Holy Spirit baptism ceased by A. D. 64.
 - a) The book of Ephesians was written by this date, but Ephesians 4:5 says there is “one baptism.” Which baptism ceased? Water or Holy Spirit?

- b) Charismatics and holiness groups practice both baptisms, but only one can be valid. Which one is it?

II. *The Miraculous Gifts Of The Holy Spirit Identified And Explained*

- A. Paul devoted 1 Corinthians 12-14 to a discussion of the identification and regulation of miraculous gifts.
- B. In 12:8-10, at the beginning of this section, he identified nine gifts.
 - 1. Word of wisdom -- This gift would be an oral proclamation of a message which had wisdom for its content.
 - 2. Word of knowledge -- This gift bestows a more precise understanding of God's will. This person would have clarity regarding the relationship of the two testaments.
 - 3. Faith -- This was not mere belief, but was apparently a miraculous working faith; a faith that carried with it a divine power (Matthew 17:20; 21:20-21).
 - 4. Gifts of healings -- The power to restore health to those with physical ailments. This is one of the more popular gifts that people claim to have today, but "miracles" today do not compare to the healings that were performed by the Lord and His apostles.
 - 5. Working of miracles -- The ability to perform supernatural acts in order to confirm the teaching of the gospel.
 - 6. Prophecy -- "Prophet" means a spokesman for God. This gift enabled one to reveal the past, present, and future divine revelation of God. This was a more desirable gift (1 Corinthians 14:1).
 - 7. Discerning of spirits -- In a time when divine revelation was being given through men, the church needed a way to determine who was a true prophet or teacher (1 Corinthians 14:29, 37; 1 John 4:1). This gift was a means of protecting the early church.
 - 8. Divers kinds of tongues -- The ability to speak in an existing, understandable language that one had not learned (Acts 2:4-8; 1 Corinthians 14:22).
 - a) Pentecostals believe that speaking in tongues is evidence of a "third work" of grace, in addition to conversion and sanctification.
 - b) This gift is misunderstood today to be the uncontrollable uttering of ecstatic sounds or "glossolalia" (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:28).
 - 9. Interpretation of tongues -- This gift was the ability to understand a language and translate it for the church (1 Corinthians 14:27).

III. *The Purpose Of The Miraculous Gifts*

- A. God does not do anything without a purpose, and understanding the reason God gave these gifts, and the role these gifts played in the early church is explained in the Bible.
- B. These gifts edified the early church in the absence of the written word.
 - 1. These various gifts were given for the benefit of the entire church, not just those who possessed them (1 Corinthians 12:7).
 - 2. The first century church did not have the Bible, and the apostles could not be in every local church. In the absence of the apostles, local congregations needed these gifts (Romans 1:11). When a local church assembled, they

relied upon the members who had miraculous gifts as a means of receiving instruction (1 Corinthians 14:1-5, 26).

C. These gifts confirmed the word.

1. "Confirm" means "to certify or prove as being true." The miraculous gifts accompanied preaching and proved that preaching was from God (Mark 16:20; Acts 8:5-6).
2. These gifts were never intended primarily as a means of helping people physically. Paul and Epaphroditus did not need confirmation of the word, so they were not healed miraculously (2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Philippians 2:25-27).
3. When God's revelation was completed and compiled into the New Testament, these gifts have served their purpose and are no longer necessary (Hebrews 2:3-4; Jude 3).

IV. The Means Of Receiving The Miraculous Gifts Of The Holy Spirit

- A. Some believe they possess miraculous gifts because they claim to have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, but according to the Bible, the only way that someone other than an apostle received miraculous gifts was by the laying on of the hands of an apostle.
1. In Acts 8, after the city of Samaria had received the gospel, Peter and John were sent so they could receive the Holy Spirit (vss. 14-15).
 2. Luke tells us that "then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (vs. 17). One of the new converts in Samaria was able to see for himself exactly how men received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (vss. 18-19).
- B. Paul indicated that this was the reason that he wanted to visit the Romans (Romans 1:11). Paul also instructed Timothy to "stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6).

V. The Duration Of The Miraculous Gifts Of The Holy Spirit

- A. When one understands the intended purpose of these gifts (to reveal and confirm the truth), and the means of receiving these gifts (through the laying on of the hands of an apostle), it should be easy to understand how long God intended these gifts to last.
- B. When the last apostle died, the means of receiving these gifts were gone. When the generation after the apostles died, these gifts disappeared. This is also the time when the New Testament was taking shape. For one to have these gifts today, he would have to prove:
1. An apostle is still alive.
 2. Some who received these gifts directly from an apostle are still alive.
 3. God is now imparting these gifts to men in a way that is not revealed in the Bible.
- C. Any serious Bible student must reject all three possibilities. The New Testament speaks of the time when miraculous gifts would come to an end (1 Corinthians 13:8-10).

1. Paul said that these gifts (prophecies, tongues, and knowledge) would “fail,” “cease,” and “vanish away.” This miraculous means of receiving revelation was knowing God’s will “in part” (vs. 9). The early Christians received God’s word piece-by-piece during their weekly assemblies.
2. The “perfect” would do away with the “part” (vs. 10). The “part” is the miraculous gifts, but what is the “perfect”?
 - a) Charismatics say that the “perfect” refers to Christ, and that these gifts are to last until He returns. However, to be honest with the text, the “perfect” has to correspond to the “part.” The “parts” make up the “perfect.”
 - b) If the “part” was the means of receiving God’s revelation piece-by-piece through the miraculous gifts, then the “perfect” is the complete revelation. The New Testament is the perfect and complete revelation of God’s will. It has come, so the “part” has “failed, ceased, and vanished away.”
3. In their infancy, babies have different needs than adults (vs. 11). The church, in its infancy, needed help that it does not need today. Those who desire to have the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit would actually have the church regress back to its infancy. Like Paul, the church has put away what is associated with its youth.

Conclusion. People believe that they have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak in tongues, prophesy, perform miracles, heal the sick, and cast out demons. They may be sincere, but these claims do not harmonize with the Bible’s teaching.

Miraculous gifts were real. They were given to Christians through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. These gifts were the means of equipping the church and confirming the word to unbelievers. When the last apostle died, these gifts were no longer available to mankind. The “part” was replaced with the “perfect.” Today we have the New Testament to guide us.