

DICKSON
THE HOLY SPIRIT
and the
EARLY CHURCH



Temporary Assistance
Until The Perfect Came

The Holy Spirit And The Early Church

– Temporary Assistance Until The Perfect Came –

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PREFACE

We do not assume that the material of this book, and similar studies on this subject, will be without controversy. There are several reasons for this, particularly in this era where the religious world has moved into the realm of some very refined religions. With these religions have come some accepted beliefs that are assumed to be true because of their widespread acceptance.

The subject of this book will hit at the heart of some religious groups that define their existence by authorities for faith other than the word of God. This is true in view of what constitutes a religion. The problem with religion is that it is based on the religious inclinations, or inventions of men, rather than the revelation of God. We were created inherently religious by our Creator. However, when we leave the revelation of our Creator for the inclinations of our own experiential inventions, we have moved away from our Creator and His word as our final authority in matters of faith.

This is evidenced particularly in reference to the subject of this book. Those who are enthusiastic about being religious often fail to consult the word of God in order to substantiate their beliefs. We sometimes forget that in the absence of the Bible, we seek for something other than the Bible to be the foundation of our faith. If we have little knowledge of, or desire to base our faith on the word of God, then we will seek another foundation for our faith. The religionist subsequently turns to his own authority, either in his religious traditions or the experiential events of his life in order to validate his faith.

We live in an era where the Bible now plays a very small role as the foundation

upon which faith is established. When the Bible is consulted, those who have a smattering of Bible often seek to steal something from the Bible that had historical reference only to the first believers. In reference to the subject of this book, those who know little about the Bible, often seek to take away from the Bible only those favorite passages that appeal to some experiential encounter of their humanistic religiosity. The Bible, therefore, ceases to be the final authority in matters of faith. It becomes a second source from which one can justify something that is already established experientially in his or her life. This is the era of religion in which we find ourselves today.

As a consequence, it is not surprising that religious adherents today seek out those religions where they can find some sense of experiential validation that focuses on one's self. In doing this, worshipers have confused worship with being emotionally mesmerized by experiential events that are passed off as confirming miracles. Instead of giving one's heart in worship, the religious worshiper seeks to walk away from assemblies after having received something from the assembly. The result is that many worshipers have become narcissistic takers in religious assemblies, and not givers.

It is extremely difficult for the narcissistic religionist to connect the dots in Bible study, especially in studies of the Holy Spirit. In an era where most of the Bibles are electronic, there is no longer a flipping of pages in order to connect all the dots of the word of God on a particular subject. Rightly dividing the word of God through long hours of study is a relic of the past.

In the absence of note keeping, we now live in an era where supposed Bible students only finger their way across a laptop screen in hopes of finding a favorite passage, not to research a subject of connected dots in their historical background and application. In this quest, any favorite passage will do that would satisfy those who are seeking validation for that which has already been experienced, regardless of whether the truth of the matter is studied in its historical context.

There is an irony about our present religious environment. We have discovered that the more experiential the religious experience, the less the experientialist understands the power of the gospel. This is revealed in the fact that the experiential religionist often seeks to base his faith on his own personal experiences, rather than the power of the gospel of God's grace that was revealed through the incarnate Son of God. Since the experiential worshiper attributes his experiences to the supposed direct work of the Spirit in his life, then the power of the gospel has little importance or power in transforming his life into the image of Jesus. He very subtly sacrifices the power of the gospel for a Spirit experience.

This has led to little emphasis being placed on the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that is revealed in the word of God. People find it difficult to "*grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" because they have little knowledge of the source of our knowledge of the gospel of our Lord.

If one asserts that his personal experiences of emotional hysteria are the product of the Holy Spirit, and thus the foundation of his faith, then there is little impetus to focus on the gospel of the in-

carate Son of God, if indeed one has ever really studied the magnitude of the incarnation of the Son of God in the first place.

There is so little focus on the gospel among religionists today, that many assemblies have digressed into being "Jesus, Jesus" miracle sessions of the Holy Spirit, rather than an experience of the preached gospel of King Jesus. Open Bible study among most churches is an anomaly because the attendees have never been together with a Bible in their laps, discussing the word of God. Their participation in their religion is simply a cheering session on Sunday morning that is led by a very charismatic cheerleading preacher.

We must remember that our faith is true only if it is based on the gospel of Jesus, not on the work of the Holy Spirit, whether imagined or true. We seek to glorify Christ, as He said the Holy Spirit would also do through His work. We would not, therefore, be diverted to a subtle glorification of the Holy Spirit over Christ by focusing on the work of the Spirit, more than the power of the gospel. If we come to our senses in a "miracle-working assembly" that focuses on miracles from the Holy Spirit, then we know that we have been diverted from Christ to the glorification of the Holy Spirit.

We would not, therefore, be rebellious children who would turn away from the "book, chapter and verse" faith of our forefathers. There is no shortcut to a faith that is based on the word of God. The faith that is pleasing to God is not spontaneously generated. It is grown through years of Bible study and Bible living. Jesus never promised that the Holy Spirit would steal this adventure away from us by directly inserting faith into us.

The Holy Spirit never intended that

He would work in a way in our lives that would rob us of our desire to diligently understand His ministry in our lives that is revealed through His word. He did not work endlessly through the inspired pens of holy men to put into print the will of God, and then turn around and circumvent all His efforts of working through the inspired word of God. There is no shortcut to faith, and thus the Holy Spirit would do nothing to marginalize the power of the word of God to build the faith of those who love Jesus.

No matter what conclusions to which we may come in reference to the work of the Holy Spirit, we must all agree on this one point: **The Spirit will not discard the word He brought into the world through inspiration in order to short-circuit its power by any work He would do.** If one does not believe this, then we are sure that that person gives little time in his or her life to the study of 1,500 years of work that the Spirit put into the inspira-

tion of the Bible.

It is only through the inspired word of God that we can understand the power of the gospel, or even discuss these matters. If we seek to dodge the word of God on our road to a greater faith, then we will end up with a religion that is based on ourselves, and not the word of God. And in religion we will find ourselves depending on ourselves. Subsequently, we will go in search for fellow religionists who are also struggling in experiential assemblies for something the Spirit never promised He would give. Our faith will subsequently digress into being experientially founded, rather than gospel based. We personally do not want to go there, and thus, we continually open our Bibles on a regular basis and diligently present ourselves before our Father. We would be as David was inspired to teach us to be: *“O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all day long”* (Ps 119:97).

INTRODUCTION

The church existed in the first century for at least twenty years before the first of the New Testament documents were written. Copies of the Old Testament existed. However, these copies were mostly confined to the synagogues of the Jews. The New Testament Scriptures did not come into existence until the middle and latter part of the first century. It was God’s plan, therefore, to directly instruct and lead the early Christians through the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. When we study through the history of the early church, it is imperative that we understand the work of the Holy Spirit in the context of the miraculous gifts that were given to enhance the establishment and ministry of the saints. This exciting study opens the door to understand better the development of the church in the first century until the New Testament documents were written and circulated among the Christians. Until the New Testament Scriptures came into existence as the foundation upon which the faith of the early Christians was based, the disciples were edified through the miraculous gifts. Once the Scriptures were revealed in their entirety, then the gifts passed away. They passed away in order to give way to the great blessing of the written word of God. Our ministries today, therefore, are directed and enhanced by the blessing of the Holy Spirit-inspired word of God.

In Joel 2:28 the prophecy concerning God’s outpouring of the Holy Spirit would be a blessing for “all flesh.” Therefore, the blessing of the baptism of the apostles with the Holy Spirit that occurred in Acts 2 reached far beyond the apostles themselves. Old men, young men, sons, daughters, servants and slaves were included in the fulfillment of the Joel 2 prophecy. We must investigate how this prophecy was fulfilled in the first century and how its fulfillment blesses us today.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit was promised specifically to the apostles. The effects of this baptism would go

beyond the apostles to “all flesh.” Technically speaking, however, there is a difference between the “baptism with the Holy Spirit” upon the apostles and the “outpouring” of the Spirit upon all flesh. The apostles alone received the baptism with the Spirit that was specifically promised to them by Jesus (At 1:5). In a similar manner the Spirit came upon the household of Cornelius. However, the outpouring of the Spirit on the household of Cornelius must not be confused with the unique empowering baptism that the apostles alone experienced in Acts 2. The “outpouring” of Joel 2 includes “all flesh.” Therefore, the outpouring of

the Holy Spirit in a baptismal manner in Acts 2 would have consequences that would extend to “all flesh.” The consequences of the baptism would continue, but not the baptism itself.

Though the apostles alone were baptized with the Spirit in Acts 2, the effect of that baptism began the preaching of the gospel, and thus implemented the establishment of the early church as believers in the gospel obeyed the gospel.

The result of the outpouring of the Spirit on the apostles is usually underestimated by many Bible students. Regardless of what one’s view of the work of the Spirit today, we have consistently found that some Bible students in this area of study have generally failed to understand the permeating miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in the first century church. This is especially true in reference to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit that were prevalent among the disciples of the first century.

In an effort to activate a direct operation of the Spirit today on the hearts of men, some have unfortunately applied passages to Christians today that should be interpreted and applied only in the context of the first century church. Passages that define the direct work of the Spirit in the affairs of the New Testament church in the first century should not be used to affirm the same today. If we do this, we **weaken** the miraculous work of the Spirit in the early church.

Those passages that talk about a direct and miraculous activity of the Spirit in the early church are “watered down” in their first century context if we say what we experience today was the same as that which existed in the first century.

By forcing passages that refer to the miraculous work of the Spirit in the historical context of the first century to apply to us today, we often lose the real and actual work of the Spirit in both the first century and today. Interpreters who do not make a distinction between the miraculous and non-miraculous work of the Spirit actually fail to see the purpose of the Spirit in confirming the messengers of God and their message in the first century. In their efforts to make the Spirit’s work the same today as it was in the beginning and establishment of the church, they fail to understand the work of the Spirit both in the first century and today.

There are those who are arguing for confirming miracles today as they existed in the early church. They claim that miraculous gifts exist today as they did in the first century church. But this is actually an attack against the miraculous work of the Spirit in His historical setting of miraculous work in the early church. The modern-day pseudo-miracles of overzealous religionists are compared with the confirming miracles of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament church. By equating the “presumptuous miracles” today with the true confirming

miracles of the New Testament, the New Testament miracles lose their power to confirm the message of the gospel.

The hermeneutics of the above interpreters have led to a misunderstanding of the direct work of the Spirit in the early church. In our failure to understand the New Testament in its historical setting, we have clouded our interpretation of passages that relate specifically to the miraculous work of the Spirit in the first century. We must remember that the New Testament letters were written to those early disciples wherein the Spirit worked openly in directing the assemblies, edification, teaching and prayers of the disciples who were struggling to come out of Jewish religiosity and idolatrous worship.

In the beginning, the early disciples had no New Testaments as we have them today. They did not have many copies of even the Old Testament. In the absence of such inspired-written guidance, they sat in Bible classes that were conducted **directly** by the inspired prophets. In order for us to receive an adequate and accurate interpretation of the letters that were written to those first disciples, we must step into an “interpreter’s time machine” and return to the first century context. In order to understand their assemblies without any copies of the Bible, we will through historical hermeneutics, have to somehow mentally sit in their assemblies and watch how the Spirit worked through the mi-

raculous gifts.

If we try to understand the ministry of the Spirit in the first century by our modern-day needs, or experiences, we can be sure that our understanding of the Spirit’s work in the early church and today will be distorted. We must remember that **we are secondary recipients of the letters of instruction that were first written to Christians who lived almost two thousand years ago.**

The Spirit intended that we should have enough common sense to “rightly divide” the word of truth (2 Tm 2:15). And by this Paul meant more than dividing the Old Testament from the New Testament. We must be able to divide what applied to the Spirit’s miraculous work among the early disciples from His work that is applicable to us today. If we cannot make this distinction, then assuredly we will come to some contradictory conclusions.

We must investigate the significant part the Spirit played in the establishment of the early disciples. We will credit the Spirit with His complete and successful work in doing His job in beginning that which exists to this day. Therefore, we must understand all passages in the context of the Spirit’s work with the early disciples, before we make application of scriptures to our personal needs today. In doing this some of our favorite passages on the Holy Spirit will probably be taken from us and placed in their historical context. **It is impera-**

tive that we first understand the Scriptures in their historical setting before we understand or apply them to our needs today. We are not so presumptuous as to claim something today that God never promised us in the first place. We must prove all things and hold fast that which is true and applicable to us today (See 2 Co 13:5).

We have always been amazed at the earnestness by which Bible students will apply the above rule to other subjects of Bible study, but fail to apply such principles to a study of the Holy Spirit. Subjects as the head covering for women and foot washing are earnestly interpreted in the historical setting of the early church. And true, foot washing and the head covering must be studied in the cultural and religious context of the early church. However, because of our yearning for something that is beyond what

God has promised, we often seek to apply almost every New Testament statement concerning the Holy Spirit to ourselves today.

This is an unfortunate and inconsistent hermeneutic for understanding the Bible. We must stress that the Bible student will fail to grasp a correct understanding of the Bible unless he or she can mentally find himself or herself sitting on the assembly in Corinth or Ephesus in the first century, listening to a reading of Paul's instructions concerning the Holy Spirit or any other subject. We must challenge ourselves, therefore, to first place ourselves in the historical context of the Holy Spirit's establishing the church in its early beginnings. After we first do this, then we will better understand the application of the New Testament to our lives today.

Chapter 1

THE PROMISE TO ALL

1 In any study of the Holy Spirit, we must focus on the fact and reason for the expansion of the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit beyond the apostles. Since the miraculous activity of the Spirit is clearly evident in the history of the early church, we must understand that the promise concerning the work of the Spirit in a miraculous manner was to go beyond the apostles. The Spirit's work was to empower the early disciples in the initial establishment of the church. Joel 2:28, Mark 16:14-20 and Acts 2:38,39, therefore, take the results of the baptism with the Spirit of the apostles in Acts 2 far beyond the personal ministry of the apostles.

As the story of the establishment of the church unfolds in the book of Acts, we learn that the miraculous work of the Spirit was implemented beyond the apostles through the laying on of the apostles' hands. By understanding this fact, we must conclude that confirming miracles—those miracles that confirmed the gospel message of the early evangelists—do not exist today because there are no Christ-sent apostles through whom either the confirming miracles or miraculous gifts can be imparted to others.

Since the purpose for the giving of the gifts was accomplished in the first

century, then there was no need that the gifts should continue. When we understand the purpose for which the gifts were given, then we can clearly see that the confirming miracles, as well as the miraculous gifts themselves, were no longer needed. When the message of the gospel was miraculously confirmed, then there was no further need that the message be confirmed continually after it was written down as the inspired Scriptures. When the disciples were empowered by the word of God, then the Spirit did not have to continue His ministry of directing the disciples through the miraculous gifts.

In Mark 16:14-20 Jesus made a very significant promise specifically to the apostles, and in general, to “those who believe” (the early church). This promise is often misunderstood in a religious world that is seeking for some validation for behavioral extremism in colorful worship assemblies that center more around one's emotional release. But a close examination of the grammatical structure of the context of Mark 16 clearly reveals that what Jesus promised **was limited** in its fulfillment.

In the context of Mark 16:14-20, Jesus did not define **how** the miraculous works would be continued by those who believed. He simply stated that “those

who believe” would do wonderful things. This is the primary point to be understood from this context. It is one thing to understand the fact that Jesus made the promise of the miraculous gifts. However, it is another thing to understand how these gifts would be imparted to “those who believe.”

It is possible that the event during which the statements of Mark 16:15-18 took place at a different time and occasion than the events and statements of Matthew 28:16-20 and Luke 24:44-49. There is no reason to assume that these are two parallel accounts of the same appearance of Jesus to the apostles before His ascension. After all, Jesus appeared to the disciples over a period of forty days after His resurrection and before the ascension (At 1:3). The occasion of Mark 16 was only one of these appearances.

It is necessary to understand Mark 16:14-20 by first identifying the **four different meetings or events** that are mentioned in the text. These events or meetings took place at different times after Jesus’ resurrection and before the disciples went forth to preach as is stated in verse 20. It is important to under-

stand the chronology of these events in order to understand the promises that Jesus made in the text.

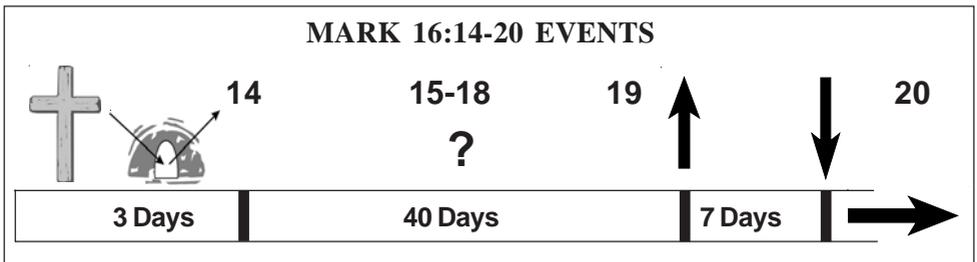
The diagram below places the events or discourses at the approximate period of their occurrence after the resurrection, as well as after the Acts 2 event.

A. The indirect discourse of Mark 16:14:

Mark recorded,

Afterward He [Jesus] appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

This was an appearance of Jesus to the eleven apostles immediately after the resurrection. Mark here used **indirect discourse**. Indirect discourse is the use of third person pronouns (he, she, they, them). Indirect discourse emphasizes **the ones about whom discussion is made**. Mark was here writing about Jesus and the apostles. The



apostles were the ones to whom Jesus appeared on the occasion that is recorded in verse 14.

Verse 14 is composed of the **words of Mark** who recorded this historical narrative of what Jesus said and did. The antecedent of the pronouns of the indirect discourse of Mark's narrative is established in this verse. The pronouns of the indirect discourse, therefore, **must refer back to the eleven apostles of this verse.**

The events in this verse took place sometime **before** the speech of verses 15-18. We do not know how much time transpired between the event of verse 14 and the event of verses 15-18. There is no reason to connect the rebuking by Jesus in this verse with the speech of verses 15-18. Two different occasions were recorded by Mark that took place at two different times.

B. The direct discourse of Mark 16:15-18:

¹⁵*And He said to them [the apostles], "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷And these signs will follow those who believe [those who obey the gospel, the church]: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; ¹⁸they will take*

up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Beginning with the word "go" in verse 15, and extending through the end of verse 18, Mark recorded the **direct discourse** of Jesus. Mark recorded what Jesus actually said on possibly **another occasion** than the occasion of verse 14. These concluding statements in the earthly ministry of Jesus that are included here are Mark's concluding narrative of the ministry of Jesus.

The group of "**those who believe**" of this worldwide call through the gospel in verse 17 finds its beginning in "he who believes" of verse 16. **All those who believe and are baptized form the group of "those who believe."** Reference in these verses is to the group of Christians in general (the church), not specifically to the apostles of verse 14. This group (the church) would work miracles. However, the passage does not assume that everyone of the group of Christians would work miracles. The passage simply says that the signs **would follow this group** of "those who believe."

Neither does the passage state **how** the group would be empowered to work miracles. It simply states that they would. In fact, the entire context of Mark 16 does not explain how the group would be empowered to work miracles.

We learn this only when we study the early history of the early church in the document of Acts.

When the fulfillment of this promise of Jesus unfolded, it was revealed that the apostles were first given authority to work miracles. This was one of their blessings that resulted from their baptism with the Holy Spirit. The apostles in turn passed this authority to command the miraculous to others by the laying on of their hands (At 8:18). Therefore, the apostles, and the ones on whom they laid hands, were the ones of “those who believe” who worked miracles.

C. Indirect narrative of Mark 16:19:

Verse 19 is indirect narrative. These are the historical words of Mark who wrote, “*So then, after the Lord had spoken to them [the apostles], He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.*” By turning this **indirect narrative**, Mark left the direct discourse of verses 15-18. He now mentions the historical event of the ascension.

In this context, Mark mentioned events that were parallel to the events of Acts 1:6-9 where Luke recorded the ascension of Jesus. Reference in Acts 1 was to the event of the ascension of Jesus to heaven that took place sometime after the direct discourse of verses 15-18. Therefore, we must keep in mind that

the event of the ascension took place about **forty days after the event of verse 14**. The pronoun “them” here finds its antecedent in the indirect discourse of verse 14. Reference is to the apostles. In other words, after Jesus had spoken to the apostles, He ascended to heaven.

D. Going forth of the disciples in Mark 16:20:

In Mark 16:20 Mark recorded,

And they [the apostles] went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

The event of this verse took place at least **seven days after verse 19**. The apostles went forth only after they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4. The antecedent of this verse is discovered in the indirect discourse of verse 14. Therefore, reference is specifically to the apostles who went forth to preach.

However, other disciples than the apostles went forth to preach after the establishment of the church in Acts 2. Philip went to Samaria and worked many miracles (At 8:5,6). At the time Philip and others went forth, the apostles remained in Jerusalem. Though the reference of verse 20 is specifically to the

apostles, the actual history of the church's "going forth" with miracles was carried out by more disciples than the apostles. We are not told in the text how the disciples other than the apostles received the authority to work miracles. We learn this from other texts.

In summation, here is what is important to remember from the context of Mark 16:14-20: The pronoun "them" in verses 14,19,20 refers to the **apostles**. However, in Mark's record of Jesus' statements in verses 15-18, the pronoun "them" would refer to people **other than the apostles**. Reference was to **those who believed and obeyed the gospel**. Therefore, not only would the apostles do miraculous works, some of "those who believe" (the disciples) would also work confirming miracles.

"Those who believe" in verse 17 would work miracles, and thus, have their message confirmed by God. This miraculous work by other disciples than the apostles is a reference to the fulfillment of Joel 2:28.

The comments of Jesus in Mark 16:15-18 also have in view what Peter would later state in Acts 2:38,39. Jesus' statement was also a promise that the working of miraculous signs would go beyond the apostles. However, Jesus does not explain **how** the believers would receive the authority to work signs. Jesus does not in Mark 16:15-18 explain **when** the other disciples would re-

ceive this authority. He simply stated that signs would follow the disciples as a result of their belief and obedience to the gospel.

It is also significant to notice that Jesus was here promising that those who believe would receive the authority to work signs. Their reception of such authority was assumed in the text. He did not specify that only a special group as the apostles would be given the authority to work signs. In fact, the nature of the promise of Joel 2:28 that "all flesh" would receive the "good things" of the Spirit is in contrast to a select group receiving the special authority to work miracles as in the Old Testament period.

Neither did Jesus say that there would be restrictions or qualifications for others to receive the Spirit other than "believing" and "obeying" the gospel He simply stated that the group of those who believe and are baptized would receive the authority to work signs. We must keep this in mind as we consider what actually took place in the early development of the church.

Jesus does not state in Mark 16:15-18 that the signs would necessarily follow every believer. He seems to indicate that the signs would only follow the believers **as a group**. The phrase "those who believe" indicates that the corporate body of believers would be followed by the signs wherever they went. Not every one of the believers would be able to work the

confirming signs. However, there would be those in every group of believers who could. The signs would follow every believer only as long as they were a member of the group, and had the opportunity to have had hands laid on them by the apostles.

In Mark 16:20, it is stated that the apostles went forth. In verses 19,20 the pronoun “them” finds its antecedent in verse 14. The “them,” as previously stated, were the eleven apostles who were present at the time Jesus was with them—Matthias was later added to their number.

The going forth of the apostles took place many days after the commission of verses 15-18, for they waited in Jerusalem until the coming of the Spirit (Lk 24:49). (There are fifty days between Passover, the day on which Jesus was crucified, and Pentecost. It was on Pentecost that the church was first established. After being in the tomb for three days, Jesus appeared to the apostles during forty of the fifty days (Acts 1:3). Therefore, the apostles waited in Jerusalem for about seven days before the Spirit came upon them on the day of Pentecost as is recorded in Acts 2.)

When the apostles went forth from Jerusalem, they preached everywhere. Actually, it was about fifteen to twenty years after the events of Acts 2 before the apostles personally went forth from Jerusalem to preach to all nations. How-

ever, the method by which they went forth with the gospel was through those who came from every nation to Jerusalem for the Passover/Pentecost feast. Many of these obeyed the gospel, and subsequently, they returned home with the message of the gospel.

The Passover/Pentecost feast of A.D. 30 was the beginning of the apostles’ going forth when they sent out from Jerusalem those who had been taught after their conversion (At 2:41). After A.D. 30, there were still Passovers and Pentecosts every year in the years to come. The apostles remained in Jerusalem throughout these years as different groups of Jews made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover/Pentecost feast. During every Passover/Pentecost feast, therefore, more Jews were converted and taught and sent forth. Understanding this historical fact helps us understand the group (“those who believe”) that went forth and worked signs. They were able to do so because they had received the miraculous gifts by the laying on of the apostles’ hands at the time of their initial conversion in Jerusalem during one of the Passover/Pentecost feasts after A.D. 30.

As we study the early history of the disciples who went forth from Jerusalem, we must not forget the purpose for which the miraculous confirming signs accompanied the disciples. In all the New Testament letters wherein miraculous works are discussed, the Lord was

given credit for working the miraculous signs. His work through miraculous signs was an indication that the word of His messengers originated from Him, not man. God thus sought to give a divine stamp of approval on the disciples as they went forth to preach the gospel. Hebrews 2:3,4 states,

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him. God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.

Chapter 2

PENTECOST AND THE PROMISES

2 The word “promise” is used many times in the New Testament to refer to various guarantees that God said He would give to His people. In fact, Paul said that “the promises” (plural) were given to Israel (Rm 9:4). As one studies the New Testament, therefore, there is more than one promise in the Old Testament to which reference is made in the New Testament.

In reference to Old Testament prophecies concerning blessings that would come as a result of the fulfillment of the promises, there is the promise that refers to the baptism of the apostles with the Holy Spirit, which promise resulted in the baptism of about 3,000 people. Both of these promises are connected with one another in reference to the establishment of the church in Acts 2. However, both are not dependent upon one another. One promise refers to **the promise of salvation by faith in Jesus that was initially made to Abraham**

(See Gn 12:3). The other promise refers to the promise of **the Holy Spirit that was made through Joel and re-emphasized by Jesus** (Jl 2:28; Mk 16:20; Lk 24:49; At 1:8). In reference to Acts 2, both promises must be considered because both of the promises were fulfilled in Acts 2.

A. The promise of salvation:

Among other promises that God made to Abraham concerning his seed, Genesis 12:1-3 includes a promise of salvation that would come through his seed, which promise would be a blessing to all humanity. While in uncircumcision as a Gentile, God promised that “*in you [Abram] all the families of the earth shall be blessed*” (Gn 12:3). This promise was later renewed to Abraham and to his descendants (See Gn 22:18; 26:1-4; 28:1-4,13,14). This was a promise that from

the seed of Abraham there would come the Seed (Christ) who would bring salvation to all men. This promise focused on the seedline of woman that would continue through Abraham until the Seed was eventually revealed. It would be through his seed that the promise of Genesis 3:15 would eventually be fulfilled.

Genesis 12:1-3 contains more than one promise to Abraham. The Hebrew writer revealed that the multiplication of Abraham's seed, which promise was made in Genesis 12:3, was also a promise (See Hb 6:12,13). In Hebrews 7 it is stated that Melchizedek blessed Abraham "*who had the promises*" (Hb 7:6). One of the promises that God made to Abraham was that his seed would be multiplied into a great nation. This promise was fulfilled in the nation of Israel.

On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 the multiplied physical seed of Abraham (the Jewish nation) was represented in Jerusalem in order to receive the promise of the blessing that would go to all nations. God had physically fulfilled His promise to present a multiplied nation on the day of Pentecost. However, Paul said, "*they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham*" (Rm 9:6,7). Paul's teaching in this statement is that **we are all sons of Abraham by faith**. All who walk by faith in God are thus included in the promise of the spiritual nation of Israel. In this sense,

therefore, one would include the children of Abraham by faith in the statement of Peter in Acts 2:39.

For the promise is to you and to your children [all physical Israel], and to all who are afar off [children of Abraham by faith], as many as the Lord our God will call [through the gospel].

In making this statement, Peter was affirming that the promise of both the "blessing" and "the Holy Spirit" would go to both Jews and Gentiles who were sons of Abraham **by faith**.

1. Romans 4:13-16: In this passage, Paul refers to **the promised salvation** that would come from Abraham's seed. "*Through the righteousness of faith,*" God promised that Abraham "*would be the heir of the world*" (Rm 4:13). Paul revealed in the context of this statement that Abraham received the promise by his faith, not by meritorious works of law. In reference to the application of the promise to us, he stated, "*Therefore it [the promise] is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed*" (Rm 4:16). Paul's point is seated in the context that God poured out the promise of the gospel while all men were in sin (Rm 5:8). It was not given because of man's righteousness, for no man was righteous before God in

order to be awarded the promise (Rm 3:9,10).

2. Galatians 3:10-29: This passage is another context where Paul argues that justification is by faith as opposed to justification through meritorious law-keeping. The two major promises that were fulfilled in Acts 2 are also mentioned together in this context. The “promise of the Holy Spirit” is first mentioned in verse 14 where Paul argued “*that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive **the promise of the Spirit** through faith.*” Reference here is **not** to a promise “made by the Spirit,” but to a promise of the reception **of the Spirit**. Emphasis is not on the Holy Spirit making promises. The Holy Spirit was the fulfillment of a promise that was made.

In Galatians 3 Paul continued his argument of justification by faith when he wrote, “*Now to Abraham and his seed were the **promises** [plural] made*” (Gl 3:16). Both Jews and Gentiles are sons of Abraham by faith. All are sons of God by faith (Gl 3:26). “*And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise*” (Gl 3:29). According to the promise, we are all heirs of the blessing of the gospel that was brought into the world through Jesus.

B. The promise of the Holy Spirit:

The second major promise that was made in the Old Testament is the promise of the Holy Spirit (See Jl 2:28). In the context of Acts 2, this is certainly in the minds of the people because they were wondering about the miraculous events of Acts 2:1-4 that had just taken place.

Peter’s response is first an explanation of what had just taken place. He quoted Joel 2 in order to explain that what had just happened was the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (At 2:16ff). His answer emphasized the fact that the event of Acts 2:1-4 was a signal of a new beginning. This new beginning was the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that salvation by faith in the Seed (Christ) of Abraham had now arrived (See Gl 3:16). The miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-4 was God’s validation of the apostles to make the first official announcement that Jesus was the Christ and Son of God who made a sacrificial offering for the sins of the world.

Some groups today have confused this point. Their misunderstanding is that they suppose that the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” that took place in Acts 2:1-4 signaled salvation, not the beginning of the gospel dispensation. Therefore, when the apostles were all baptized with the Holy Spirit, some believe that the apostles were being saved by the Holy

Spirit. It is thus assumed that Acts 2:38 is a command by Peter that everyone be baptized in the Holy Spirit in order to be saved.

It is also assumed that Acts 2:39 refers exclusively to the promise of salvation through the gospel. However, if one contends that the promise of Acts 2:39 refers to the promise of salvation, and verse 38 to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, then he is faced with the dilemma of determining where Peter makes a change of thought between verses 38 and 39. Peter actually stated in Acts 2:38,39:

*³⁸Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For **the promise** is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”*

If we do not separate the two specific promises (the one of the Spirit and the other of salvation), then we will be faced with the same interpretive confusion of Acts 2:39 that prevails among many religious groups today.

The word “promise” in Acts 2:39 is **singular**, and thus refers to either the promise of salvation or the promise of the Holy Spirit. We must keep in mind that the baptism or outpouring of the

Holy Spirit did not bring salvation. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was never meant to be salvational. The Spirit came in a miraculous manner in order to signal, not save. In the case of the apostles in Acts 2, the Spirit signaled the beginning of the gospel dispensation. In the case of Cornelius, He signaled to the Jews that they must focus on the Gentiles in their evangelistic outreach.

In order to partake of the promise of the “blessing” that God promised to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, one must obey the gospel by immersion for the remission of sins. This is obedience in response to faith. What Peter was saying in Acts 2 is that if one voluntarily partakes of the first promise by obedience to the gospel, then he or she will be able to partake of the second promise that comes as a free gift. Therefore, in Acts 2:38,39 Peter was discussing both the promise of salvation that resulted in the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Both promises were made through the Old Testament prophets. The day of Pentecost in Acts 2 was the time for the fulfillment of inseparable promises of salvation and the Holy Spirit. The promise of the outpouring of the Spirit was fulfilled by the baptism of the apostles in Acts 2:1-4. The promise of salvation in Christ was fulfilled when repentant believers obeyed the gospel by baptism into Christ (At 2:41).

The fulfillment of the promise of the “blessing of Abraham” is in Peter’s re-

sponse of Acts 2:38. However, in verse 39 he was referring back to his explanation of the events of Acts 2:1-4 where the apostles “*received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit*” (At 2:33). The word “for” that begins Acts 2:39 brings this out. This is a conjunctive preposition which means that the material that follows is an explanation of that which immediately precedes the conjunction. In other words, verse 39 is a continued explanation of the “gift of the Holy Spirit” in verse 38 that one receives as a result of obedience to the gospel by immersion.

For this reason, therefore, we would suggest that the promise of verse 39 does not refer to the promised salvation that would come by obedience to the gospel, but would come as a result of obedience to the gospel. Reference is to the blessings of the Holy Spirit that comes as a result of one’s repentance and immersion. Peter simply continued the meaning of the gift of the Holy Spirit from verse 38 into verse 39. He was here again reaffirming the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28. The prophecy was a promise of the Holy Spirit to “all flesh.” It was to “*as many as the Lord our God will call.*”

Acts 2:38,39 is a parallel statement to what Jesus promised and explained in Mark 16:16-18. In Acts 2:1-4 the Spirit was poured out in a baptismal manner upon the apostles. In Acts 2:16 Peter explained, “***But this is what was***

spoken by the prophet Joel.” He then quoted Joel 2:28. Therefore, Peter was interpreting Acts 2:1-4 to be the outpouring of the Spirit that was prophesied by Joel.

This outpouring was the baptism with the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised in Acts 1:5. Jesus had said specifically to the apostles, “*For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.*” The promise was made to the apostles just a few days before the event of Acts 2:1-4. Acts 2:1-4 was the “*receiving of the promise.*” Peter stated clearly that the miraculous outpouring of verses 1-4, with the resulting speaking in languages and revelation of the gospel, was the fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:33 he stated, “*Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.*”

It is significant to understand an interesting point that is made in Acts 2:33. Peter said that what the multitudes “heard and saw” was the result of the apostles’ “having received” the Holy Spirit. In other words, the apostles first received the Holy Spirit, and then there was a miraculous manifestation that was “seen and heard.” Though we may not understand all the implications of what Peter meant, we must understand that

he made some distinction between the receiving of the Holy Spirit and the miraculous event of their speaking in languages and the sound as a rushing mighty wind.

The apostles first received the Spirit, and then the Spirit moved them to speak with languages. There is probably nothing complicated about what actually took place. The apostles were first inspired with all truth of the gospel by the Spirit in fulfillment of Jesus' promises in John 14:26 and 16:13. He then signaled to the other disciples by the divided tongues of fire that the apostles had received the fulfillment of Jesus' promise. And then, through the speaking in languages, the apostles were able to communicate to the multitudes what the attention-drawing sound of the wind signified.

The initial receiving of the Spirit by the apostles, therefore, was not something that was openly manifested, though the mighty wind and tongues of fire were (At 2:4). However, it was not some convulsion in their bodies or speaking in gibberish that could not be understood. When they received the Spirit, none of the other disciples knew that the mystery of the gospel had been revealed to them. It was only when the Spirit manifested His presence in them through what was "seen and heard" that others knew that something significant had been revealed to the apostles.

The apostles first received the

promise of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit empowered them as a result of His presence in their lives. The result was a miraculous manifestation through the speaking in languages. However, both Joel 2:28 and Mark 16:15-20 state that the promise was to go beyond the apostles. Joel had stated that "all flesh" would manifest the miraculous work of the Spirit. Jesus had promised in Mark 16 that "those who believe" would work miraculous signs.

According to Jesus' promise, the preaching and teaching of all "those who believe" in the first century was to be followed by signs. Therefore, in Acts 2:38,39, Peter took the promise of the miraculous work of the Spirit beyond the apostles. Upon repentance and baptism for remission of sins, Peter said they too would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, **for the promise was to all.**

Acts 2:39 begins with the preposition "for." This preposition connects verses 38 and 39. It indicates that what is stated in verse 39 is in some way an explanation of what is immediately stated in the preceding statements. Bruce Terry stated,

Thus when Peter says in Acts 2:39, "the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off," he is referring to the Holy Spirit. This is clearly shown by the "for" which begins verse 39 and indicates that it is an explanation of the preceding

verse where Peter had just said, “you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” ... the promised Holy Spirit which was given to the apostles when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit was also to be given to “everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him” (Acts 2:39).^{1:194}

Reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit is the last concept that is introduced in verse 38. Therefore, verse 39 is an explanation, or continuation of the thought of verse 38. **If we understand that the promise of verse 39 refers to the prophecy of Joel 2:28, then we would understand that the gift of the Holy Spirit in verse 38 includes blessings that resulted from the outpouring of the Spirit that was promised in Joel 2:28.**

In other words, all that the Holy Spirit would do in reference to the church after Acts 2 finds its initial seat in the prophecy of Joel 2. This would thus include the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in Acts 2, Peter was discussing not only the non-miraculous indwelling and work of the Spirit, but also the miraculous work that the Spirit would do through “those who believe,” as promised also by Jesus in Mark 16. We must assume this in view of the fact that it was **first the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal all truth of the gospel by miraculous inspiration of the apostles, and then to miraculously**

confirm the spoken and written word by the signs that followed (Mk 16:20).

The non-miraculous indwelling and work of the Spirit must also be included as a meaning of these verses. It would appear that Peter emphasized the miraculous work of the Spirit by explaining the event of the outpouring of Acts 2:1-4, and then, the secondary work of the Spirit through the miraculous work of “those who believe.” And finally, he emphasized the continuation of the work of the Spirit throughout history after the passing away of the miraculous. Reconsider the following main thoughts of Acts 2: 38,39:

1. “*For the promise is to you*”:

This statement in verse 39 includes many important details that are embedded in the prophecy of Joel 2:28 and its fulfillment in Mark 16:17,18. Peter stated that the promise was not only to the Jews, it was also “*to all who are afar off.*” Others than the immediate recipients were included in both the prophecy and fulfillment. The Gentiles were also to be included. The promise was to “*as many as the Lord our God will call.*” This would be the group of “*those who believe*” of Mark 16:17,18 who were obedient to the gospel (2 Th 2:14). The complete fulfillment of the prophecy would include those beyond the nation of Israel.

a. Ephesians 3:6,7: In Ephesians 3:6,7 Paul wrote a commentary thought on Acts 2:38,39. He stated, *... that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.*

Notice that when the Gentiles believed and obeyed the gospel, they too became **fellow heirs of the promise**. They became **partakers** in the sense that *“these signs will follow those who believe”* (Mk 16:17). The Gentiles were *“sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise”* (Ep 1:13). The “good things” that Jesus promised (Mt 7:11; Lk 11:13), and that Joel promised (Jl 2), first came to “those who believed.” These were those who obeyed the gospel on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 (At 2:38,39). The Gentiles were “fellow heirs” of these good things of the Spirit as the gospel went to all nations from the initial recipients of the message of the gospel.

b. Hebrews 6:4-6: This passage is another commentary of Acts 2:38,39.

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy

Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come ... to renew them.

The promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit **originated from heaven**. It is thus the **heavenly gift** of which the apostates had initially tasted. The whole context of Hebrews 6 is discussing the apostasy of those who once believed, but **turned away from the miraculous testimony of God**. It is impossible to renew them simply because they had experienced the **open manifestation of the environment of God**, and yet, they turned away. They partook of the best of God and yet gave it up.

This is not surprising. Thousands of Israelites who came out of Egyptian captivity did the same when they fell away from God and worshiped a golden calf. They did so after having witnessed the power of God in passing through the Red Sea (Ex 32). The same apostates to whom the Hebrew letter was directed had received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, and yet, they were on the verge of turning away from the gospel.

We must remember that inspiration, and the ability to command the miraculous, did not guarantee one’s salvation. Neither did the Spirit subjectively take control of anyone in a manner that would directly change one’s moral behavior. We must remember that Peter once stood condemned when he withdrew from the Gentiles in Antioch in Galatians 2. He

stood condemned even though he was an inspired Christ-sent apostle.

c. Galatians 3:14: This passage is another reference to the promise of Acts 2:39. Paul stated “*that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through [the] faith.*” (The article is in the Greek text before the word “faith.”)

Here again is the concept of Mark 16. The “*blessing of Abraham*” was the **gospel of Jesus**. It was preached. Paul says that through faith they received the “*promise of the Spirit.*” Jesus had said that those who would believe and obey the gospel would be followed by confirming signs as they went forth to preach the gospel. Peter said that the Pentecost believers would receive the promise through obedience to the gospel. Paul said that the Galatian Christians had received the promise as a result of their obedience to the faith. These are all parallel works of the early Christians as they went forth to preach the gospel (See Mk 16:20).

Herein is the “*renewing of the Spirit*” about which Paul wrote in Titus 3:5,6:

*He saved us, through the washing of regeneration [baptism for remission of sins] and **renewing of the Holy Spirit** [the promised gift of the Spirit] whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ*

our Savior [we believed on Him].

The Spirit was initially poured out on the apostles in a direct baptismal manner in Acts 2:1-4. Believers then received the miraculous gifts through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. The “*renewing of the Holy Spirit*” Paul discussed in Titus 3:5,6 is obviously a reference to the return of the miraculous work of the Spirit among God’s people as He miraculously worked in the days of the Old Testament prophets.

To renew something means to do it as it was once done before. As a special class of God’s messengers in the Old Testament, the prophets worked wondrously among the Israelites through the miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit. In the same manner, Joel was prophesying that the Spirit would work among “all flesh” in the early church. Therefore, after four hundred years of silence since the days of Malachi, the Holy Spirit was again working among God’s people in a miraculous manner. It was indeed a “renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

2. “Receive”: Peter promised that those who obeyed the gospel would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is interesting and explanatory to study the word “receive” in the context of its use in reference to the Holy Spirit throughout the New Testament. When used in the context of the Holy Spirit, the indication is that the “receiving of the Holy

Spirit” referred to receiving the miraculous gifts of the Spirit through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. In its historical usage in the New Testament, this seems to be its first and most obvious meaning. In the context of Acts 2:38, this is the first understanding that we must infer from the use of the word “receive.” Consider carefully the following commentary passages that define the word in different contexts:

a. John 7:39: John recorded,

*But this He [Jesus] spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would **receive**; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

John wrote that those who believed on Jesus would **receive** the Holy Spirit. In Mark 16:17,18 Jesus said that those who believed would work signs. These signs would come through the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. If we connected the thoughts of John 7:39 and Mark 16:17,18, we would conclude that Jesus was discussing the same thing in both passages. Therefore, John 7:39 would refer to the reception of the Holy Spirit to which Jesus referred in Mark 16:17,18. John was thus referring to a reception of the Holy Spirit that would result in working signs.

b. John 20:21,22: John recorded,

*Then Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “**Receive the Holy Spirit.**”*

In this text Jesus made an **imperative command** to the apostles. The statement, “*receive the Holy Spirit*” is a command. What He wanted of them is that they **willingly accept** the outpouring of the Spirit that would come on them about fifty days from the time this statement was made. This would suggest, therefore, that their being baptized with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was not subjective, but came with their willingness to receive the Spirit.

Jesus was about to depart from the presence of the apostles when He made the preceding statements. The apostles were to be sent the Spirit in His absence (Jn 14:18). Their reception of the Spirit was not to be subjective, nor against their will. Jesus was commanding them to be of a state of obedient receptivity when the Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. They must be of a state of mind whereby the Spirit could be poured out upon them.

c. Acts 1:8: Jesus promised the apostles that “*you shall **receive power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.*” In this statement, Jesus promised that the apostles were going to be invested with miraculous power

when the Spirit came upon them. In the context of the promise, **receiving** power is in conjunction with the coming of the Spirit upon the apostles. When this power was poured forth in Acts 2:1-4, miraculous activity occurred. Peter proclaimed in Acts 2 that power was manifested in the pouring forth of the promise. He affirmed that they having, “**received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear**” (At 2:33).

d. Acts 8:5-25: Acts 8:5-25 is a historical record of Philip’s ministry of preaching the gospel in Samaria. As a result of his preaching, multitudes gave heed to his word and obeyed the gospel by immersion in water. Even Simon, a sorcerer, was baptized.

“*Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them*” (At 8:14). Peter and John prayed for the new converts “*that they might **receive the Holy Spirit***” (At 8:15). Those who were baptized in Samaria had not yet received the Holy Spirit until the arrival of Peter and John. They had not received the Spirit, for Luke recorded, “*for as yet He [the Holy Spirit] **had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus***” (At 8:16). It was then that Peter and John “*laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit*”

(At 8:17). Therefore, they had not received the Spirit until an apostle had imparted the Holy Spirit to them by the laying on of their hands.

Acts 8:18 is crucial in understanding the context of Acts 8:5-25. “*Now when Simon **saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money.***” Simon empirically recognized that the Holy Spirit was imparted by the laying on of the apostles’ hands. As a baptized believer, even he had a right to have hands laid on him by the apostles in order to receive the Spirit. He had undoubtedly already received the Spirit in this manner. He had “*tasted the heavenly gift*” and had become a partaker of the Holy Spirit (Hb 6:4).

But this was not what Simon sought from the apostles. He wanted more than a miraculous gift. His heart was not right according to what Luke stated in At 8:19. He was bitter because he had lost his position of recognition in the community. What he saw in the work of laying on of hands by Peter and John was an opportunity to regain his prominent position in the community. Therefore, Simon wanted the authority to impart the Spirit by the laying on of his hands. He said, “*Give me this power [authority] also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may **receive the Holy Spirit.***”

Though Simon’s motives were not pure, what he said does explain what he perceived the receiving of the Holy Spirit

to be. **The Samaritans did not receive the Spirit until the apostles came to Samaria to lay hands on them.** When the apostles came, that which the Samaritans received was the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

It is also evident that “all who believed” in Samaria had hands laid on them by the apostles in order that they receive gifts of the Spirit. Once one became obedient to the gospel he had a right to receive the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles’ hands.

e. Acts 10:44-48: When Peter began to preach to the household of Cornelius, “*the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word*” (At 10:44). The Christian Jews who were with Peter were astonished “*because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also*” (At 10:45). Therefore, the outpouring of the Spirit on the household of Cornelius was a miraculous outpouring of the Spirit. A miraculous gift (speaking in languages) resulted from the outpouring. After the Spirit fell upon the household of Cornelius, Peter then said, “*Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?*” (At 10:47).

The household of Cornelius had not been baptized, and yet, they had “*received the Holy Spirit.*” However, this was a unique outpouring of the Spirit and was accomplished for a special purpose.

What Luke did for us in this historical record, and in other contexts of Acts, is define what it meant to “receive the Holy Spirit.” In reference to this same event, in Acts 15:8 Peter stated that God **gave** the Holy Spirit to the household of Cornelius. Therefore, “receiving” the Spirit and “giving” the Spirit can refer to the same thing.

Consider also the fact that the six Jews who were with Peter had also received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. This is true because in Acts 10:47 Peter used the pronoun “we” to refer to the six Jews who had accompanied him to the house of Cornelius.

Peter said that the Spirit came upon Cornelius and his house in a miraculous manner. They, Cornelius’ household, **received** the Spirit as the others who accompanied Peter had received Him. This would certainly indicate that the six Jews with Peter had all received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. Their reception of the Spirit was a miraculous reception, though they had not received the Spirit in an outpouring manner as Cornelius and his household. This would indicate that those Jewish Christians with Peter had had hands laid on them by the apostles in order to receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

f. Acts 19:1-7: This is a context wherein we see the work of another Christ-sent apostle as Peter and John in Acts 8 in the administration of the Holy

Spirit by the laying on of hands. We also see the teaching that every baptized believer had a right to receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

When Paul returned to Ephesus on his third missionary journey, he found about twelve disciples in Ephesus who had been baptized with John's baptism. When he found these disciples, he immediately sought to administer to them the "good things" (the miraculous gifts of the Spirit) which Jesus promised that all those who believed on Him would receive (See Mt 7:11; Lk 11:13).

When Paul first encountered this group of disciples in Ephesus, he asked them, "*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*" (At 19:2). One would wonder that if the reception of the Holy Spirit were automatic at the time of one's baptism, then why would Paul ask this question and in this manner? **What he was asking was if any other Christ-sent apostle had been by and imparted to them the miraculous gifts since the time they had obeyed the gospel.**

They replied, "*We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit*" (At 19:2). This reply is not made with the meaning that they did not believe in the existence of the Holy Spirit. To make this statement mean this would certainly be ignoring the common knowledge of these disciples. **What is meant is that they did not yet know that the Holy Spirit had been poured out.** At

least, they did not know that they had a right to the Spirit by the laying on of the apostles' hands, which blessing came to all who were baptized in the name of Jesus.

Since these Ephesian disciples did not know that they could receive the Holy Spirit, Paul then inquired further by asking, "*Into what then were you baptized?*" Since reception of the Holy Spirit was a right for every believer who was baptized in the name of Jesus, then their lack of knowledge as to whether the Holy Spirit was given sparked Paul's question concerning that into which they had been baptized. They replied, "*Into John's baptism.*"

Paul then explained the baptism that was by the authority of Jesus. Acting upon their further knowledge of the gospel that Paul taught, they were baptized again. "*And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied*" (At 19:6). Therefore, they had not received the Holy Spirit until Paul had laid hands on them, and only after they had been baptized in the name of Jesus.

In this incident, Paul was seeking to accomplish his apostolic duties of imparting the Spirit by the laying on of hands on every baptized believer he encountered on his journeys. He discovered that these disciples had not yet obeyed the gospel by baptism in the name of Jesus. After their baptism, they

received the Spirit through the laying on of his hands.

g. Galatians 3:1-5: The background to the Galatian letter was Paul's defense of his apostleship in the face of rising Jewish legalism among the disciples of Galatia. In the context of Galatians 3:1-5 he used the same argument he used with the Corinthians to validate his Christ-sent authority as an apostle. To the Corinthians he argued, "*Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you*" (2 Co 12:12). To the Galatians, he argued, "*Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*" (Gl 3:2). The problem with some among the Corinthian and Galatian disciples concerning his apostleship was the same. His defense was the same. **Paul had miraculously proved his apostleship with all the disciples in both Corinth and Galatia.**

In the Corinthian situation he had laid hands on the baptized believers in order that they receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. This was something only a Christ-sent apostle could do, and thus, it was a sign of his apostleship. In the Galatian situation he had likewise imparted to them the Spirit through the laying on of his hands. They had thus received the Spirit, not because of works of law, but by the grace of God. This harmonizes perfectly with our understanding that the receiving of the Holy Spirit refers to the miraculous reception

of the miraculous gifts.

Consider Galatians 3:1-5 from another contextual viewpoint. In the Galatian letter, Paul was arguing the superiority of the law of Christ, grace and faith, over the judaizers' legalistic use of the Sinai law. They sought to self-righteously justify themselves on the basis of keeping law. Among the Galatian disciples were some judaizing teachers who had convinced some of the brethren that obedience to the Sinai law was also necessary in order to be justified before God.

After defending his apostleship in the first two chapters, Paul then turned to an **empirical defense** of Christianity. He presented in 3:1-5 his first defense. He presented an evidence that they could **observe**, that is, a miraculous manifestation of the Spirit through the laying on of his hands. This evidence was not a "good feeling," for false teachers could present the same. Paul used the evidence that only a true Christ-sent apostle could use. He thus presented the evidence, "*Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*" In other words, he challenged them by asking that when they believed and obeyed the gospel, did they receive the miraculous gifts as a result of obedience to the gospel or through meritorious obedience to law? (See Mk 16:16,17). He was using the "receiving of the Spirit" as an empirical evidence that the gospel is true and superior to law.

Paul also used the miraculous evidence of the Spirit in reference to a similar problem among the Corinthian disciples. He stated, “*Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you*” (2 Co 12:12). The truth of the gospel that was preached to the Galatians, and the evidence of a true apostle in Corinth, were all proved by Paul in the same way. They were proved by the miraculous impartation of the miraculous gifts. This was an empirical proof. It was one that they could see. In the Corinthian situation, the signs of the apostle confirmed the messenger of God. In the Galatian situation, the miraculous confirmed the message of the gospel (See Mk 16:20).

Paul continued the argument of Galatians 3 by referring to the reception of the Spirit as a confirmation of the source of the truth of the gospel. “*Therefore He who supplied the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by works of the law, or by the hearing of faith*” (Gl 3:5). It must first be noted in this statement that the capitalization of the “He” is only the opinion of the translators. The “He” could just as well refer to a Christ-sent apostle, and in particular, to the apostle Paul. However, the argument is still the same. It was God working through His messenger, Paul, in order to supply the Spirit to the Galatians.

Paul used the statement of Galatians 3:5 as an apostolic defense against

those who added affliction to his chains in Rome. He was confident that God would grant to him “*the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*” (Ph 1:19). In the Galatians 3 context Paul interprets the “receiving of the Spirit” in verse 2 by what is stated in verse 5. God, through Paul’s obedience of faith, supplied the Spirit to the Galatians **by the laying on of his hands**. This should be understood in the same manner as Acts 8:18 where Simon **saw** “*that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given.*”

Paul asks that the Galatians remember what they **saw** him do when he was present with them. This is exactly what he did in Acts 19 when he laid hands on about twelve disciples in order that they receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. It was something that could be **seen**.

The reception of the Spirit was an evidence of the truth of the gospel. Paul had laid hands on the Galatians, though it was not, as he said, a legalistic work of law. This also was not something the Galatians felt. **It was something they saw. It was an evidence they could not deny, nor could the false teachers copy.**

h. Galatians 3:13,14: Paul wrote,

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on

*a tree'), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, **that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.***

Paul continued the thought of Galatians 3:1-5 in verses 13 and 14. Here we are reminded of what Peter said on the day of Pentecost many years before: *"The promise is unto you ..."* (Acts 2:39).

We must make a correction in the 3:14 context that was an unfortunate deletion on the part of some versions of the Bible in the book of Galatians. In the Greek text, the article "the" is before the word "faith." Therefore, the translation should read, *"... that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through **the** faith [dia tais pisteus]."*

The phrase "**the faith**" refers to the truth of the gospel, not to one's personal faith. When we restore the article to the verse, it makes sense and harmonizes perfectly with Mark 16:16-18 and Acts 2:38,39. Through the Galatians' acceptance of and obedience to the truth of the gospel (the faith), they received the miraculous gifts of the promise by the laying on of Paul's hands.

i. Galatians 4:6: The above interpretation now explains Galatians 4:6 that is often twisted to fit some preconceived ideas surrounding the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Paul stated, *"**And because you are sons, God has sent***

forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, 'Abba Father'." This statement says that the Spirit was sent into their hearts **after they were already sons**, not at the time they became sons. The emphasis here is not on receiving the Spirit at the time of adoption (baptism). The Spirit was received here at the time the Father sent the Spirit. The Spirit was sent **because they were sons.**

It seems clear that Paul was using the sending of the Spirit here in the same manner as the receiving of the Spirit in Galatians 3:1-5. It is the same empirical argument that Paul used in 2 Corinthians 12:12. The signs of an apostle were worked in Corinth to miraculously prove Paul's apostleship. In the Galatian context, Paul was using an empirical evidence to prove his apostleship by the miraculous giving and receiving of the Spirit. He proved their sonship in Galatians 4:6 by their miraculous reception of the Spirit by the laying on of his hands.

1 Corinthians 12:3 is an obvious miraculous passage in the context of the miraculous gifts. It is a parallel concept with Galatians 4:6. In the Corinthian passage Paul said,

*Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking **by the Spirit** of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say **that Jesus is Lord** except by the Spirit.*

In the Galatian passage, the meaning is parallel. Both passages are discussing **inspiration**. The crying “Abba, Father” and “Jesus is Lord” are literary statements that are used to express the meaning of what was happening. The Spirit originated the “cry” (Gl 4:6) and “statement” (1 Co 12:3) by inspiration of the individual who made the cry or statement.

Galatians 4:6 and 1 Corinthians 12:3 are a good commentary on what Paul meant in Romans 8:14,15:

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’

Galatians 4:6, 1 Corinthians 12:3 and Romans 8:14,15 are surprisingly similar. They are parallel passages, and thus, express the received promise of the Spirit among the disciples of the first century. The Spirit was miraculously working to build up the body through the medium of the miraculous gifts and inspired spoken word. The “good things” from the Spirit were coming forth in the spiritual growth of the early Christians. This was the reason for the giving and reception of the promise. The Christians were being firmly established by the direct work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. However, after this was accom-

plished, the Spirit no longer needed to function in a direct manner through the miraculous gifts. Once the Spirit provided the written record of His instructions, there was no longer any need for Him to work directly through the New Testament prophets in order to instruct the early disciples.

j. 1 Timothy 4:14: Paul wrote to Timothy, “*Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.*” Paul here spoke of “the gift” that was given to Timothy by prophecy. This passage surely refers us back to Joel 2:28-32. In the prophecy of Joel 2 God was intending that those who ministered in preaching the gospel be given miraculous gifts. In particular, the early evangelists were given the gift of prophecy, that is, the gift of speaking the word of God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The evangelists did not have New Testaments by which to guide their teaching and preaching. It was only by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that they could teach the truth to the church.

The statement, “*with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery*”, must not be confused with what Paul stated in 2 Timothy 1:6. In 2 Timothy 1:6 he said that the gift came “*through the laying on of my hands.*” Two different prepositions are used in these two passages. The gift came **through** (*dia*) Paul’s authority (2 Tm 1:6), but it evi-

dently happened at the same time the presbyters (elders) set forth Timothy as an evangelist by the laying on of their hands. Therefore, the gift was received **with** (*meta*) the laying on of the presbyters' hands to send out Timothy (1 Tm 4:14), but the gift came to Timothy through the laying on of Paul's hands.

k. 1 John 2:20,27: John wrote,

²⁰But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. ²⁷But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

John's use of the word "anointing" was taken from the Old Testament's anointing of kings, priests and prophets of Israel (Ex 29:7; 1 Sm 10:10; Is 61:1). Jesus was also anointed (At 4:27). He was anointed by the Holy Spirit (At 10:38). The anointing of someone was something that was **visible** for all to witness. It was not hidden.

In the same sense John used the Holy Spirit as an "anointing" manifestation of the true disciples to whom he wrote. Campbell wrote,

The oil, the pouring of the oil, and the head on which it was poured, are all

external and visible. Hence the Holy Spirit descended on the head of the Messiah **visibly**, and sat upon the head of the apostles in the resemblances of fiery tongues. Thus were Jesus and the Apostles anointed.^{2:279}

In this same sense John's readers openly and visibly received the Spirit and exercised their gifts. Such was proof that they were born out of God.

In this context, the use of the word anointing (*christoi*) is a play on words in the Greek text. John was arguing against the gnostic antichrist (*antichristoi*). John's faithful readers were *christoi* (anointed). The gnostic false teachers were *antichristoi* (antichrists).

In 1 John 2:20 John stated, "*But you have an **anointing** [christoi] from the Holy One, and you know all things.*" In view of the fact that they knew all things without having a copy of the New Testament Scriptures, infers their reception of the miraculous gift of prophecy. Jesus was anointed (*christoi*) "*with the Holy Spirit and with power*" (At 10:38; see At 4:27; Hb 1:9). As a result, He "*went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him*" (At 10:38). John's audience had received the same anointing of the Holy Spirit. This anointing allowed them to do the same as Jesus in exercising the miraculous gifts.

This anointing (*christoi*) was in contrast to the antichrists (*antichristoi*) who were not speaking the truth. Paul also said that He who anoints is God “*who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a deposit*” (2 Co 1:21,22). Paul referred to this anointing in reference to himself, Silas and Timothy who had been commissioned to teach the word of God. They had been anointed with the Spirit, and thus empowered by the Spirit. We would naturally conclude that the reference to the anointing of inspired New Testament prophets (Paul, Silas, and Timothy) was the same anointing to which John referred in 1 John 2:20,27.

In 1 John 2:27 John said that they **received** the anointing. John’s audience **received** “the anointing” from God. John said that this “*same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie*” (1 Jn 2:27). Through the inspiration of the New Testament prophets, therefore, the early disciples were taught all truth.

All truth was initially delivered to them by the apostles as promised by Jesus (Jn 14:26; 16:13). However, the inspired prophets were “living New Testaments” among the disciples. By the laying on of the apostles’ hands, the gift of prophecy was distributed among the early Christians. No false teacher could deliver to John’s audience any new teaching or different teaching. The “anointing” (the Holy Spirit), through the

prophets, taught them all things.

John brought out the above concept of receiving miraculous gifts of the Spirit in 1 John 4:13. In his argument against the antichrists who taught error, he used the miraculous gifts of the true disciples as **empirical evidence** that they were of the truth. He stated, “*By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.*”

The phrase “*of His Spirit*” comes from the Greek phrase *ek tou pneumatou autou* (also in 1 Jn 3:24). Thayer’s lexicon points out that the emphasis of this phrase is on “origin, source, cause.” Thayer lists the verse under the definition, “**of the supply out of (from) which a thing is taken, given, received ...**” In other words, John’s audience had received the miraculous gift of prophecy **from the Holy Spirit**. The Spirit was the origin or source from which they “*knew all things.*”

In the immediate context of the above arguments of John, John taught against the arrogant assertions of gnostic teachers. These teachers claimed to know “all things.” The gnostics claimed a hidden knowledge or awareness by which they based their salvation. John’s statements were an argument against these gnostic false teachers. At the same time, he sought to encourage the faithful.

The faithful should not be intimidated by the assertions of the so-called

“special” knowledge of the gnostics. The faithful had the truth that had been miraculously delivered to them by inspired prophets in their midst. The anointing (the Holy Spirit) taught them all things through the inspired prophets. They needed nothing from the gnostics.

The gnostics, as Jude wrote, did not have the Spirit (Jd 19). In other words, they did not have the miraculous gift of prophecy of the Spirit. In this sense, both John and Jude wrote concerning the miraculous gift of prophecy that originated from the Spirit. John affirmed, “*And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us*” (1 Jn 3:24). How could they empirically know that God dwelt in them by a non-miraculous indwelling? They could not. This is why we must affirm that the anointing about which John spoke refers to the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit through the gift of prophecy.

John’s readers **received** this anointing. They received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. The gifts were an open manifestation of their belonging to God and that God dwelt in them. They were taught all things by God the Spirit and were able to discern the falsehood of those who claimed to speak from inspiration. He wrote, “*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world*” (1 Jn 4:1).

In view of the fact that the early

Christians did not have copies of the written word of God, we must conclude that they tested those who claimed to be prophets by the gift of discerning spirits. There is no other answer for what John asked them to do. Therefore, we must conclude that the anointing of the Spirit that they had received was the miraculous gift of discerning spirits and not the non-miraculous indwelling of the Spirit that Christians have today.

The following chart illustrates an important point concerning a consistent interpretation of receiving the Spirit. In examining passages in the New Testament that refer to “receiving” the Holy Spirit, we must seek to be as consistent as possible in our interpretations.

It is a general rule of Bible study to allow the Bible to be its own interpreter. Above all, we must be consistent in interpreting similar phrases and concepts alike, though they may be found in different contexts. We must use this rule in order to understand that to which the Scriptures refer when it speaks concerning the reception of the Holy Spirit.

In the context of the following passages that are marked “miraculous,” it is clear that miraculous activity resulted from the reception of the Spirit. One must conclude, therefore, that in the contexts where the phrase “receive the Spirit” is used, reference is primarily to a miraculous reception of the Spirit. This would be in harmony with what Jesus promised the apostles, “*But you shall*

"RECEIVING" OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	
Miraculous	Non-miraculous
John 7:39	← ? →
Acts 1:8; 2:33	X
Acts 8:5-25	X
Acts 10:44-48	X
Acts 19:1-7	X
Galatians 3:15	← ? →
Galatians 3:13,14	← ? →
1 John 2:27	X
Acts 2:38	← ? →

cept that is our interpretation and deduction. We say that if one accepts another's word, he subsequently accepts or receives that person. In a similar sense, if we accept the word of the Spirit, we accept ("receive") the Spirit. Such is a common interpretation of communication. At least this is what Paul meant when he reminded the Corinthians that they "received" the gospel that he had preached to them (See 1 Co 15:1,2).

receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (At 1:8). When the early disciples "received the Spirit," therefore, it would be a fair conclusion to say that they received power.

But we must also add another thought here in reference to receiving the Spirit. **One cannot receive the person of the Holy Spirit without receiving His word.** If one obeys the gospel in baptism through the direction of the Spirit-inspired word of God, then it is assumed that he has received the word of the Spirit (See 1 Co 15:1,2). But one cannot receive the Spirit through baptism into Christ, and then walk away from the word of the Spirit and do his own religious invention.

In conjunction with the preceding thoughts, we must add that the reception of the Spirit's word is in a sense a reception of the Spirit. James wrote, *"Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word"* (Js 1:21). The Spirit inspired the word of God to be written (2 Tm 3:16). Therefore, when one receives the word of the Spirit, he is in a sense, receiving the Spirit. In the same sense one can receive the message of the gospel (1 Co 15:1-3).

Living the gospel is to be directed by the word of the Spirit. If one does not live according to the Spirit-inspired word of the Spirit, then he is quenching the Spirit in his life (See Cl 3:1-17). It goes without dispute, therefore, that when one begins his life with the Spirit that initially led to his obedience of the gospel of Jesus, then he will continue to be a student of the word of the Spirit.

However, we must be careful with our terminology. The Scriptures do not make the exact statement that one receives the Spirit by receiving the Spirit-inspired word. This would be a con-

Chapter 3

THE GIFTS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

3 It would be correct to say that in our discussions in the religious world concerning both the Holy Spirit and the New Testament church, that many Bible students might maintain a challenged understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit among the early disciples. For example, in our efforts to make the New Testament relevant and contemporary, we often bypass the historical context of the inspired letters of the New Testament that were initially written to churches and individuals almost two thousand years ago. In doing such, we make some things in the New Testament applicable to us today that God never intended that we should apply to our lives. We apply passages and concepts to ourselves today that were originally intended for the first century disciples.

This problem is especially true in reference to studies concerning the Holy Spirit. On the assumption that everything in the Bible must somehow be applied to our lives today, we often bring many teachings concerning the Holy Spirit into our theology as applicable to our lives today. To be fair, it is often difficult in biblical interpretation to detach ourselves from our 21st century culture in order to place ourselves in the situation of the early Christians. However, in order to understand the New

Testament correctly, we must do this. We must first interpret the New Testament from the perspective of those to whom the letters were first written. Only after doing this can we rightly divide the word of God in order to make it come alive in our lives today.

It is crucial in one's interpretation concerning the Holy Spirit **to first study all passages in their first century application**. Since the Spirit did actually play a miraculous role in the lives of the early disciples, we must approach our study of the Spirit's work in the New Testament from the historical context of how He worked in the first century. If we do not do this, then we will do one of two things, or both, on the supposition that what the Spirit did then He still does today: First, we will affirm that the Spirit worked then as we experientially affirm He works now. In other words, we will use our experiences today as a commentary to understand how the Spirit worked in the first century. However, this invariably devalues the true nature of the miraculous ministry of the Spirit in the first century. If we impose so-called modern-day miracles into the New Testament, we devalue the first century miracles to nothing short of tricks and show-business religion.

Second, there are also those who

affirm that the miracles of the first century are worked today in the true nature of how they were worked in the first century. In other words, the dead are raised, broken limbs are healed, and the lepers are instantaneously cured.

If we do not make a distinction between the work of the Holy Spirit in the first century, and His work after the close of the initial establishment of the church, then we will interpret the New Testament with the conclusion of one of the two preceding understandings of miracles. Both conclusions concerning miracles lead one to misinterpret the Scriptures in reference to the miraculous work of the Spirit. It was certainly for this purpose that Paul wrote the exhortation of 2 Timothy 2:15: *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**”*

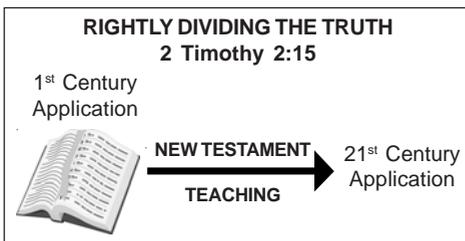
When Paul wrote this passage, he had in mind more than dividing the Old Testament from the New Testament. He taught that we must also divide New Testament events and teachings that applied to the first century disciples from our lives today. If we make a distinction

between how the Spirit worked then from how He works now, then we will conclude that all that is in the New Testament concerning the ministry of the Spirit does not apply to us today.

There is a difference between the miraculous confirming work of the Holy Spirit in the first century and His work today. The Spirit still works, but His work is indirect in the environment in which we live. His direct work that presented itself to the sense perceptions of people in the first century was meant to confirm the word of God. But the word has been confirmed, and thus, His miraculous confirming work is no longer needed today in order to validate the already confirmed word of God.

Our task is to first study the work of the Spirit in His initial miraculous work among the early disciples in the first century that was meant to confirm the word of God to unbelievers. His work thus included the edification of the early believers. **All scriptures that refer to the work of the Spirit must first be understood in reference to the early Christians to whom the Scriptures were first written.** We are secondary recipients of these same letters. Therefore, we must interpret the New Testament as secondary recipients.

If we fail to approach the New Testament from this perspective, then we will invariably rob some emotional interpreters of their coveted passages that they have used as proof texts for sup-



posed miraculous happenings today. It will also arouse some unjust criticism of the New Testament. Some will conclude that the New Testament is simply a dead letter in reference to our lives today.

Regardless of any criticism, however, we must rightly divide the word of truth in order to determine what applies to us today and what applied to the early disciples in the initial establishment of the church.

When we come to a study of the work of the Holy Spirit today, therefore, there are some risks involved. In our objectivity, we risk losing some favorite passages that we first thought applied directly to Christians for all time. Regardless of the risk, however, we must allow the Bible to interpret itself. We must deal with every verse, sentence, phrase and word in Scripture in their original context. We must not allow our emotions to dictate our objective interpretation of the Bible.

All our beliefs, emotions and preconceived theological ideas in religion must be submitted to the guidance of the Scriptures in every detail and point that is made by the Holy Spirit through the word of God.

A. Definition of terms:

We must remember that the work of the Holy Spirit in the first century was directed both towards the unbeliever and the believer. Toward the unbeliever, the

Spirit worked to **miraculously confirm the message of the gospel** (See Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). Paul wrote, “*For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power*” (1 Th 1:5). Luke wrote of Paul and Barnabas’ work in Iconium,

Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands (At 14:3).

In His miraculous work that was clearly witnessed by the unbelievers, the Spirit signaled to the world that the messengers of God were speaking the gospel message of God.

The Spirit’s work also included the building up or edification of the early disciples through the miraculous gifts. It is in the context of this miraculous work that most of the scriptures of the New Testament were written that refer to the work of the Spirit. This work of the Spirit is communicated in the New Testament by various terms that define His miraculous work among the early Christians. Therefore, when we read passages in the New Testament that refer to the work of the Spirit, we must first interpret them as they referred to the direct work of the Spirit in the lives of the early Christians.

The Spirit was working to build up

the early disciples in the absence of the written word of God. When we read this historical work of the Spirit, therefore, we must be cautious about making application of these statements to us today. The following words and phrases are examples of references to the work of the Spirit among the early disciples:

1. **“In the Spirit”**: When John received the visions of Revelation, Revelation 1:10 states that he was “*in the Spirit*” [*en pneumatos*—the article is not present] *on the Lord’s Day*” (See also At 10:10-16; 22:17). The passage would literally read that he was “in spirit,” not “in the Spirit.” The meaning is probably that he was in a state of vision or inspiration by the Spirit.

Regardless of the meaning that would be attached to the reading that we would prefer, reference was to a miraculous work of the Spirit in connection with the inspiration of the one who was “in spirit” or “in the Spirit.” This is Paul’s argument to the Galatians: “*Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the law?*” (Gl 3:3). In other words, in the context they were converted through the gospel that was miraculously confirmed by the one who brought the gospel to them. Paul wondered why they thought that they would be perfected by legalistic law-keeping after they had obeyed the gospel that came to them by the Spirit of God.

Consider also John 4:24: “*God is*

spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” The article “the” is not before the word “spirit,” therefore, **quality is emphasized**. Romans 1:9 is the commentary explanation. Paul explained, “*For God is my witness, whom I serve with* [literally, “in”] *my spirit.*” The spirit in John 4:24 refers to God to be in spirit as Paul refers to the **spirit of man**, not the Holy Spirit. Since God is spirit in nature, then we can worship Him only through spiritual means. John 4:24, therefore, is not discussing some supposed Holy Spirit-inspired worship of God as some contend. John was simply identifying God as spirit who must be worshiped after the spiritual nature of man.

2. **“Of the Spirit”**: When this phrase is used in the New Testament, reference is to receiving something that was given by the Spirit. The phrase *ek tou pneumatos* (“out of the Spirit”) does not refer to the giving of the Spirit Himself, **but to that which comes as a result of the reception of the Spirit**. Emphasis is on something that originates out of the Spirit.

3. **“With the Spirit”**: This is another New Testament phrase (*to pneumatōi*) that refers to the guidance of the Spirit in a miraculous manner. Seated in the context of miraculous gifts, Paul said, “*I will pray with the Spirit*” (1 Co 14:15). This is a reference to inspired prayer that was part of the gift of prophecy in the first century. Prayer,

teaching, preaching or singing as a part of the gift of prophecy, was guided by the Spirit. Since the early Christians who were converted out of idolatrous religions did not have copies of the Bible, the Spirit was their “Bible.” He directed their worship and lives through the inspired word of the prophets.

4. “Gift” or “gifts” of the Spirit: The word “gift” is a general term that was used to refer to the miraculous work of the Spirit. Though the word “gift” is used in other contexts in a non-miraculous manner, it was also used in the context of the miraculous. In the miraculous contexts, the singular word “gift” was used to refer to all of God’s miraculous works or “gifts” (plural). Therefore, the “gifts of the Holy Spirit” fall under the “gift of the Holy Spirit,” which phrase is found only twice in Scripture (At 2:38; 10:45).

B. The gift of the Holy Spirit:

As stated before, the “gift of the Holy Spirit” that is mentioned in Acts 2:38,39 refers to all that the Spirit would do in this dispensation of time. In the first century context, however, reference would include the miraculous work of the Spirit in fulfillment to the promise of Joel 2. At least this seems to be the primary emphasis in the historical fulfillment of what actually took place in the first century. This was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28 and acknowl-

edged by Peter in Acts 2:16,17,33. The promise was made by Peter in Acts 2:39 to “those who believe.” This interpretation has been promoted by various Bible students throughout the years. Franklin Camp stated,

I believe that the Scriptures teach that the gift of the Holy Spirit refers to miraculous endowments that belonged to the period when these miraculous gifts were for the purpose of confirming the apostles of Christ as His apostles and providing the church with inspiration through these gifts that came through the laying on of the hand of an apostle.^{3:131}

Harper added,

Thus we see the “gift of the Holy Spirit” was ...

1. ... the **revelation** of God’s great scheme of redemption for man.
2. ... His **confirming** it by miraculous demonstrations beyond the power of men to perform, and
3. ... **sealing it once and for all time.** This, having been complied with, the Holy Spirit “sealed” (stamped) his approval upon them, and this COMPLETED 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, it was **never** to be “opened again for new revelations and new confirmations.” **This** was the completion of his “gift” to us.^{4:xxxv, xxxvi}

David Lipscomb wrote, “The gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) is the bestowal of the Spirit, possibly in his miraculous manifestations.”^{5:644} Biblical interpreters would not be alone in affirming that the “gift of the Holy Spirit” referred primarily to the miraculous work of the Spirit among the early disciples.

There have been numerous efforts that suggest that the Spirit was measured out to the believers. It is agreed that the Spirit works in different ways, some perceived by the senses of man, and some not perceived, or perceived through faith. However, to assume that there are “measures” by which the Spirit works does not do justice to the work of the Spirit (Jn 3:34). He worked in an open manner in the first century in order to confirm both the message and messengers of the gospel. However, since the first century He continues to work. We would not conclude that this work would justly be classified as a less “measure” of the Spirit. It is simply less recognized. It is perceived through faith and not sight.

Efforts to measure out the work of God the Spirit in His creation have confused the relationship between the Holy Spirit and His work. This is especially true of one’s understanding of Acts 2:38,39. In an effort by some to affirm a “direct,” and yet, non-miraculous work of the Spirit upon the moral behavior of the Christian, some have portioned out the Spirit in measures of influence. But we would challenge this view of the work

of the Spirit.

When Jesus promised the time of the Spirit in John 7:38,39, it would be a time when the Spirit would do His work in His way. He would be given, that is, sent. When He was given, He would accomplish His work in this dispensation. We would thus question the idea of “measures” of the Spirit’s work. The Holy Spirit simply works.

The Holy Spirit has worked in different ways in the affairs of this world. He has revealed two ways He works. In the first century, His work was visual (miracles), and thus, confirming. Today, His work is not visual, but still an effort to affect providentially the lives of those who have obeyed the gospel. Whether miraculous or non-miraculous, it is still the Spirit working in a manner that is not according to the natural occurrence of physical laws.

Anytime the Spirit works, it is out of the ordinary in reference to the normal occurrence of the natural laws of this world. We use the words “miracle” and “miraculous” to identify His work that is perceived through the senses. Though the word “providence” has much to be desired in reference to defining His work, we use this word to identify the work of the Spirit that is perceived through faith and not sight. Regardless of what word is used, the Scriptures teach that the Spirit is working, whether it is perceived by sight or perceived by faith.

For the preceding reasons, we conclude that one cannot separate the work of the Holy Spirit from the Holy Spirit Himself when reference is made to the “gift of the Spirit.” The time of the Spirit in this gospel dispensation began with the baptism of the apostles with the Holy Spirit. “Those who believed” had access to the miraculous work of the Spirit

upon their obedience to the gospel by immersion. We today live with the benefit of the outpouring of the Spirit. That benefit is the Spirit-produced word of God that reveals the gospel. It is upon the foundation of this revealed gospel that we are founded as the church. We also benefit from the Spirit Himself as He works in our lives as the people of God.

Chapter 4

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

4 A study of the word “gift” as it is used in reference to the work of the Holy Spirit reveals some very interesting points concerning the work of the Spirit in the lives of the early Christians. We must keep in mind that the context of the word must be allowed to define the meaning of how the word was used in reference to the Holy Spirit. As we study through these texts in which it is used, it will not be difficult to understand that the primary use of the word was in reference to the miraculous work of the Spirit in the lives of the early Christians. Upon obedience to the gospel, the early Christians who came into contact with a Christ-sent apostle were freely given the gifts of the Spirit in order to firmly establish the early church.

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “If you knew the **gift of God** ... you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water” (Jn 4:10;

see also Lk 11:13; At 8:20). This is the first reference in the New Testament to the concept of a “gift” that would originate from God. This would not be the person of God. It would be a gift (*dorea*) that would proceed from God. Therefore, this is the first use of the word “gift” that refers to something that God had in store for His people.

The gift of God in John 4:10 probably refers to all things concerning salvation that God was about to offer to all men through the gospel. Salvation would be the free gift of God that would come as a result of His grace that would be revealed on the cross. This general use of the word would certainly include the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit and the indwelling of the Spirit. All would come from God as a gift.

No man could have worked for that which is a gift of God. The gift was offered to man on the basis of God’s

grace. God gives to man those things that man could never earn through meritorious works.

In John 4:10 Jesus was in His earthly ministry and looking forward to what was yet to come. In Acts and the epistles, the gift of God was poured out for man as a result of the cross. In these contexts the word “gift” was used several times in reference to the Holy Spirit.

We must first seek to understand consistently the “gift of the Spirit” in all contexts in the sense of allowing all contexts to be the commentary of one another. We would not assume that the Scriptures would be written in a manner that would use the same word or phrase to mean different things every time the word or phrase is used. **Our first rule of Bible study principle would be to consistently understand the same word or phrase to refer to the same thing in all contexts in which the word or phrase is used.** If there are other meanings that are to be understood, then the context in which a word or phrase is used must be determined by that context.

It is for this reason that we must compare all contexts wherein the word “gift” or “gift of the Holy Spirit” is used in order to allow each context to add more definition to what reference is made. The following is a list of scriptures wherein the word “gift” is used in reference to God or the Holy Spirit:

A. The gift of God:

Acts 8:20 is a clear reference to the miraculous aspects of the gift of God. Simon asked Peter and John, “*Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit*” (At 8:19). But the two apostles rebuked Simon because he “*thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money*” (At 8:20).

What Simon saw was the miraculous ability of Peter and John to impart miraculous gifts. Peter and John had laid hands on the newly immersed Samaritans. The Samaritans received the Holy Spirit by this action. What Simon wanted to purchase was the authority or power to do likewise. Therefore, the gift of God in this context referred to the miraculous work of God through the Spirit, **specifically to the authority to impart the miraculous gift of God through the laying on of hands.**

B. The gift of the Holy Spirit:

Acts 10:45 is also a reference to the miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit. After the Holy Spirit had just fallen on the household of Cornelius, in astonishment Peter proclaimed that “*the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.*” There is little question concerning this explanation of Peter that the outpouring of the Spirit on

the household of Cornelius was the “gift of the Holy Spirit.”

If we use this passage as a commentary passage of Acts 2:38, then we must affirm that what was promised in Acts 2:38 was similar to, or directly connected with, what happened to Cornelius and his household. **The gift of the Holy Spirit in the case of Cornelius was a miraculous endowment of the Spirit.** Cornelius and his household miraculously spoke in languages.

Though the reception of the Spirit in Acts 10:45 was not connected with baptism as it is in Acts 2:38, the results were the same. Those of the promise of Acts 2:38,39 would receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit by the laying on of the apostles’ hands as in Acts 8:18 and 19:1-6. In Acts 10:44,45, Jesus directly administered the Spirit on the household of Cornelius in order to give an open manifestation of the Gentiles’ right to the promise. The circumstances were different, but Peter stated that the gift of the Holy Spirit was the same. The Spirit came on the household of Cornelius in a miraculous manner. The result was that they spoke with languages.

Before the outpouring of the Spirit on the household of Cornelius, Gentiles had been baptized into Christ. However, in view of Peter’s statement of Acts 11:17, hands had not been laid on the Gentiles in order that they receive the “gift of the Holy Spirit.”

If the Gentiles who were baptized before the event of Acts 10 had received the “gift of the Holy Spirit” when they were baptized, then what is the “gift of the Holy Spirit” about which Peter spoke in Acts 10:45? Did the Gentiles receive another gift of the Holy Spirit after their baptism that would have been different than the gift that they received at the time of their baptism? Or, does Acts 2:38,39 refer to the miraculous reception of a gift of the Holy Spirit? If Peter’s explanation of the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 10:45 is the commentary on Acts 2:38,39, then the phrase “gift of the Holy Spirit” refers to a miraculous reception and action of the Holy Spirit. If it does not, then the early Christians received a gift of the Holy Spirit when they were baptized, and then another gift of the Holy Spirit when the apostles laid hands on them.

We could correctly assume that God took the opportunity in the case of Cornelius to manifest officially to Jewish Christians that the Gentiles had a right not only to be targeted in full-scale evangelism, but also to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the apostles’ hands. There could possibly have been a misconception on the part of the disciples that only the Jews were to receive the gift. At least, the Jewish disciples were not evangelizing among the Gentiles as God intended they should. However, the outpouring of the Spirit on the household of Cornelius signaled to

the Jewish Christians that the Gentiles had a right to the gift of the Holy Spirit as the Jews.

C. The same gift:

Acts 11:17 is Peter's proclamation to the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem who confronted Him when he and his company returned from the house of Cornelius. After Peter's explanation of the events, he said,

If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?

The gift about which Peter spoke here was not the gift of salvation. Neither was this a non-miraculous indwelling of the Spirit. The miraculous event of Acts 10:44,45, and Peter's comparing of this event in Acts 11:17 to that which the first Christians had received as a result of their obedience, refers back to the miraculous endowments of the Spirit that were first poured out on the apostles in Acts 2:1-4.

In Acts 10:45 Peter referred to the gift as the "gift of the Holy Spirit." In Acts 11:17 he referred to it as "the same gift" that the apostles received at the beginning of the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. The result of the gift of the Holy Spirit that was

poured out on the apostles at the beginning, and the same gift being poured out on Cornelius and his household, may be different. However, the fact is that Peter identified the "gift of the Holy Spirit" ("the same gift") with that which was poured out on the apostles in Acts 2. It is for this reason that the "gift of the Holy Spirit" that is mentioned in Acts 2:38,39 must include the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in the first century. Though the indwelling of the Spirit continues with all Christians today, the fact is that when Peter spoke of the promise being to all who were afar off in Acts 2:39, he included the miraculous work of the Spirit in the lives of the early Christians.

This understanding is in complete harmony with Paul's statement to the Galatians in Galatians 3:2: "*Did you receive the Spirit by ... the hearing of faith?*" The Galatians were of those who were "afar off" (At 2:39). Therefore, they too received the Spirit. When they believed, they were immersed, and "*through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given*" (At 8:18). The gift came to them by the grace of God through the laying on of the apostles' hands. The Galatians did not work for the gift. It was free. In the cases of the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and the household of Cornelius, the gift was freely given by God. The apostles, Cornelius' household, and the Galatians all received the "gift of the Holy Spirit," which gift came from the Holy

Spirit as the Spirit worked in their lives to edify those first Christians.

D. The gift of the grace of God:

In **Ephesians 3:7** Paul referred the Ephesians *“to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.”* In the context of Ephesians 3, Paul was not using the phrase “the gift of the grace of God” with a salvation meaning. This is not the context of his argument. Neither is this what he said in the statement.

Paul was discussing what happened **after** he was saved. The Ephesians had *“heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to”* Paul for them (Ep 3:2). However, the mystery of Christ *“has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets”* (Ep 3:5). This mystery was made known to Paul by miraculous revelation (Gl 1:11,12; Ep 3:3). After he received it, he preached it to the Ephesians. The gift was his reception of the mystery by revelation. Once he received the mystery of the gospel, he *“became a minister according to the gift.”* The passage does not say that he was made a minister **of the gift**. He was made a minister of the mystery of the gospel that came to him by revelation. As a result of the revelation, he preached the mystery of the gospel.

Notice how Paul explained the above in Ephesians 3:8: *“To me, who*

am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” There is a difference here between the “grace” that was given to him and the unsearchable riches that he preached. It was his work *“to make all people see what is the fellowship of the mystery”* (Ep 3:9). His calling and commission came by the miraculous outreach of Jesus in a heavenly vision. By miraculous endowment he was commissioned with the authority of a Christ-sent apostle. This was the gift. **The gift was his receiving of that which he preached.** The reception was miraculous. It was by revelation. The subject of the preaching was the gospel. Therefore, the gift of Ephesians 3:7 refers to the miraculous activity of God through the Holy Spirit in the life of Paul to preach to the Ephesians. By revelation he was gifted with the message of the gospel that he preached.

E. The measure of Christ’s gift:

Ephesians 4:7 is a statement that refers to the gifts of the Spirit among the Ephesian Christians. Jesus had stated to the apostles, *“It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper [the Holy Spirit] will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you”* (Jn 16:7). Though this statement is made as a direct promise to the apostles, the sending of the

Spirit was taken outside the realm of the apostles in Ephesians 4.

In Ephesians 4:8 Paul quoted Psalm 68:18: “*When He [Jesus] ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men.*” Psalm 68:18 refers to the sending of the Holy Spirit after the ascension of Jesus. Paul had said in Ephesians 4:7, “*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift* [Gr., gift of Christ].” In this context “gift of Christ” (gift of the Holy Spirit) is associated with the gifts (plural) of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the individual miraculous gifts of the Spirit are listed under the singular term, “gift of Christ.”

The gift of Christ in Ephesians 4:8 refers to the “gift of the Holy Spirit” that includes the gifts of the Spirit. This is why we affirm that all work of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation must come under the “gift of the Holy Spirit.” How the Spirit works in the life of a Christian is different now than when He first worked among the early Christians. He initially worked miraculously with the apostles and those on whom they had laid their hands. He worked non-miraculously in the lives of those who did not have hands laid on them by the apostles. However, He still worked in their lives to work all things together for good, to comfort, and to strengthen. In this same way He continues to work today. Therefore, it is erroneous to say that the Spirit has stopped working sim-

ply because we cannot see, touch, taste, feel or hear His working.

When Jesus, who is the administrator of the Spirit, ascended, He sent the Holy Spirit. He did such in order to fulfill all things (Ep 4:10). Therefore, He “*gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers*” (Ep 4:11).

Though particular ministries are mentioned here, we would suggest that those in the first century context of the church functioned in their ministries with the miraculous gifts of ministry. In other words, Jesus did not directly call these apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors/teachers. The apostles in this context were not the Christ-sent apostles as the twelve whom Jesus personally called (Lk 6:13). Reference was to church-sent apostles as Barnabas, Titus and Epaphroditus.

However, Jesus did directly administer the gift of the Spirit upon many of the individuals of the ministries of Ephesians 4:11 by the laying on of the Christ-sent apostles’ hands (At 8:18). The church-sent apostles, prophets, and evangelists here worked for the “*equipping of the saints ... for the edifying of the body of Christ*” (Ep 4:12). The miraculous gifts that they possessed and exercised in the church were for the building up of the body of Christ in order that the early disciples “*should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of*

doctrine” (Ep 4:14).

In its primary context, Ephesians 4:11-16 refers to the early church in Ephesus as the Holy Spirit, through the gifts, built up the church. Through the inspired preaching of the church-sent apostles as Timothy, the church was grounded in the truth of the gospel in order that members not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

Paul first commended the Ephesian Christians unto the word of God (At 20:32). The word unto which he commended them was first spoken. However, by the time the Ephesian letter was written, the truth was being recorded for their continued growth. We have the same written truth today unto which we are commended. By the direction of this word we are equipped unto the ministry of the saints through the ministries of church-sent apostles, pastors, evangelists and teachers.

The ministries of teaching and edification continue, though the miraculous gifts of the Spirit that enhanced the ministries of individuals in the first century

has ceased. The superior influence and impact of the Spirit’s work through the word of God was always considered more complete than the miraculous gifts. Therefore, the ministry of the preachers, pastors, teachers and church-sent apostles (missionaries) has been enhanced by the written word of God.

F. The gift of the Holy Spirit:

In view of the above, reconsider again Acts 2:38. Peter promised that those who repented and were baptized would receive the “*gift of the Holy Spirit.*” From the Spirit would eventually flow the blessing of His inspired word. When John 4:10, Ephesians 4:7 and Acts 2:38 are considered together, the indication is on what all three personalities of the Godhead were going to do in reference to the salvation and life of those who would come to God through the gospel of Jesus. In order to bring the meaning of these verses together, the following are some thoughts to consider:

THE GIFT		
	MIRACULOUS	NOT MIRACULOUS
1. Acts 8:20: “Gift of God”	x	
2. Acts 10:45: “Gift of the Holy Spirit”	x	
3. Acts 11:17: “The same gift”	x	
4. Ephesians 3:7: “The gift”	x	
5. Ephesians 4:7: “The gift of Christ”	x	
6. Acts 2:38: “Gift of the Holy Spirit”		?

Thus in the meaning of these passages [Jn 4:10; At 2:38; Ep 4:7], the *dorea* (gift) of God, and the *dorea* (gift) of Christ, and the *dorea* (gift) of the Holy Spirit, are all used in the special sense—specifying what God and Christ and the Holy Spirit **are doing**. The **dorea of God** in John 4:10 was that which proceeded from

God, the living water, the **dorea of Christ**, was that which proceeded from Christ—the measure of grace to each several members in the distribution of the spiritual endowments. On precisely the same premise the **dorea** of the Holy Spirit was that which proceeded from the Holy Spirit—the salvation and blessing of the all-inclusive promise mentioned without even a break in the context.^{6:40}

In order to understand what those who were baptized would receive, there are some grammatical structures we must consider in reference to Acts 2:38. In the grammar of the text, the phrase “gift of the Holy Spirit” is either an objective genitive or a subjective genitive. If the meaning is **objective genitive**, then Peter would be saying, “You will receive the Holy Spirit which is a gift from God.” This meaning would make the Holy Spirit the gift that would be received.

If the meaning is the **subjective genitive**, then Peter would be saying, “You will receive the gift that is from the Holy Spirit.” Emphasis would be on something that the Holy Spirit would give.

The difficulty is that **the grammar alone of the verse does not define whether the meaning is objective or subjective genitive**. Only the context can define whether the subjective or objective genitive is being used. However, in reference to Acts 2:38 **it is difficult to make a distinction even by**

the context of the verse. A broader context of the New Testament, therefore, is necessary in order to understand that to which reference is made. And in the broader context, reference could be made to both. That is, at the time of one’s obedience to the gospel, he or she receives the Holy Spirit. In the first century context in reference to the laying on of the hands of the apostles, one had a right to the promise about which Peter spoke in Acts 2:33, that is the gifts of the Spirit.

In the context of Peter’s proclamation concerning the fulfillment of Joel 2:28, and this statement concerning the promise in Acts 2:33 and 2:39, the subjective genitive would be the most logical meaning. In other words, they would receive the gift that would come from the Spirit. But in the context of the gospel that had been prophesied and preached in Acts 2, the meaning could also be the objective genitive. Those who were baptized would receive the Holy Spirit.

The discussion concerning this point has been carried on for decades. We are sure that the discussion will carry on until the Lord comes. Nevertheless, as Bible students we must first recognize the difficulties we have in understanding some passages. We would, however, ask that everyone seriously consider both the objective and subjective genitive possibilities in interpreting this passage.

There are some things that are clear

concerning the person and work of the Spirit in this dispensation of the gospel. He indwells the Christian, though we must understand what is meant by “indwell.” We also understand that the Spirit worked openly, that is, miraculously, in the first century. And, He still works today, though not miraculously as He did in order to confirm the message and messengers of the gospel. But one thing is very clear. **The Holy Spirit will do His work regardless of our lack of understanding of His work.** Some become quite uneasy when they cannot dictate to the Spirit where He is or what He does. On our part, these matters do not concern us for the simple reason that the Spirit does not indwell or work according to our feeble understanding. We would not be so arrogant as to dictate to the Spirit that He must work according to our understanding of His work.

In Acts 2:38, some have argued for the objective genitive (the Holy Spirit is the gift) on the basis of the Greek word that is used in this passage for gift. The word that is used is *dorea*. *Dorea* denotes that which is given. *Chrisma*, that is also translated “gift” in the New Testament, emphasizes the giver. However, *dorea* is used in Acts 2:38, and thus, it is often argued that the clause is expegetical, that is, the Spirit is the actual gift.

The above reasoning is possible, except it still does not help us determine whether the miraculous or non-miracu-

lous work of the Spirit is in view in the text. The same word, *dorea*, is used in the same phrase in Acts 10:45 with a clear reference to the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit upon Cornelius and his household. If Acts 10:45 is also used to be the commentary passage of Acts 2:38, then one would lean more toward the miraculous work of the Spirit being emphasized in Acts 2:38. The *dorea* would refer to the miraculous work of the Spirit that was the promise in Joel 2:28, and to which Peter referred in Acts 2:33.

It is important to understand Acts 2:38,39 in the context of all scriptures that refer to the “gift” that came through the work of the Holy Spirit. If Acts 2:38,29 is taken out of the context of the ones to whom it was initially stated, then it is difficult to understand correctly. As with all the New Testament writings, Acts 2:38,39 must first be understood in the context of how the immediate audience understood the statements. We would urge Bible students to view this text through the total work of the Holy Spirit in His ministry among the early disciples as a fulfillment of Joel 2:28.

In view of Joel’s prophecy of Joel 2:28, “all flesh” in the church would benefit from the outpouring of the Spirit. **We would view all work of the Spirit since Pentecost as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2. In the same sense, therefore, all work of the Spirit since Pentecost is affirmed in the statement of Acts 2:38,39.**

Peter said in Acts 2:39, “*For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.*”

This is a very all-inclusive promise. Regardless of our personal view of the work of the Holy Spirit, **such a view must be seated in the “gift of the Holy Spirit” as stated in Acts 2:38,39.** Since all work of the Spirit that is mentioned in the New Testament finds its seat in the prophecy of Joel 2, and the promises of Jesus, then we must assume that when the apostles first mentioned the “promise” and “gift of the Holy Spirit” in the context of Act 2, we must conclude that Jesus and the apostles had in mind the work of the Spirit throughout this dispensation of the Spirit’s work. It is for this reason that we must consider the promise of Acts 2:38,39 to refer to more than the indwelling of the Spirit.

The miraculous and non-miraculous work of the Spirit must be included in gift of the Spirit of Acts 2:38. If one affirms that Acts 2:38 promises only the miraculous gifts, then he would exclude the person and presence of the Spirit in the life of the Christian today. Other passages clearly manifest the person and presence of the Spirit in the lives of the early Christians.

If one affirms that only the person of the Spirit is in the gift of Acts 2:38, then he would exclude the miraculous gifts that were obviously present in the

lives of the early Christians, which gifts originated from the promise of Joel 2. Because both the miraculous gifts and the Spirit Himself were present in the early Christians’ lives, we must conclude that both are in the Old Testament prophecies and fulfillment among the early disciples. Whatever one’s view of the Spirit is, therefore, he must base it in the context of Acts 2 where Peter referred to the gift of the Holy Spirit as a promise to all. On this point Winters wrote,

This verse [Acts 2:38] contains two commands and two promises. The commands are to **repent** and be **baptized**. The promises are **the remission of sins** and the **gift of the Holy Spirit**. It seems incredible to me that anyone could understand this verse in any sense but that those (“every one of you”) who obey the commands will receive the promises. It would be as Scriptural to separate the commands and say that only one of them applies as it would be to separate the promises and say that only one of them can be received. Both promises are made to those who obey both commands.^{6:12}

We would also add that the gift of the Spirit would include the blessings that Christians would enjoy in Christ in this gospel dispensation. The inspired record of the gospel event (the New Testament) resulted from the work of the Spirit. We

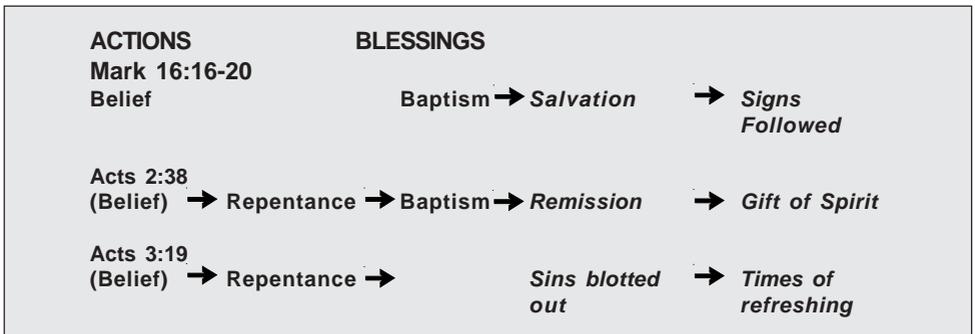
would never have known of Jesus if it were not for the Spirit. If it were not for the revelation of the Spirit through the inspired word of God, we would never have known, as the apostles and early believers, that the crucifixion of Jesus was for the redemption of man (See Ep 3:3-5). We would never have known of God’s will for our living if it were not for the Spirit directing us through the words of the Bible (See Cl 3:1-17). The early Christians would never have survived without a true knowledge of Jesus if it were not for the work of the Holy Spirit. Even at the time Luke wrote the record of Luke there were false ideas being circulated concerning the life and ministry of Jesus (Lk 1:1-4). By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, therefore, Luke wrote that Theophilus might “*know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed*” (Lk 1:4). It is our blessing from the Holy Spirit that the message of the gospel has continued throughout the centuries by the guiding work of the Holy Spirit through the inspired written word of God.

Peter’s commentary statement of

Acts 2:38 is in Acts 3:19. He defined this dispensation of the gospel as the “age of the Spirit.” “*Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.*” These “times of refreshing” are the times when God “*has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*” (Ep 1:3). These are those times about which Peter and Paul wrote. These are the times of refreshing and spiritual blessings.

The diagram below is a comparison between Mark 16:16-20, Acts 2:38 and Acts 3:19. All three of these contexts harmonize in concepts and teaching that one receives the remission of sins and the blessing (gift) that proceeds from the Holy Spirit upon obedience to the gospel (immersion). We must first understand these passages in the context of the first century, as well as to our application today.

There is a conditional action to which adherence must conform before one receives any blessing from God. In other words, God’s blessing is free,



however, one must respond to the gospel in order to receive the benefit of the free blessing. This does not mean that we earn God's gifts. The fact is that His gifts are so great that there is no possible way that we can meritoriously earn them. The concepts, "gift of the Holy Spirit," "times of refreshing," and "signs followed those who believe" indicate free blessings that one would receive as a result of obedience to the gospel. These phrases indicate the same thing in reference to the miraculous work in the first century. If we seek to be consistent in understanding these three passages, then they must be understood together.

There are two blessings that come as a result of an obedient response to the gospel. First, one's sin problem is solved through the remission of sins. Second, the times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord (At 3:19) by the "*renewing of the Holy Spirit*" (Ti 3:5). Therefore, could Mark 16:11-20, Acts 2:38 and Acts 3:19 refer to the miraculous work of the Spirit in the lives of the early Christians?

If we must affirm that the personal indwelling of the Spirit finds its origin in Acts 2:38,39, then we must consider the fact that the emphasis of the passage is on all that proceeds from the Holy Spirit. We must conclude, therefore, that all that the Spirit offers in this dispensation finds its origin in the outpouring of the Spirit on the apostles in Acts 2. When one is baptized, he receives all that the Spirit

has to offer him that is applicable to him at the particular time in history when he obeys the gospel. The Spirit is the source of what the Father would accomplish in any dispensation of time through the work of the Spirit, and thus, He is the source of all blessing that we have in this gospel dispensation.

In Acts 2:38, the phrase "of the Holy Spirit" is prepositional. **It is not the direct object of the verb "receive."** "Gift" is the direct object. "Of the Holy Spirit" is not the objective ablative. The prepositional phrase, "of the Holy Spirit," is in the possessive case. The fact is that the verb "receive" **cannot** have two direct objects that are of two different cases. In other words, Peter is not saying that they would receive both the "gift" and the "Holy Spirit." They would receive the "gift" that originated from the Holy Spirit. The "gift" is the direct object of the verb "receive."

Though one might affirm that in the gift would be the person of the Holy Spirit, consistent grammar here would emphasize the "gift" as that which would be received. **Therefore, in view of the tremendous miraculous work of the Spirit in the early church, it would seem that this part of the gift would be the primary emphasis of the gift in Acts 2:38.** In fact, in the context of the early disciples this is without doubt the primary understanding the early Christians placed on the "gift" of the Spirit.

Nevertheless, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians would also seem to be a part of the gift. After all, how could one have the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit without having the Spirit? The indwelling relationship the Spirit had with Christians must have begun at the time when the obedient believer submitted his will to the Lord in obedience to the gospel. However, we must not assume that when one received the Spirit, he subsequently received the miraculous work of the Spirit. The Spirit certainly worked in the lives of the early believers, but in most cases, He worked in a non-miraculous manner.

We would emphasize the miraculous work of the gift of the Holy Spirit in the first century because this was the first manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the manner by which He came upon the apostles. The miraculous was the primary work of the Spirit in confirming the Spirit-inspired message of the gospel to the lost. The miraculous gifts were a major work of the Spirit in establishing the early disciples in the faith. It is an obvious conclusion, therefore, to emphasize the miraculous work of the Spirit in the passages in the New Testament that state His work. However, we must keep in mind that when this work was completed in the first century, the Spirit continued with the disciples even to this day.

We must not assume, therefore, that the Spirit has ceased to work sim-

ply because we do not openly perceive His work. All things are working together for the good of the Christian. Though we may not understand how this work is being carried out in our lives, this does not mean that God the Holy Spirit is not working. The Spirit will do His work in our lives regardless of our understanding of His work. Our knowledge does not regulate the Spirit's work in our lives.

Acts 2:38 should be considered in the whole text interpretation of the gift of the Spirit as explained in other passages. Here again, the New Testament should be allowed to interpret itself. We could conclude that the "gift of God" (At 8:20), "gift of the Holy Spirit" (At 10:45), "the same gift" (At 11:17), "the gift of the grace" (Ep 3:7), "the gift of Christ" (Ep 4:7) and the "gift of the Holy Spirit" (At 2:38) all refer to the same thing. Reference is primarily to the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of this dispensation of the Spirit. As a result of this miraculous work, especially the work through inspiration, we sit with Bibles in our laps today through which the Spirit continues to work on our moral behavior. Apart from this word, we perceive through faith that the Spirit works in a providential way in the lives of Christians. Such is an extended result of the gift of the Holy Spirit that Christians enjoy as a result of their obedience to the gospel.

We must also caution ourselves

concerning the unfortunate tendency of man to “humanize” God the Holy Spirit by localizing Him in some place in our physical environment. We must remember that we cannot use human terms of location to place Deity in a particular location. To say that the Holy Spirit is “here” or “there” is to force the meanings of our human vocabulary on the existence and presence of God the Spirit. In other words, to say that the Spirit is “in” or “by” according to our definition of these words as physical human be-

ings, seems to miss the metaphor of the close relationship the Spirit seeks to have with the believer.

The metaphorical use of words as “indwell,” “in” and “by” seek to convey a close relationship God the Holy Spirit has with those who have submitted to His directions. Much of the debate on the Holy Spirit throughout the years has resulted from our “humanization” or “literalization” of metaphors where the Spirit is trying to convey a much deeper meaning than earthly concepts and locations.

Chapter 5

MIRACULOUS GIFTS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

5 We must understand that the New Testament was written during a period of history in which the early disciples were directed by the miraculous inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the spoken word of God. The first written documents of the New Testament did not come until approximately twenty years after the establishment of the church in A.D. 30.

The apostles did not pass out Bibles in the beginning. They passed out the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. In view of the historical fact that the early disciples were converted out of idolatrous religious practices, God intended that their conduct as the church of Christ be directed through the miraculous gifts.

the whole worship and edification of the primitive church, in its infancy, was directed by inspired men; and that the Spirit suggested the songs, prayers, exhortations, and, indeed, all the discourses which were useful to the congregation; and that every thing incompatible with these suggestions was reprobated by the Apostles and those judges who had the gift of discerning spirits.^{7:Vol. 11, No. 7}

When we read the New Testament, therefore, we must interpret what is said from the viewpoint of Christians who were directed by the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. The instructions of the epistles of the inspired writers were directed to those who had recently come out of idolatrous religions. Therefore,

Recollect the proposition is this: That

we must read these instructions from the viewpoint of a document that was first written to those who were newly converted out of idolatry.

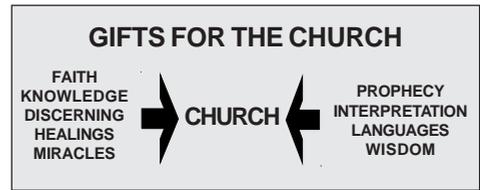
Biblical interpreters have made many unfortunate and erroneous conclusions in rightly dividing the word of truth by applying scriptures to us today concerning the Spirit that were originally directed to disciples in the first century when the church was under the miraculous direction of the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that we must reconsider some of the principal concepts of the purpose for which the miraculous gifts were given to the early Christians. When we focus on the purpose for which the gifts were given, we can understand why the gifts were not meant to continue throughout history.

A. The purpose of miraculous gifts:

In the absence of written directions (the New Testament), the early disciples in the first century were under the care of those who spoke and worked by the direct work of the Spirit. This direction came through the ministry of those disciples who had received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit through the laying on of the apostles' hands. Paul explained that such was necessary ...

... till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to

the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive ... (Ep 4:13,14).



The gifts were to be in existence until *“that which is perfect has come”* (1 Co 13:10). That which was perfect in 1 Corinthians 13 was the *“perfect law of liberty”* (Js 1:25). We must not under-emphasize the vital and necessary role the complete recorded truth played in the continuation of the church after the first century. This explains the passing away of the miraculous direction of the Spirit.

Through inspiration, the faith *“was once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jd 3). In the middle 60s, Peter wrote that God’s *“divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness”* (2 Pt 1:3). These things were recorded *“that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”* (2 Tm 3:17). These statements were made after A.D. 60, or about thirty years after the establishment of the church in A.D. 30.

While the written documents of the New Testament were being produced in the first century by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit worked through the gifts in order to direct the early disciples. However, when the New Testament documents were completed, the gifts passed away. This is why Paul wrote the following in reference to miraculous gifts:

But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away (1 Co 13:8-10).

The gifts were “in part.” The inspired word is complete (2 Tm 3:16,17). The written word of God is able to furnish the Christian unto all good works. It contains all direction that is necessary for godly living. It has once and for all time been delivered to the saints. Therefore, the word of God has displaced the miraculous gifts in that the word of God has assumed the purpose for which the gifts were given, that is, to equip the saints unto the work of the ministry of both evangelism and edification (Ep 4:11-16).

B. The nature of the miraculous gifts:

It is difficult to determine the exact nature of some of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, Paul listed nine general areas of the miraculous work of the Spirit through the gifts. However, we would not view this list to be a conclusive description of each gift. The Spirit did not accomplish just one objective under each heading as might be assumed from the listing of the gifts. In other words, “tongues” (languages) meant more than just the speaking of one language. One individual could have the gift of speaking many different languages (1 Co 14:18). As we will discuss later, prophecy included more than just inspired preaching. Paul’s intention for giving the list of 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 was to give an umbrella for the gifts in order to bring to mind the gifts that were already familiar to the early Christians.

It is difficult to understand the exact nature of many of the gifts. We were not there when they were in action in the early church. Therefore, we have no experiential learning as to the nature of some gifts, or how they were used to enhance the ministry of those who possessed them in reference to the edification of the church. Any understanding of the exact nature of any particular gift must be defined by what we read in the pages of the New Testament.

We must not read into the definition of these gifts our own experiences today. We must be cautious not to use our natural gifts that everyone has today

to define the function of the miraculous gifts. After all, it was the Spirit working in a miraculous manner through the gifts in order to edify the church until the coming of the inspired written word of God.

If we use the definition, or function, of our natural gifts today, that each member has, in order to define the miraculous gifts of the first century, **then we lessen the function of the Spirit in His ministry of edification of the early church.** In fact, if we take the position that there is no difference between the use of natural gifts, and the miraculous gifts about which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 12, then we must take the position that the Spirit is working today in the same way that He worked through the miraculous gifts in the first century. **If we make no distinction between the miraculous gifts of the first century, and the natural gifts that we have today, then the laying on of the apostles' hands to receive the miraculous gifts in the first century meant nothing.**

It is important to first form a general definition of the miraculous gifts that Paul mentions. A definition of each of the miraculous gifts will help us to understand that this manner by which the Spirit worked then is not the manner by which He works today. The following is a suggested definition of each of the gifts that Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 12:

1. *The gift of wisdom:* Refer-

ence here is probably to the inspired wisdom about which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 2:6,7:

... we speak wisdom among those who are mature ... we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory.

Though this statement refers to the wisdom of God concerning the mystery of the gospel, we must also assume that the wisdom about which he refers in 1 Corinthians 12 is wisdom that was necessary to direct the early disciples. This would be the wisdom that originated from God as opposed to that which originated from man (See Js 3:17).

We must keep in mind that the early converts came out of idolatrous religious thinking that had no connection with how the disciples should function as the universal body of Christ. Paul's description in Ephesians 2:1-3 concerning the nature and behavior of the Ephesians before they became Christians helps us understand why it was necessary for the direct leading of the new converts through the gift of wisdom:

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works

in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

From reading this description of the social conduct out of which people were converted in the first century, we can easily suppose the purpose for which the Spirit worked through the gift of wisdom. Understanding the pagan environment of those who had been swept away by idolatrous practices helps us to also understand the necessity for the gift of knowledge.

Wisdom certainly exists today among the disciples. In fact, James said, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him”* (Js 1:5). However, there is a difference between the acquisition of this wisdom and the manner by which it came through the miraculous gift of wisdom in the first century. The wisdom would be the same, but the means by which the wisdom came was different.

The miraculous gift of wisdom of the first century came immediately through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. The wisdom for which James encouraged us to pray does not come in the abundance and immediate nature by

which the wisdom of the miraculous gift came. We pray for wisdom today, and then we seek for the blessing of the wisdom over a period of time. When the Spirit provided the wisdom that was needed for the direction of the church in the first century, there was no question as to whether the wisdom was given. The wisdom was given immediately for the occasion for which it was needed.

Wisdom was sometimes needed in reference of how to apply God’s instructions. For example, when two women had a dispute over a babe during the reign of Solomon in the Old Testament, Solomon acted wisely in reference to determining the real mother of the babe (1 Kg 3:16-28). In reference to the decision of Solomon, the writer of 1 Kings recorded that the people *“saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice”* (1 Kg 3:28; 4:29-31). Everyone knew what was right, however, wisdom was needed to apply what was right in the sight of God. This is a definition of how the gift of wisdom was exercised among the early disciples.

Another example would be the occasion when the disciples in Jerusalem came to the apostles concerning the problem of the neglect of Grecian widows in the distribution of food (At 6:1-6). Everyone knew what was right in reference to caring for widows and orphans (Js 1:27). However, men full of wisdom needed to be designated in order that the will of God be carried out in

a proper manner on this occasion and when the distribution was corrected (At 6:3). The inspired prophets and teachers of the first century could deliver what God's will was for the direction of the church. Wisdom was needed to apply the will of God in the particulars of what was needed in order to transform the thinking of the people into the mind of Christ (See Rm 12:1,2). Wisdom is our application of what we know must be done. The gift of wisdom activated in the lives of the early Christians the knowledge that came through the gift of knowledge.

2. *The gift of knowledge:* The gift of knowledge was the inspired ability to organize and direct the function of the disciples according to the will of God. Colossians 1:9 would be a commentary passage on this matter:

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

In the absence of the written will of God, the Spirit miraculously provided that which was needed to direct the infant disciples who had been recently converted out of idolatry.

We must suppose for a moment that we ourselves were the product of an idolatrous environment. When we

heard the gospel, we were converted to a membership of others who had also been recently converted out of idolatry. Would we as new brothers and sisters in Christ know how to conduct the affairs of our working together as the body of Christ in order to accomplish the will of God? In order to function as the body, we could not refer to any other "Christian" religious group in the community. There were none. We could not refer to our fathers who were idolaters before us. We had no "church history," and thus we could not refer to the heritage of our forefathers.

Herein was the reason and necessity for the gift of knowledge. This knowledge was not revelation of truth that was binding on the church. It was simply knowledge of how to do things. It was knowledge of how to conduct the interaction of the membership in carrying out the will of God.

3. *The gift of faith:* Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Rm 10:17). One grows in faith through knowledge of God's faithful work in the lives of men in the past (Hb 11). We know how He worked in the past because of the inspired record of the Scriptures. However, in the absence of this knowledge—the absence of the written record of God's work in the lives of His people—there was the need in the early church for strong faith for the newly converted disciples.

The great faith that was necessary

to bring the Christians through the relentless trials of the times could not be established on the foundation of God's faithful work throughout the centuries. This was true because there was no record of such work that was available to most of the early Christians. There were no copies of the Old Testament that were circulated among the Christians. Copies of the Old Testament were found only in the Jewish synagogues. And often, Christians were banned from the synagogues because they believed that Jesus was the Messiah. There were no records of the faithful work of Paul and Peter, or the other evangelists. For at least thirty years, the document of Acts did not exist. And after it was written, it had to be copied and distributed among the early disciples.

Through the gift of faith, however, men of faith within the fellowship of the early Christians were encouraged by the examples of great faith during times of great trial. Some new converts might be tempted to return to their former way of life in idolatrous religions. However, those who had the gift of faith would be the foundation of stability for the new converts.

Once the inspired documents of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were written, the gift of faith could pass away. The document of John was written specifically to produce faith (Jn 20:30,31). Once the disciples had copies of this document in their hands, then there was

no more a need for the miraculous gift of faith. They could read the evidence of John concerning the life and ministry of Jesus. This document alone would produce faith in Jesus as the Son of God. After inspired documents as John were written, therefore, the Holy Spirit intended that Christians should study the New Testament documents instead of seeking faith directly from the Holy Spirit (See Rm 10:17).

4. *The gifts of healings:* Paul used the plural words "gifts" and "healings" to refer to this ministry of the Holy Spirit. This gift accompanied those who went to the unbelievers with the message of the gospel. Philip went to Samaria ...

*... and the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, **hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.** For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed (At 8:6,7; see At 5:15,16; 19:11,12; 28:8,9).*

In Philip's work, the word "miracles" from the preceding quotation is from the Greek word *saimēia*. The word is used in the context to refer to the signaling by Philip's works that he had power over the world of Satan by the casting out of demons. He used the

word “healing” in reference to the paralyzed and lame unbelievers who were restored to normality. In Mark 3:14,15 it is stated,

... then He [Jesus] appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power [authority] to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.

Philip’s miraculous work in Samaria was the same as Jesus’ commissioning of the apostles in Mark 3:14,15. However, we must keep in mind that in both cases, the ministry was in reference to evangelism of the unbelievers, not work among the disciples. Jesus empowered the apostles in their work among the unbelievers. Philip’s work in Samaria was among the unbelievers. The healing that took place in both cases, therefore, **was for a witness to the unbelievers.**

In fact, it was the unbelievers who were healed, not the believers. It is for this reason that we would suggest that **the gift of healing was not for the benefit of the believers**, but only for unbelievers as an act to confirm the message of the gospel (Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). **Members of the early church were not miraculously healed as a result of the gifts of healings.** This miraculous gift was directed toward those who were unbelievers.

In support of the above thought, consider some very significant situations

wherein the gift of healing **was not used in reference to believers.** In 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 Paul spoke of a “thorn in the flesh” that buffeted him. In reference to this thorn, he said, “*Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me*” (2 Co 12:8). Paul could not heal himself of this thorn. Neither did God heal him. When he was in Jerusalem in Acts 15, he was with other apostles of Christ. However, they did not heal him. Any healing power that he and the other apostles had could not be used to heal Paul’s thorn in the flesh.

In 1 Timothy 5:23 Paul wrote to Timothy, “*No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.*” Timothy evidently had some problem with his stomach. If he had this problem in the presence of Paul, we would wonder why Paul did not heal him. We can only conclude that the miraculous power of Paul to heal was not to be used to heal believers.

While in prison, Epaphroditus came to Paul from Philippi. While in Paul’s presence, Paul wrote, “*For indeed he [Epaphroditus] was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow*” (Ph 2:27).

This statement of Paul does not say that he healed Epaphroditus personally. It speaks of what God did in a special

way in order that Paul in prison not have “sorrow upon sorrow.” Our question would be concerning why Epaphroditus became so sick in the first place that he was nigh unto death. Why could Paul not heal him? Was it because the gift of healing was never meant to be for the healing of Christians?

Consider also the case of Trophimus in 2 Timothy 4:20. **Paul left Trophimus sick in Miletus.** This case will puzzle those who believe that the gift of healing was given specifically for the benefit of the disciples. If the gift was given for the benefit of the believers, then why did Paul leave Trophimus sick in Miletus? Would Paul have been so unconcerned that he simply left Trophimus without healing him? Or, was it because the gift of healing that Paul possessed, which gift he used to heal the father of Publius on Malta (At 28:8), was not meant for the benefit of the believers?

The case of Trophimus might prove another point that was true in the historical purpose of the miraculous gifts. Paul did not heal Trophimus because he possibly could not. By the time Trophimus was left in a sick bed by Paul, the gift of miraculous healing had already passed away. We would assume that such was the case because of the passing away of all the miraculous gifts (See 1 Co 13:8-10).

The passing away of the miraculous gifts was necessary because the early disciples had to learn to base their

faith on the gospel alone, not on miracles. The faith of the believers had to turn away from dependence on miracles to dependence on the gospel reign of King Jesus. We, too, needed an inspired record (the New Testament) of the birth and continuation of the church that was based on and centered around the gospel, not miracles. Since it was in the work of the Holy Spirit not to focus the disciples continually on Himself or His miraculous gifts, then we would assume that after He had revealed the truth to the early disciples, and started their ministry into all the world, He stepped into the background in order to fulfill the statement of Jesus in John 16:14: “*He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify Me.*”

Those individuals who continue to base their faith on some supposed miraculous wonders today in order to maintain their struggling faith are focusing on the empirical and not the spiritual. For example, they seek for a resurrection of someone today in order to believe. They are like Thomas who would not even believe his closest friends concerning their testimony of the resurrection of Jesus. “*Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails...*,” he responded to their reports, “*I will not believe*” (Jn 20:25). As Thomas did not believe the testimony of the other apostles, many today will not believe the testimony of the Spirit-inspired New Testament. It is for this reason that the Holy Spirit had to terminate the confirm-

ing miracles after He inspired the New Testament documents to be written that exalt King Jesus. The miraculous had to pass away in order that our minds turn to heaven to Jesus on the throne (See Cl 3).

Consider this point also from the viewpoint of the fellowship of the disciples themselves. Suppose the gift of miraculous healing was meant for the believers. Everyone who became a member of the body in the first century, therefore, could miraculously be healed of any disease. Members of the church who became ill would simply be healed by those who had the gift of healing. There would thus be no sicknesses among the members of the body of Christ in any community.

Now we must ask, what impact would this have on the community? The impact would be that people would not come to Christ for the healing of the soul, but for the healing of the body. The church would become known for its lack of physical sicknesses, rather than a body of people who had come to the foot of the cross for spiritual healing. The gospel would be ignored in order to come into contact with a disciple who had the gift of healing. People would ignore the healing of the blood of the Lamb in order to selfishly be healed in their bodies.

5. *The gift of miracles:* The Greek word that is used here (*dunamais*) refers to the powers that were manifested

by unleashing the supernatural environment of God. These special miraculous works of some disciples were meant to confirm the messengers and message of the gospel (Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). This gift, therefore, would refer to confirming the message of the gospel before the unbelieving world.

This gift would not have been designated for the benefit of the church. The members of the body already believed. The miraculous confirming power of God that was worked through the early disciples was directed toward those God wanted to move toward belief in both His messengers and the message of the gospel.

The believers did not need their belief confirmed continually by the revealing of the supernatural world of God. If their faith had to be continually reaffirmed by the miraculous work of God, then their faith was weak. How could they have anything to offer to the unbelieving world if they themselves had little faith in what they believed? It is for this reason that the confirming miraculous work of the Holy Spirit was not meant for believers.

We must assume that the miraculous gifts were designated to enhance the ministry of the saints, both to the unbeliever and for the believer. The miraculous gifts of healing and powers, therefore, were directed toward confirming the message of Christians who went out as evangelists (See Mk 16:20).

6. The gift of prophecy: Of all the miraculous gifts, this one was the most important and diversified in reference to the edification of the church and the evangelization of the world. Paul encouraged the disciples to seek the gifts, “*but especially that you may prophesy,*” for “*he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men*” (1 Co 14:1,3). This was the gift of inspired speaking. In other words, what was said by the speaker was directed by the Holy Spirit. Under the umbrella of inspired speaking, the gift of prophecy included four areas of ministry:

a. Preaching: Agabus was a New Testament prophet (At 21:10). He preached the word of God by inspiration, but also on at least one occasion he spoke concerning what would happen in the future of Paul’s life. Judas and Silas were also prophets who spoke by inspiration (At 15:32). Their work consisted primarily of evangelizing the unbelieving world by preaching the gospel, as well as edifying the church. We could correctly assume that all evangelists we read about in the New Testament were inspired preachers. However, the work of a prophet, at least in the context of the Achaian disciples, would be preaching and teaching the gospel throughout the province of Achaia. The prophets’ work as teachers would be to build up the disciples by teaching the word of truth, whereas, the

evangelist’s work was directed toward preaching the gospel to the lost.

We commonly refer to the prophets today who work in the edification of the church as teachers. They speak to edify the church, not by inspiration as the New Testament prophets, but by proclaiming the inspired written word. Direct inspiration of preaching and teaching is not needed today because the preacher/teacher can study the Spirit-inspired Bible in order to know what to deliver to the church.

b. Teaching: Preaching in the first century was directed toward the proclamation of the gospel to the unbelievers. Teaching, on the other hand, was the impartation of the word of God to the believers. There is teaching in preaching, but the word “preaching” is generally used to convey the public proclamation of the message of the gospel to the unbelievers.

In the New Testament, the word “teaching” or “teacher” refers to both men and women who minister the word of God to the church. The work of the preacher was directed toward an evangelistic outreach to the lost, whereas the teacher was one who focused on the body of believers.

Philip, the evangelist, had four virgin daughters who were prophets (At 21:9). They were teachers of the word of God who taught by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Paul told Titus to instruct older women, who were possibly

prophets, to teach younger women. He wrote that *“the older women likewise, that they be ... teachers of good things”* (Ti 2:3). In the early church, therefore, there were those who taught the word of God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. There were those who preached the message of the gospel to the lost by inspiration. The gift of prophecy was directed toward the edification of the church, though preaching the gospel was directed to the lost.

c. Praying: With no New Testament to direct their prayers according to the will of God (1 Jn 5:14), new converts from idolatrous religions needed direction as to what must be requested of God and how to ask of God. The early disciples of Jesus were godly Jews. However, they asked Jesus to teach them to pray (Lk 11:1). When the Holy Spirit came, it was His work to teach the new Christians how to pray. For example, inspired prayer is in the meaning of statements as Ephesians 6:18, *“... praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.”* Jude wrote, *“... building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Spirit”* (Jd 20). Reference here is not to spiritual prayers, but prayer directed by the Spirit. The Corinthians also prayed in tongues (1 Co 14:14). Such Spirit-guided prayer was praying *“with the Spirit”* (1 Co 14:15). Seated in the context of the inspired prayers of the early church is the statement of Paul in Romans 8:26,27:

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

d. Singing: The early church had no songbooks. However, they were to teach truth to one another through singing (Cl 3:16). What was taught through the songs, therefore, was directed by the Holy Spirit. In the context of the miraculous gifts of 1 Corinthians 14, Paul mentioned this: *“I will sing with the Spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding”* (1 Co 14:15). As prophets were inspired to preach and teach by the inspiration of the Spirit, so those who came to the assembly with an inspired song were to teach the members the new song (1 Co 14:26).

Through the gift of prophecy the early church was “taught by God.” Paul wrote to the Thessalonians who had no written New Testaments: *“But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another”* (1 Th 4:9). How were they taught? He later commanded them to *“not despise prophecies”* (1 Th

5:20). This one statement alone signifies the presence of the gift of prophecy in the Thessalonian church. They were taught by the Spirit to love one another. They were not to despise the teaching and preaching of the prophets, for these gifted members were delivering the word of truth to the church for the purpose of edification.

7. *The gift of discerning of spirits:* This was a gift to test those who came to the disciples and claimed to be Christ-sent apostles or inspired prophets. John instructed his readers to exercise this gift with those gnostic teachers who claimed to have special knowledge from God. He wrote, “*Test the spirits, whether they are of God*” (1 Jn 4:1). In the absence of written Scriptures, the only means by which the early Christians could determine if a supposed prophet was preaching by inspiration was to test them by the miraculous gift of discerning spirits.

The Ephesian disciples “*tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars*” (Rv 2:2). These were those who claimed to be church-sent apostles with the gift of prophecy, but they were liars. The Ephesian disciples tried them and found them false. Many such deceivers had gone out among the Christians in the first century (2 Jn 7). To protect the innocent infant believers from such deceivers, the miraculous gift of “discerning

spirits” was given in order to stop those who masqueraded themselves as prophets or apostles of Christ (2 Co 11:13).

8. *Languages:* This is the speaking in a foreign language that the speaker had not previously studied. This miraculous ability was given by the Spirit for a sign to unbelievers (1 Co 14:22). The sign was God’s signal to everyone, especially the Jews, that God was with the Christians. The gift of languages also aided in the rapid evangelism of the world because evangelists would not be slowed down by the months of language learning in order to preach the gospel to a new tribe or culture.

9. *The gift of interpretation of languages:* This was the gift of being able to understand one who spoke in a foreign language that one had not previously studied. From the context of 1 Corinthians 14, one who spoke in a language may not have had the gift of interpretation. Therefore, Paul instructed, “*Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret*” (1 Co 14:13). If the language could not be interpreted in an assembly by one who had the gift of interpretation, then the one speaking in the foreign language was to remain silent (1 Co 14:28). If he was not blessed with the gift of interpretation, then he needed to remain silent (1 Co 14:28).

The one who had the gift of interpretation had hands laid on him by an apostle in order to receive this gift. Paul

stated that he pray in order that the Spirit distribute to him also the gift to interpret what he was speaking in the language.

The gift of languages also benefited the local disciples. It was a great benefit by providing visiting brethren, who did not speak the local language, an opportunity to understand what was being preached. One who had the gift of interpretation could translate for a speaker who did not have the gift of languages.

In the historical context of the urgency to preach the gospel to the world, the gift of languages was given for the benefit of the unbeliever. The problem that prevailed among the Corinthian disciples centered around those who had the gift of languages, but were using their gift as a matter of pride. Their misuse of the gift led to Paul's exhortation that if no one understood the language that was spoken, then the one speaking the language should remain silent (1 Co 14:28).

C. The environment of the miraculous gifts:

A common mistake that biblical interpreters make today is failing to see the assemblies of the early disciples as certain members were guided by the miraculous gifts of the Spirit in order to edify the whole body. Modern-day interpreters often fail to understand the implications of the early disciples meeting in the homes of the members. If we ap-

proach the work of the Spirit among the members in any particular city, then we must understand that the gifts were directed toward the edification of the individual members, not the assembly of hundreds of people at one location. We have observed that even when we use the word "church," immediately what comes to mind in most people is a large assembly that is orchestrated around a preprogrammed ritual of performances. But in the first century, this was not the case. When we consider the typical assembly of the disciples in the first century, we must envision a few disciples who came together in the house of one of the members.

In the historical context of the Corinthian problems concerning this matter, it was possible that all the difficulty concerning languages and interpretation of languages was centered around the assembly of the Achaian disciples during the Isthmian Games that were biannually conducted in the city of Corinth. We would assume that the disciples in Achaia from throughout the province of Achaia used this occasion as an opportunity to come together in Corinth for the purpose of preaching the gospel to the hundreds of athletes who came to Corinth for the Games.

This was an occasion when the gift of languages and interpretation of languages would have greatly enhanced the Christians' evangelistic outreach to the athletes who came to the Games. If

some of these athletes by chance showed up at the combined assembly of the saints, then those prophets who were also blessed with the gift of languages could speak to those of the many languages who were represented at this unique occasion.

But normally, and in their homes, the early disciples worshiped God ***“in the Spirit”*** (Ph 3:3). Those of a common language would have assembled in someone’s house. Prayer, singing, teaching and preaching were *“by the Spirit.”* But in the assembly of the Isthmian Games assembly, Paul said that he would *“pray with the spirit and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding”* (1 Co 14:15). Though the word “spirit” in this verse in the translation of the *New King James* is not capitalized, it must be understood that this is the translator’s opinion. It is our opinion that it should be capitalized because it was a reference to the Holy Spirit. Since the verse was stated in the context of the use of the miraculous gifts, it would be consistent to understand that Paul was speaking of inspired prayer and singing.

It was a work of the apostles to impart the miraculous gifts to all baptized believers with whom they came into contact. They could not pass out Bibles, but they could “pass out” the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they traveled among the disciples in order to impart

these gifts. This was the reason why Peter and John went to Samaria. They had heard that the Samaritans had obeyed the gospel, and thus the apostles sent Peter and John to Samaria in order to impart the miraculous gifts to the new Christians. Luke recorded,

Now when the apostles [in Jerusalem] ... heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (At 8:14,15).

The reason the Christ-sent apostles, Peter and John, went to Samaria was to impart the miraculous gifts to the new disciples. They did not go to evangelize. That had already been accomplished through the preaching of Philip.

Luke records that Peter and John prayed that the Samaritan disciples might receive the Holy Spirit (At 8:15). The fact that they had to pray that they receive the Spirit indicates that it was the choice of the Spirit as to whom He would work miraculously. Though the apostles, through their own discretion, laid hands on individuals, it was the final choice of the Spirit as to what gifts would be given. Therefore, the apostles prayed that the Spirit would choose to work miraculously through the individuals on whom they laid hands.

Throughout the establishment of the

early disciples, the Spirit was given by the laying on of the Christ-sent apostles' hands (At 8:18; Rm 1:11). When we read of the work of the Spirit in the New Testament epistles, the inspired writer was often discussing something in the context of the miraculous gifts of the first century. Therefore, we must be cautious about taking "miraculous" passages of the Spirit out of their historical setting of the first century in order to apply them to ourselves today. Camp was right when he wrote,

It is a mistake to read passages that were written to churches that had miraculous gifts and the references to their having received the Spirit, and equate that with our situation today when there are no miraculous gifts, nor do we need them. Confusion results when we fail to make this distinction.^{3:159}

We must study the New Testament in the historical context of the gifts of the Spirit that flourished throughout the disciples in the first century. We must keep in mind that the early disciples had no Bibles. They had only the gifts of the Spirit. Duncan stated,

In order to understand properly the Bible verses that deal with the Holy Spirit it is necessary that the reader keep in mind the fact the New Testament was written largely to

churches and individuals who possessed supernatural gifts of the Spirit. When a letter written to a church or an individual possessing supernatural gifts referred to that church or individual's possessing the Holy Spirit, such reference would most naturally be understood to refer to those supernatural gifts (emphasis mine, R.E.D.).^{8:n.p.}

D. The manifestation of the miraculous gifts:

Those who possessed the miraculous gifts worked in an environment of many false teachings. Until the written word of God began to be inscribed about thirty years after the establishment of the church, the Spirit was working by inspiration through inspired preachers and teachers. However, false teachers also claimed inspiration. Paul referred to these as "*deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ*" (2 Co 11:13). For this reason, we must not forget two very important points: (1) The miraculous work of the Spirit in confirming the truth of the gospel was **manifested** to beholders. (2) It was **demonstrated** to those to whom the truth was preached. These two concepts permeated the visible nature of the miraculous gifts.

1. Manifestation of the Spirit:

When introducing the miraculous gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:7, Paul said, “*But the **manifestation** of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.*” The manifestation of the Spirit refers to something that was perceived through the five senses. On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit manifested Himself through a rushing mighty wind (At 2:1-4). The apostles thus spoke in languages. Peter referred to this manifestation in the following manner: “*He poured out this which you now **see and hear***” (At 2:33). When Philip worked miracles in Samaria, the Samaritans “saw and heard” the miracles that he did (At 8:6). Because a true miracle could be seen or heard, it could be a confirming witness to those who saw it as a supernatural manifestation of God.

In the above sense, therefore, the truth was confirmed by the manifestation of miraculous works. When the Scriptures speak of the manifestation of the truth of the gospel, reference was to the confirming miraculous work of the Spirit. Paul wrote, “*But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by **manifestation of the truth***” (2 Co 4:2).

2. Demonstration of the Spirit:

Paul did not go to the Corinthians with “excellence of speech” or of wisdom (1 Co 2:1). On the other hand, the false teachers were among them with flatter-

ing words and deceitful wisdom. Paul went with the empirical evidence of what he preached. He said, “*And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in **demonstration of the Spirit and of power***” (1 Co 2:4). He also wrote to the Thessalonians, “*For our gospel did not come to you in word only, **but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit***” (1 Th 1:5).

In other words, the message of the gospel went forth “in the Spirit” (it was inspired). But it was also demonstrated to be of God by the confirming power of the Spirit. “*For this reason,*” Paul wrote, “*you received the word of God which you heard from us ... not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God*” (1 Th 2:13).

When the New Testament defines spiritual gifts, the words “**manifestation**” and “**demonstration**” explain that the gifts were something that appealed to the senses of those to whom the gospel was preached. The manifestation and demonstration of the gifts was not something that was secret or hidden from the senses of individuals. This distinguished the miraculous work of the Spirit from the crafty deceit of those who proclaimed something that was false. It is important to understand, therefore, that the miraculous work of the Spirit among the early disciples was God’s empirical confirmation of those who spoke the truth of the gospel.

Chapter 6

KEY PASSAGES ON MIRACULOUS GIFTS

6 The possession of a miraculous gift **did not change the moral behavior of the one who possessed it.** Neither did the miraculous gifts, when distributed among the members, subjectively change the nature of the church. Change in moral behavior was accomplished in an indirect manner. In other words, the prophet, and those to whom he ministered with his or her particular gift, changed only as individuals submitted their lives to the gospel. Winters correctly stated,

Except by serendipity, the gifts did not change one's free will; they did not change his attitude; they did not remove desires or temptations to sin; they did not make one stronger in the faith; they did not make one less forgetful; they did not make one successful and happy. One could have a miraculous gift and neglect it—not use it for its intended purpose.^{6:21}

The miraculous gifts **were subject to the one who ministered to others with the gifts.** Paul said, *“The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets”* (1 Co 14:32). On one occasion, as Timothy, one could neglect the use of his miraculous gift (1 Tm 4:14). For some reason he become quite timid

in reference to preaching the word of God. Paul had to command him not to neglect his gift and to get busy preaching the word (2 Tm 4:1,2). The Holy Spirit did not through Timothy's miraculous gift, therefore, give him courage to preach. The Spirit did not subject the prophet or one speaking in languages in a manner by which He took over the behavior of the individual. He did not directly influence the moral behavior of the one who was gifted.

The Thessalonian church is another good example. Paul had laid hands on the Thessalonians in order that they receive the gifts of the Spirit as God had given him the Spirit (1 Th 4:8). He in turn urged the Thessalonian brethren, *“Do not quench the Spirit”* (1 Th 5:19). In this statement, Paul was referring to those who would be working against the preaching or teaching of the inspired prophets. Those who possessed the gifts were not to allow themselves to be discouraged by those who resisted their ministry with the gifts.

The following verse after 1 Thessalonians 5:19 reads, *“Do not despise prophecies”* (1 Th 5:20). This is the commentary on what it means not to quench the Spirit. If we keep our understanding of these two statements in the historical context in which they were

first written, then **Paul would be discussing the Thessalonians' attitude toward the use of miraculous gifts among the Thessalonian disciples**. He was urging them not to discourage the work of those who were exercising the gifts in the edification of the disciples in Thessalonica.

In other words, the Thessalonians were not to quench or despise the work of the Spirit who sought to guide the disciples through the teaching of the word of God. If they discouraged the prophets (teachers) in their efforts to edify and build up the body through teaching, then they were working against those who were their teachers. They were thus working against the Spirit who inspired their teachers to teach the word of truth.

Only because some in the Corinthian church had a problem with their carnal, puffed up attitudes, did the church need direct instruction by revelation from the Spirit concerning the use of the gifts (1 Co 12-14). If the disciples in other areas would have had the same division because of carnal thinking, Paul could have written the content of the 1 Corinthian 12-14 instructions to them also.

Unfortunately, there are some interpreters who believe that only the Corinthian disciples had been blessed with so many gifts. But this is not a fair evaluation of the liberal distribution of the gifts among the saints of the first century. The fact is that wherever a Christ-

sent apostle journeyed, he freely distributed the gifts as the Spirit was freely given to him. Whenever someone journeyed to Jerusalem during the first years when the apostles were in Jerusalem, they too were blessed with the gifts by the laying on of the apostles' hands.

When we understand that the miraculous gifts were necessary in order to establish firmly the early saints, then we better understand the letters that were written to these saints in the context of what God was doing through the gifts. We say this as a caution to ourselves as we study through the instructions concerning the gifts that were used throughout the ancient world among the disciples. Therefore, we must revisit key passages in the New Testament in reference to miraculous gifts that were used among the early disciples. We must understand these passages in the historical context of the direct work of the Spirit through the use of the miraculous gifts.

A. Acts 5:32:

Luke recorded, "*And we [apostles] are His witnesses to these things, and also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.*" This statement of Peter fits perfectly in the whole text of the miraculous work of the Spirit that was promised by Jesus in Mark 16:17-20. Consider the following points:

1. *Miraculous context:* In

Luke's defense of Christianity before Theophilus, to whom the document of Acts was written, he recorded that *"through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people"* (At 5:12). *"They brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them"* (At 5:15).

Jesus had promised that this miraculous work would follow *"those who believe"* (Mk 16:17-20). What Luke recorded in the document of Acts was the very thing that Jesus had promised in reference to the group of those who believed (the church). Through the Spirit, Peter accomplished what was promised. Therefore, when reading Luke's defense of Christianity in Acts 5:32, we would naturally assume that Luke was referring to the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit among *"those who believe."*

2. The apostles were obedient:

Luke's initial statements in the historical narrative of Acts mentioned the miraculous work of the apostles. However, Jesus had promised that *"those who believe"* would work miraculous signs (Mk 16:17,18). This was true since the apostles were a part of those who believed. They were, however, only a part of the entire group of the obedient.

In Acts 5:32, Peter used the phrase *"those who obey."* This is the same as Jesus' teaching in Mark 16 that *"those*

who believe" would do these great works (Mk 16:17,18). **Both passages are teaching the same thing.** One is a promise and the other is a fulfillment of the promise.

Those who believe (obey) would be given the Holy Spirit. In the context of Acts 5, Luke affirmed that they (the apostles) were the ones who were obeying. Their obedience was in contrast to the Jewish religious leaders who refused to obey (See At 5:24). Therefore, **the sign of the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit had been given to the apostles as a sign that they were the obedient.** The apostles' ability to do the miraculous was God's testimony that they were of God. This is exactly what Mark said happened in Mark 16:20. *"And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs."*

Peter used the phrase *"those who obey"* to refer to all believers as the universal church. In contrast to the Jews who did not believe and obey, God gave the Spirit to those who did believe and obey the gospel. The miraculous work of the Spirit was poured out on the church of believers as proof that God was with them. He was no longer with the Jews as a nation. He was at the time working through the believers. In the context of Acts 5, **Peter was using the miraculous work of the Spirit as a sign that God was with the saints, not**

national Israel. God was signaling to unbelieving Israel that the disciples were now the nation of God's people.

3. The Spirit testified: John 15:26,27 is a commentary passage of Acts 5:32. Jesus promised the apostles that *“the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”* In Acts 5:32 the apostles were doing what Jesus promised in John 15:26,27. The promise was a **miraculous testimony by the Spirit of the apostles who testified of Jesus.**

This was not something that was hidden from the view of the unbelievers. It was not the non-miraculous indwelling of the Spirit that could be questioned by the unbelievers. The witness was miraculous and open before all. In this open and miraculous manner, Jesus stated in John 15:26,27 that the Spirit would testify of Him. In his historical record of what was actually happening, Luke affirmed that the Spirit was doing this through the miraculous work of the apostles.

Another commentary passage of what was happening in the early beginnings of the church is Hebrew 2:4 where it is stated, *“God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.”* God, through the miraculous work of the Spirit, bore witness to the

apostles in Acts 5. The witness was demonstrated before the unbelievers. The miraculous works of the Spirit signaled to unbelievers that God was with the saints. The context of Acts 5:32, therefore, must be understood to refer to the miraculous work of the Spirit.

B. Romans 5:5 & Titus 3:5,6:

Paul wrote that *“the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us”* (Rm 5:5). This passage discusses the love of God that was poured out. The **ao**rist tense is used in this passage in the Greek grammar in order to communicate a **onetime event that took place in the past.** The Holy Spirit was given (aorist participle). Titus 3:5,6 talks about the renewing of the Holy Spirit *“whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ.”* The aorist tense is again used in this statement to refer to a onetime happening when the Holy Spirit was poured out. If these passages (Rm 5:5; Ti 3:5,6) find their interpretation in Acts 2:33, then reference is to the onetime outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-4. On that occasion on Pentecost, Peter explained to the multitudes, *“Having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear”* (At 2:33). Paul's reference to the benefits of the outpouring in Acts 2:1-4 is that the Roman Christians and

Titus had received the miraculous benefits from the endowed apostles by the laying on of the apostles' hands.

One might use the outpouring of the Spirit about which Paul spoke in both Romans 5:5 and Titus 3:5,6 to refer to an "outpouring" of the Spirit at the time one obeys the gospel. If we assume this outpouring, then we would have difficulty in separating the miraculous outpouring about which Joel 2 speaks, which outpouring happened on Pentecost and in the case of Cornelius, and a non-miraculous "outpouring" at the time one is baptized. But if we understand the word "outpouring" to refer to the miraculous coming of the Spirit in Acts 2, then we must interpret Romans 5:5 and Titus 3:5,6 to refer to the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit.

Though Paul wrote to the Roman disciples and Titus in reference to the "outpouring" of the Spirit. Their benefit of this outpouring was secondary in reference to the primary outpouring on the apostles on the day of Pentecost. This interpretation is acceptable since Joel 2 speaks of the Spirit being poured out on **all flesh**.

The outpouring of the Spirit on "all flesh" did not happen on Pentecost. The result of the outpouring on Pentecost, however, did affect the group of "those who believe" in a secondary sense. In other words, everyone after Pentecost on whom the apostles had laid their hands received the Spirit through the

medium of the apostles. In this way, therefore, they partook of the outpouring of the Spirit that happened in a miraculous manner in Acts 2.

We must not forget that the apostles stayed in Jerusalem after Pentecost for at least fifteen years. They were still there when the disciples came together in Acts 15 for a gathering to deal with Jewish legalism that was being propagated among the new Gentile believers.

Since it was through the apostles' hands that the gifts of the Spirit were distributed, then those who came to Jerusalem for the Passover/Pentecost feast that followed the A.D. 30 Pentecost of Acts 2, had the opportunity to hear the gospel, and if they obeyed the gospel, to have the apostles lay hands on them to receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. This would certainly be in the meaning of what Peter said in Acts 2:39: "*For the promise [of the Spirit in Joel 2] is to you and to your children*"

It was not only the opportunity of the apostles to use the Jewish gathering of the Passover/Pentecost feasts to preach the gospel to the Jews who attended, it was also their opportunity to lay hands on those who obeyed the gospel during the seven week feast. In this way, the apostles "distributed Bibles" throughout the world by laying hands on those who obeyed the gospel in Jerusalem, and then returned home.

For this reason, we assume that the three thousand who obeyed the gospel

in Acts 2 had hands laid on them by the apostles in order that they return to their homes with the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the miraculous gifts. We can only imagine what impact these people had on those of the local Jews when they showed up at the local synagogue the first Sabbath after returning from the Passover/Pentecost feast in Jerusalem.

C. Romans 8:

The entire chapter of Romans 8 is a **contrast** between the **law of the Spirit** (the law of grace and faith) and the **law of sin and death** (meritorious law-keeping in order to earn one's salvation) (Rm 8:2). Paul's argument in the chapter centers around obedience in response to the gospel of grace as opposed to an effort on the part of some to be justified by meritorious law-keeping.

The difference between salvation by grace and meritorious law-keeping is that in salvation by grace one depends on God. With meritorious obedience, one depends on himself to be saved. "Obedience" to the law of sin and death is an effort to earn meritoriously salvation on the basis of one's ability to keep law perfectly. Therefore, any law, including the Sinai law, was a law of "sin and death." Law was such simply because no one can keep law perfectly in order to demand salvation on the merit of his obedience.

Paul's answer to those who would

seek to be self-justified by meritorious good works and perfect law-keeping, was, "*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Rm 3:23), and the wages of sin is death (Rm 6:23). It is necessary to understand Paul's argument in Romans 8 in order to better understand his references to the Holy Spirit. Consider the following key points that Paul made in the chapter:

1. Law is weak because men are weak. In Romans 8:3 Paul wrote,

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh

The Sinai law (or any system of law) was weak to produce salvation simply because men (flesh) were unable to keep it perfectly. One sin makes a sinner. Since "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Rm 3:23), then no one can be saved on the basis of trying to keep law perfectly in order to be justified before God. The Sinai law was a perfect law for its purpose. However, the problem was that no man could keep all the ordinances of the law perfectly in order to claim to have no sin. Law, therefore, cannot be considered a means by which one would save himself. Paul's argument is that ordinances become a "law

of sin and death” because one is condemned on the basis of breaking just one law. There is no salvation if we are left to save ourselves through law keeping.

In the context of Romans 8, the word “law” is often found without the Greek article (“the”). Therefore, Paul’s reference was not only to the Sinai law, but to any religious law that men would strive to keep in an effort to be self-sanctified before God. This would certainly include everyone who constructed a religious system of rites and rituals in order that the adherents of the religion self-justify themselves through obedience to the religious rites and rituals.

In the context of Romans 8, Paul was addressing both the Jews (those under the Sinai law) and the Gentiles (those who were a law unto themselves). Under law no one could be saved on the basis of perfect law-keeping, or in the case of the Gentiles, perfect religious rites and ritual keeping. Therefore, neither the Jew nor the Gentile could be saved through obedience alone.

2. *The Christian must walk according to the Spirit.* In Romans 8:4 Paul continued to explain “*that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*”

Emphasis in this statement is on the word “walk” (obedience). Christians are not seeking salvation through meritorious performance of the “flesh,” the body

of this life. In the context of the contrast, **the word “flesh” refers to one’s effort to religiously discipline his body in a meritorious effort to gain justification by perfect law-keeping and meritorious works.**

It is true that one must discipline his body in order to bring it under subjection (1 Co 9:27). However, one cannot live perfectly according to law in order to justify himself before God. Neither can one perform meritorious religious rituals in order to sanctify oneself when he breaks the laws of his religion. For this reason, Paul clearly stated, “*Therefore by the deeds of law no flesh will be justified in His sight*” (Rm 3:20; see Gl 2:16; 1 Jn 1:8).

The word “Spirit” is used in Romans 8 to refer to the Christian’s walk by “**obedience of faith**” (Rm 1:5). When he walks by the Spirit, he walks by the direction of the Spirit. Walking by the Spirit, and the obedience of faith, are the same. The legalist’s walk of obedience is a trust in himself to keep law perfectly in an effort to demand salvation. The one who walks by faith seeks justification by grace as a result of one’s faith in the sanctification of the cross of the Son of God (See Rm 1:17; 5:1,2). His walk that is directed by the Spirit is in contrast to the one who seeks to walk by his own direction. The gospel-living saint walks in gratitude of what he has. Those who walk after the flesh walk in expectation of that which they can earn.

3. Christians set their minds on the things of the Spirit. In Romans 8:5 Paul continued, “*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*” Notice the emphasis in this statement on the word “live.” Emphasis is on obedient behavior. Paul establishes a contrast between minding the things of the flesh and the things of the Spirit. His contrast is to whether one is obeying God after the manner of law-keeping or obeying God according to the law of the Spirit, which obedient walk is a walk of gratitude in response to the gospel.

4. Christians are spiritually minded. In Romans 8:6-8 Paul explained,

For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

The one who is obeying the law of the Spirit (the spiritually minded) trusts in God’s grace (Rm 8:6). On the other hand, the one who is trusting in his own meritorious performance of law and good works (the carnally minded), is working against God’s grace, for he feels

he can acquire salvation on the merit of his obedience apart from grace. Therefore, those who seek justification on the basis of their own ability to keep law perfectly cannot please God because they believe that they can meritoriously perform the works of law in order to save themselves. The problem is, therefore, that they cannot be saved by perfect obedience because **they cannot keep the law perfectly** (Rm 8:8; see Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). Their meritorious walk actually marginalizes the cross of grace.

5. Christians are in the Spirit. In Romans 8:9,10 Paul explained,

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

In these two verses, Paul continues to make a contrast between those who seek to live according to law and those who seek to live in response to the gospel of grace. The one who continues to live according to the gospel through faith in the cross maintains a close relationship with the direction of the Spirit. The Spirit, therefore, is in him by his continued walk in gratitude to the gospel. Christ is in him because he maintains his response to the gospel that was

revealed through the sacrificial offering of Jesus. In this sense, he is in the Spirit. In their initial response to the gospel, those who are new disciples have crucified the old man. They have crucified the man that lived after the carnal flesh in order to meritoriously justify themselves through law-keeping (Rm 6:6; Gl 5:24). Therefore, they are of Christ because they allow their lives to be directed by the Spirit.

We could change the negative statement of Romans 8:9 to a positive statement in order to better understand the passage: "Now if anyone does have the Spirit of Christ, then he is of Christ." Therefore, the thought of Romans 8:10, "Christ is in you," is a parallel thought to the "Spirit of Christ" being in us. The phrases convey the same thought that is explained by Paul in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me." Christ and the Spirit are living in us as we allow the Spirit-inspired word of Christ to permeate our lives as we conduct ourselves in gratitude of the gospel of Christ.

6. The Spirit dwells in the Christian. In Romans 8:11 Paul wrote,

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

In the context, Paul's terminology is clear. **When one continues his walk "in the Spirit," the Spirit is in him in the sense that his life is directed by the Spirit.** In other words, when one obeys the "law of the Spirit" (the law of grace and faith), he is "in the Spirit" and the Spirit is in him. The Spirit indwells the obedient in the sense that the spiritually minded have submitted their lives in response to the gospel of the incarnate Son of God. In another text, Paul said the same thing in different words:

Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who, being the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God. But He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men (Ph 2:5-7).

The one who lives after the indwelling Spirit will be transformed by living in response to the gospel journey of Jesus. Paul continued to explain this to the Philippians by referring to his former life:

Indeed more, I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things. I count them refuse so that I may gain Christ (Ph 3:8).

Paul's emphasis in Romans 8:9,10

defines the concept of the indwelling of the Spirit. He is not changing thoughts in the context to a location of the Spirit. His emphasis is on the responsive attitude of the one who seeks to be led by the gospel of grace as opposed to a meritorious walk of perfect law-keeping. In the context of his argument, the evidence of whether one was in Christ was whether or not he was “led by the Spirit.”

Paul’s argument concerning the indwelling of the Spirit is on the inward obedient submission of the one who is driven by a response to the gospel. This is in contrast to the one who is trusting in has meritorious law-keeping in the flesh. This responsive obedience to the gospel was the spontaneous response of faith to the grace of God. It was not the response of arrogant self-seeking legal obedience that moved one to take pride in his good works or works of law. The commentary passage on what Paul wrote in Romans 8 is the example of his own life that he explained in Philipians 3.

Those living after the “law of sin and death” could claim obedience to law. But they could not claim obedience to the law of the Spirit that demanded faith in the gospel of grace. Paul was not only discussing what they **believed** about the matter, he was also discussing what they were **doing**. If one believed that law-keeping saved, then he would walk accordingly. In contrast, Paul argued that if one were listening to the inspired prophets in Rome, and believed and

trusted in the grace of God, then he was walking by faith in the gospel. This was the empirical evidence of sonship.

If the non-miraculous indwelling of the Spirit were under discussion in the context, both sides could claim to walk in the Spirit, and then walk the way they so desired. **The emphasis on indwelling here is that one is obedient to the law of the Spirit. The Spirit indwells, therefore, insofar as one walks according to his faith in the gospel of God’s grace.**

Paul added that God would “*give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you*” (Rm 8:11). This statement does not teach that the indwelling is a condition for the bodily resurrection in the last day. The passage does not say this. It cannot say this and still harmonize with John 5:28,29 where Jesus stated that both the righteous and **unrighteous** will be bodily raised in the final resurrection. The Spirit does not indwell the unrighteous. However, they will be raised in the last day. Therefore, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not a condition for the bodily resurrection about which Paul speaks in Romans 8:11. There must be another understanding of what Paul meant in this statement.

What Paul was saying is that the Father will raise Christians “through His Spirit.” The Spirit will be the medium through which all will be raised in the last day, including the unrighteous. It will be

the work of the Spirit in the last day to raise all the dead, not just those whom He had previously indwelt when they were alive as Christians in this world. Bales added,

Unless the Bible affirms that a certain work of the Spirit is done by virtue of His indwelling, we cannot affirm it. For example, the same Spirit which dwells in us is the same Spirit by which we shall be raised (Rm. 8:11). This does not mean that we shall be raised by the Spirit in His indwelling capacity. All the Christians in Rome who read this statement of Paul passed away long ago. Their mortal bodies returned to the dust. The Spirit does not dwell in those particles of dust, so that as the indwelling Spirit He shall raise them in the last day. The quickening will not take place through the Spirit dwelling in us, but by the same Spirit which now dwells in us.^{9:538}

7. Christians are led by the Spirit of God. In Romans 8:12-14 Paul concluded,

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit

of God, these are sons of God.

As Christians in debt to Christ (see Rm 1:14,15), we are obligated to **live** in response to the gospel. Here again is the empirical proof of sonship. John said the same: “*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments*” (1 Jn 5:2). When we see someone “led by the Spirit of God,” we can know that that person is a son of God. This is not a subjective guess. It is objectively discerned. The indwelling of the Spirit here refers to the one who is submitting his life to the word of Christ that has come to us through the Spirit-inspired word of God.

Paul’s argument is that if we live according to the principle of trusting in the meritorious performance of the flesh, then we will spiritually die. We will die because “*there is none righteous, no, not one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Rm 3:10,23). The fact is that the flesh cannot keep law perfectly in order that one be saved. On the other hand, if we live according to the Spirit—trusting in the grace of God—we will live.

8. Christians received the Spirit of adoption. In Romans 8:15 Paul added, “*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’*” Christians do not need to fear because

of their inability to meritoriously keep law perfectly to save themselves. Their trust is in the gospel of grace.

We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Rm 5:1,2).

Paul carried the preceding argument of the Romans 8 context to the outward manifestation of the miraculous work of the Spirit in the early church. His evidence of this was revealed in the statement, “*by whom [the Spirit] we cry out, ‘Abba Father’.*” He used the same outward manifestation as proof of sonship in Galatians 4:6: “*And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba Father’.*”

“Abba” was the Hebrew children’s endearing reference to their earthly fathers. The intimacy in relationship that is expressed in the term “Abba” is here used to express the close relationship the Christian maintains with the Father. In the context of the early church, this intimacy was manifested through their possession of the miraculous work of the Spirit as the body of Christ.

The Spirit motivated the **outward** cry. Therefore, in some way the cry “Abba, Father” must refer to the miraculous influence of the Spirit. It certainly

cannot be some symbolic cry as is so interpreted by some today. The cry was real and actual “by the Spirit.” It was not silent. It was an outward evidence of their sonship. Paul used the outward cry as an empirical evidence of their sonship.

It was not a cry that was meant simply as an address to God, the Father. It was meant as a proof of sonship in the same sense as Paul’s meaning in 1 Corinthians 12:3: “*No one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.*” This statement is seated in the historical context of the miraculous gifts among the Corinthian Christians. Romans 8:15 was seated in the context of the miraculous gifts among the Roman disciples. The cry of “Abba, Father” and “calling Jesus Lord,” therefore, were Paul’s terms to refer to the miraculous work of the Spirit among the early disciples.

Many in the religious world today verbally call Jesus Lord. However, they have not submitted to Him in obedience of the gospel (See Mt 7:21). They are not gospel-driven Christians because they have not submitted to Jesus’ lordship by establishing a covenant relationship with Him through obedience to the gospel. Nevertheless, they call Jesus Lord. Can one make himself a Christian according to 1 Corinthians 12:3 and Romans 8:15 by simply confessing Jesus’s lordship and proclaiming “Abba,

Father,” without obedience to the gospel by joining with Jesus on the cross, in the grave, and experiencing the resurrection? Certainly not. Paul’s reference to the cry, “Abba, Father,” has more meaning than just an outward cry of words. For this reason, we affirm that among the disciples of Rome and Corinth that Paul referred to the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit through the gifts in the context of Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 12.

9. *The Spirit bears witness to the Christian.* In Romans 8:16 Paul stated, “*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*” Here again is the Spirit bearing witness as promised by Jesus (Jn 15:26,27). Acts 5:32 parallels this thought as the Spirit miraculously “**bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.**”

If the non-miraculous indwelling of the Spirit were under discussion here, we would wonder how such would be a “witness” of sonship. There are some who believe that the witness of the Spirit in this passage is manifested solely in one’s obedience to the gospel. However, we must keep in mind that as the Christian’s life is permeated by the gospel of God, it is witnessed that one is a Christian. Therefore, Paul possibly had more in mind than the Christian’s obedience to the gospel. He spoke of a “witness” of the Spirit. The word “witness” assumed that there was someone to

whom witness is made. It also assumed that the one to whom witness was made could determine or perceive the witnessing. The witness, therefore, was not guesswork. It was not hidden.

In the Greek text of Romans 8:16, the use of the Greek word *auto* seems to indicate the concept of an outward witness. This word, especially when used in the nominative case, places emphasis on the antecedent. The *New King James* translators translated the verse “*the Spirit Himself [auto] bears witness.*”

Auto is commonly translated with the demonstrative pronoun “that” in cases as Matthew 3:4 and Luke 13:1. In Matthew 3:4 the *King James Version* rendered a phrase in reference to John to read, “... *and the same [auto] John ...*,” meaning that very John who was mentioned in Matthew 3:1-3. Luke 13:1 is a similar use of *auto* where Luke stated, “... *at that [auto] season ...*” The *American Standard Version* reads, “... *that very ...*” Thus, in **that very** season some told Jesus about the Galileans.

Now place the above translation of the use of the word *auto* in the text of Romans 8:16. One can delete the capital “S” on the word “spirit” since this would be a translator’s interpretation—reference does not have to refer to the Holy Spirit. Beginning from verse 14, the text would be literally translated as follows:

... for all who are led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God; for you have not been given the spirit of slavery again to fear, but you have been given a spirit of sonship, in which we cry "Abba, Father"; **that same [auto] spirit** bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children, heirs also: heirs of God and heirs with God.^{10:10}

The spirit of sonship bears witness with our spirit that we are sons. *Auto* in the nominative case is used in the above verse with the noun "spirit," to which it gives emphasis. Therefore, the emphasis is on **that very** spirit, the spirit of sonship.

The context must be the final authority in making the above translation. This is one of those places in the Scriptures where the theology of the translator greatly affects the translation. In view of the fact that most translations are produced by theologians who lean toward the teaching of the direct operation of the Spirit on the soul of man, it is not surprising that the above passage is usually translated in reference to the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, if the passage is emphasizing the witness of the Spirit, we must allow the historical context to be our secondary source to determine the meaning of the text. Therefore, in the context of the Roman disciples, we

would naturally interpret the passage to refer to a miraculous activity of the Spirit. This is also a true concept and one that is taught in the New Testament.

If emphasis is on the work of the Holy Spirit, consider the passage in view of the work of the Spirit among the early Christians. Reference to the Holy Spirit would emphasize His miraculous confirmation of the Roman Christians through the gifts that they had received through the apostles while in Jerusalem during one of the annual Passover/Pentecost feasts (See Mk 16:20; Rm 12:6ff; Hb 2:3,4). This may also explain why Paul desired to go to them in order that he might impart more gifts to them (Rm 1:11).

The Spirit, as Jesus promised, bore witness to the early Christians, that they were God's sons (Jn 15:26,27; At 5:32). But the Holy Spirit today bears witness with our spirit of responding to the gospel. Our spirit of obedience to the gospel of Jesus, and becoming slaves of righteousness (Rm 6), bears witness that we have accepted the lordship of Jesus. Therefore, both the Holy Spirit through the gifts, and their spirit in response to the gospel (the spirit of sonship), bear witness that they were sons of God.

10. *The early Christians had the firstfruits of the Spirit.* In Romans 8:23 Paul wrote,

And not only they, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within

ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

The “firstfruits” of the Spirit referred to the first gifts of the Spirit. Paul and the first Christians initially received the benefit of the outpouring of the Spirit. The apostles were first, then through the laying on of their hands, the benefit of the outpouring went to “all flesh.”

The word “firstfruits” assumed that there was more to come. Therefore, after the initial work of the Spirit in a miraculous manner among the early disciples, the Spirit would continue to work in some way until the end of time. We must not develop a reactionary theology here by stating that after the Holy Spirit did His miraculous work in the first century that He parked Himself from working among the disciples.

God continues to work through the Spirit, even to this day. Though He does not work in a confirming miraculous manner, He continues to work behind the scenes in a providential manner on behalf of the saints. Paul affirmed this in Ephesians 3:20: “*Now to Him [God] who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.*” All that the Spirit does in this dispensation of time is the result of His outpouring in the first century.

11. *The Spirit directed the prayers of the early Christians.* Con-

cerning the prayers of the early disciples, Paul wrote,

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God (Rm 8:26,27).

This is one of the most controversial passages in the Bible. It is also one of the most misunderstood. In order to understand this passage, we should first remind ourselves that this passage must first be understood in its historical context. We must understand it in the historical context of Paul’s teaching in Romans 8 wherein he was writing to Christians who possessed the miraculous gift of prophecy. Therefore, it is imperative that we not read into the passage any preconceived ideas of our own frustrations in prayer. And we must understand that in some way this is a unique statement because it is a commentary passage of other similar statements in the New Testament concerning prayer.

This scripture has often been used to teach that the Holy Spirit somehow stands between the believer and the Father in some position of interpretation.

The Father is supposedly unable to hear, understand, or interpret the believer's innermost feelings and requests, and thus, it is the work of the Spirit to "interpret," "express," or "convey" the prayers of the saints to the Father.

It is true that only one scripture will prove a point. However, to build a major belief as the above on the foundation of only one passage is certainly precarious. This passage alone is used to substantiate the supposed preceding intercessory work of the Spirit. However, the lack of parallel passages to substantiate this belief would encourage our questions concerning the validity of the concept that the Spirit works as an interpreter in prayer between man and God.

It is not good hermeneutics to construct a major doctrine simply on the basis of one passage, especially if that passage is dealing with something that is the work of the Holy Spirit outside our realm of perception. What the Spirit is supposed to be doing in Romans 8:26,27, is not of this world. Therefore, one should be cautious about our understanding of those things that are beyond this world. Nevertheless, we do not feel that the above interpretation contradicts any Bible teaching. Because the above teaching is a supposed work of the Spirit beyond the physical environment of the Christian, it does not contradict passages that deal with the behavior of the Christian in his physical en-

vironment. On the other hand, we would like to propose an alternative interpretation that seems to harmonize more with the historical context in which Paul made the statements of Romans 8:26,27.

In order to view what Paul says in a different light than the traditional interpretation of this passage, consider the following thoughts:

a. God is omniscient. God knows all that is to be known. "*And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account*" (Hb 4:13). The Lord said, "*I the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind*" (Jr 17:10; see Jr 11:20). God sees the "*mind and heart*" of all (Jr 20:12). "*The Lord looks at the heart*" (1 Sm 16:7). David affirmed, "*O Lord, You have searched me and know me. You understand my thought afar off*" (Ps 139:1-4). Solomon wrote, "*The eyes of the Lord are in every place*" (Pv 15:3).

These, and many more passages, clearly affirm that God has always known us better than we know ourselves. God knows and understands our innermost feelings and thoughts. He knows our hearts. There is nothing inside us that God does not understand. God knows what we need and what we should ask of Him. We must remember the words of Jesus on this matter: "*For your Father knows what things you*

need before you ask Him” (Mt 6:8). Therefore, **we must not construct any theology that would lead us to question the omniscience of God.** Any interpretation that infringes on the omniscience of God must be rejected.

In view of the above, our question concerning Romans 8:26,27 is **why the Holy Spirit would need to reveal to the Father our innermost yearnings when He already knows them?** The Holy Spirit said that David was a man after God’s own heart. In order for this statement to be made in the Old Testament, God must have been able to know fully the inner heart of every individual **before** the age of the Holy Spirit that began in Acts 2. God knew the hearts of all those who prayed to Him before the coming of the Holy Spirit. He heard the prayers of Abraham, David, Isaiah, Daniel and all the other Old Testament patriarchs. During the ministry of Jesus, and before the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, He knew the needs of each faithful person who prayed to Him for help.

b. God heard the prayers of the Old Testament faithful. We find it difficult to believe that the Holy Spirit works in some advantageous manner in our prayers that He did not do with the prayers of Abraham, David, Moses and other great men and women of faith in the Old Testament. This is what some would be saying in teaching that the Christian has some special advantage

with the Holy Spirit in prayer today over the faithful men and women of God before Acts 2. God was not ignorant of the innermost feelings of His faithful followers until the supposedly intercessory work of the Spirit in prayer that came thousands of years after the creation of man.

God heard the prayers of the Old Testament faithful. He heard their innermost cries. If we would interpret Romans 8:26,27 to be a special divine system of prayer interpretation before God for those of this dispensation, then we would wonder why God waited thousands of years before He sent the Spirit to do such.

Also consider the fact that what is under discussion in Romans 8:26,27 has nothing to do with salvation. It has nothing to do with one’s spiritual growth, for a supposed intercession on the part of the Spirit would be carried out beyond the realm of the Christian’s environment. The only benefit one might receive from such intercession in the spirit realm is the knowledge that somehow the Spirit is interpreting one’s prayers before an omniscient Father who already knows our innermost thoughts, as well as our needs before we ask of Him. If one does not believe this, then will the Spirit do it anyway? Unbelieving Cornelius *“prayed to God always”* (At 10:2). The angel said that his prayers *“have come up for a memorial before God”* (At 10:4). Could God not understand the innermost

yearnings of Cornelius while he was still in unbelief? What Luke recorded in the preceding statement seems to indicate that He could.

God has always heard the prayers of the righteous. He has always known the innermost yearnings of the faithful. If it is a work of the Spirit to “interpret” or “transmit” in the spirit realm our yearnings to the Father, then it seems that this work would be redundant. He would be doing that which the Father already does. It would be difficult to believe that God waited millennia before the Spirit made this supposed intercession possible in this last dispensation of earth history.

The belief in the intercessory prayer interpretation of the Spirit actually leans toward deism in reference to God’s relationship with His people. Deistic theology moves God far off to somewhere in the universe where He cannot hear or understand the pleas of His sons. This “far off god” must somehow be connected with man through the Spirit.

However, it is our understanding that God is near to us, if we can actually use the human word “near” to explain the presence of Deity. He is not a “far away” God, but is nigh unto us at all times, listening to our innermost pleas. He is an omnipresent God who is not located in some place. He is not a deaf God who needs a personal interpreter. Paul said of God, “*For in Him we live and move and have our being*” (At 17:28). It is difficult to assume that our

being in the midst of God as Paul here affirms makes it impossible for Him to know our innermost feelings.

It may be that the doctrine of a supposed intercessory prayer ministry of the Spirit originated out of the struggles of those who have found it difficult to verbalize what they want to say in their prayers. However, the fact that all Christians struggle to voice their feelings in prayer to God should not move us to distort scriptures out of their historical context. Every Christian struggles with putting into words that which is on his or her heart. But we must not assume that God does not know what we want to say. The God in whom we live, move and have our being already knows what we are going to say before it is said.

c. God is one. It is true that the Spirit is a part of the eternal Godhead. What He knows about us is what God the Father and God the Son also know. Assuming that one part of the one God knows something that another part does not know, separates into different intellects the one Godhead. As God is not split into different personalities, so He is not separated into different intellects.

No one manifestation of God knows more or less than any other manifestation of God. The Holy Spirit does not know more than the Father. Neither does the Son know more than the Spirit. God is one in personality, intellect and being. These are concepts about the oneness of God that those who

believe in the supposed intercessory interpretation work of the Spirit should seriously consider. Any teaching that brings into question the omniscience and oneness of God should be questioned.

d. God inspired prayer in the early church. In the historical context of the miraculous gift of prophecy, Romans 8:26,27 finds a parallel in 1 Corinthians 14:15 where Paul said, “*I will pray with the Spirit.*” Consider this. The apostles had been with Jesus long enough to realize that they needed help with their prayers. They probably realized that their prayers were after the manner of the Pharisees’ prayers (See Mt 6:5-15). At least when they considered the prayers of the Pharisees, they realized that Jesus’ prayers were different. Therefore, they asked of Jesus, “*Lord, teach us to pray*” (Lk 11:1). This seems to be a peculiar request when considering the fact that these men were some of the most spiritual Jews of Israel. Nevertheless, they realized that there was something wrong with their prayers. They asked Jesus to teach them how to pray in a manner that would be acceptable to God.

Think of those who were converted in the seat of Roman idolatry. Would they have the same need to learn how to pray? The first disciples were good Jews, and yet, they knew they needed to know how to pray according to the will of God. How could these Roman Christians, and others in the idolatrous

first century, know how to pray according to the will of God?

Paul said in Romans 8:26, “*For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought.*” Because of their idolatrous background, they did not know how to pray according to the will of God. They had no New Testament revelation to direct their speech. Therefore, through inspiration the Spirit directed their intercession for them with groanings (prayers) that they did not know how to utter according to the will of God. The Father, who searches the hearts of men, and is one with the Spirit, accepts the Spirit-inspired prayer because the prayer is “*according to the will of God*” (1 Jn 5:14).

The Romans did not know how to pray correctly. The Spirit, who knows and reveals the will of the Father, directed the wording and requests of the saints in order that the prayer be according to the will of God. **This was done, not for the benefit of God, but for those who prayed.** Those who prayed in the assemblies of the saints were directed in prayer in order to pray according to the will of God. As a ministry of the gift of prophecy, the public prayers that were directed by the Holy Spirit became the examples for the private prayers of the members.

As in the gift of prophecy, and even inspiration of the Scriptures, we do not believe that the system was always by dictation. Paul preached and wrote by

inspiration. However, the Spirit allowed him to use his own wording and writing style. The same would be true concerning inspired prayer. The Spirit only made sure that they were not praying in the name of the Greek god Zeus and asking for the mediatorship of the mythical god Hermes. Today we have the word of the New Testament to direct us in correct prayer. We pray according to the will of God by allowing the word of God to direct our prayers.

It should be added that inspired prayer was a special benefit for the early Christians. This was one of the blessings of the Spirit through the gift of prophecy. However, this was a blessing that was for the benefit of the early establishment of the church in a miraculous manner. It is for this reason that **the gift was beneficial for the disciples and was not for the benefit of the Father in heaven.**

We must also keep in mind that the teaching that the Spirit must interpret the inner yearnings of the believer to the Father is an attack of the omniscience of the Father. In other words, the supposed intercessory interpretation would be for the benefit of God, not man.

We must be cautious about developing any theology that limits God's omniscience or His power. If we contend that the Father does not know or hear our innermost yearnings, then we limit His omniscience. We make Him a distant God. If we believe that the Spirit

must have internal and direct contact with our minds before He can do anything, then we limit the work of God in our lives.

D. 1 Corinthians 12 & Ephesians 4:

The concepts of 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 and Ephesians 4:1-16 are parallel in instruction for the saints to edify themselves through the ministries of each individual member. We must first understand these two contexts in the historical context of the miraculous gifts that were common among the early Christians. At least this is how the first recipients of the two letters would have interpreted the instructions. At the same time, however, we understand that the ministries that are mentioned in the contexts of the passages continue unto this day. The direct work of the Spirit in the lives of the disciples in the first century context enhanced the ministries of different individuals. We would not marginalize the Spirit's work today through these ministries to continue the edification of the disciples.

The ministries continue today, but are enhanced and directed by the inspired word of God. The purpose that stimulated the writing of each context was different. Nevertheless, Paul's instructions were similar in relation to the Spirit enhancing the work of the ministries.

The problem in the background of

both the Corinthians and the Ephesians was division. **The Corinthians were divided because of their pride.** Their pride manifested their carnal relationships with one another (1 Co 3:1-4). **The Ephesians, on the other hand, were divided because the Jewish Christians were prejudiced against the Gentile Christians** (See Ep 2:14-22). In a similar sense, therefore, pride was involved. The Jews were manifesting pride against the Gentiles.

In the case of the Corinthians, Paul argued for unity on the basis that there *“are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit”* (1 Co 12:4). *“For as the body is one and has many members but all the members of that one body, being many are one body”* (1 Co 12:12).

In the case of the Ephesians, Paul argued for unity between Jew and Gen-

tile. They must endeavor *“to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (Ep 4:3). Every work must function in the whole body, *“joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share”* (Ep 4:16).

It is significant to point out in 1 Corinthians 12:28 the difference between the ministries of work (apostles, prophets, and teachers), and what those who were functioning with these ministries did as a result of the direction of the Holy Spirit. The difference is clearly indicated in the Greek text. After listing the three ministries of apostles, prophets and teachers in 1 Corinthians 12:28, the Greek word *epeita* (then) emphasizes the gifts that follow. The word “then” separates the ministries and the

THE WORK & PURPOSE OF GIFTS & MINISTRIES

1 CORINTHIANS 12

- 1. Oneness of the body:** Though the one body has many members who function in different ministries, it is one and functions as one body (vss 12-27).
- 2. Each member functions in different ministries:** There are apostles, prophets and teachers who minister in order to edify the body through their ministries (vss 28-31).
- 3. Miraculous gifts were given to enhance the ministries of the members:** In this context Paul emphasizes the gifts of the Spirit in the ministered to the church. Apostles, prophets and teachers worked with the enhancement of the miraculous direction from the Spirit. They preached and taught the word of God by inspiration of the Spirit (vss 4-11).

EPHESIANS 4:1-16

- 1. Oneness of the body:** We must maintain the unity of the one body (vss 2-6). Each member must fulfill his or her function in the one body (vs 16).
- 2. Each member has been given responsibility to function in different ministries of the word:** Some function as apostles, others as prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (vs 11).
- 3. The ministries of work were established among the disciples in order to equip the saints:** In this context Paul emphasized the **purpose** of the different ministries of work that the miraculous gifts enhanced. These gifts were given when Jesus ascended to reign on the throne in heaven (vss 12-16).

miraculous enhancement of the Holy Spirit that the apostles, prophets and teachers were enjoying in their edification of the church. This is an important point because we must understand that there was a difference between the ministry and the aid of the Holy Spirit by which the ministry was carried out.

Consider Ephesians 4:30 in view of the time of the Spirit's work among the Ephesians and other churches: "*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for* [Gr., "until"] *the day of redemption.*" Paul urged them not to suppress the miraculous work of the Spirit, which work was an open seal that manifested their sonship. The word "for" in this passage should be translated "until." They were sealed by the Spirit **until** the day of redemption. In other words, the Spirit would remain a seal of their sonship before men until the day of redemption.

The "day of redemption" either refers to the Ephesians' physical death or to their redemption by the coming destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). Keep in mind that Paul was personally addressing the disciples who lived in Ephesus. The statement "day of redemption," therefore, would first refer to the situation of the Ephesians. Consider, therefore, that the "sealing" would first refer to their being sealed with the miraculous work of the Spirit. However, it would indirectly refer to our sealing today. Christians today are manifestly sealed by

the Spirit before men in the sense that they walk according to the Spirit-inspired word. To the Ephesians, however, the manifested mark of the seal was the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. We must remember that in the historical context of the Ephesians, the seal left a **visible** mark. The visible mark with the Ephesians was the miraculous gifts among the members of the body.

If the sealing of the Spirit referred to the miraculous work of the Spirit, and the day of redemption referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, then the gifts continued as a visible seal of their sonship until A.D. 70. This is in agreement with other New Testament references to the fact that the miraculous gifts ceased at the time of the A.D. 70 termination of national Israel.

The preceding interpretation would certainly be consistent with God's work in a miraculous manner to confirm the disciples as the true nation of God until His final confirmation through the consummation of national Israel. From the period beginning with the establishment of the church in A.D. 30, until the consummation of national Israel in A.D. 70, God sought through the miraculous signs to signal that the church of Christ was now His people. He did not work with national Israel in order to confirm the nation through signs to still be His chosen nation. Therefore, between the time of the establishment of the church and the destruction of Jerusalem, the miraculous

gifts existed. However, after the church was manifested to be the church of God's people, there was no more a necessity for the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. It would be at this time, the time after A.D. 70, that the written word of the Spirit would take over as the early Christians copied and distributed the Spirit-inspired word.

Paul was encouraging the Ephesians in Ephesians 4:30 not to discourage those who possessed the gifts. They should not discourage them because the exercising of their miraculous gifts was a continued manifestation that the Ephesian saints were the group of God's people in Ephesus. He encouraged them by stating that the Spirit was the seal, the visible stamp of God's approval of His people until the destruction of Jerusalem. If this is what Paul was saying, then the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit continued as an open manifestation of the Ephesians' sonship until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

By the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, all truth had been revealed and confirmed. The disciples were established by the truth in their hearts and behavior. The letters of the New Testament were in the process of being copied and distributed throughout the world. Christianity was completely separated from Judaism. It was no longer considered a sect of Judaism after A.D. 70. The perfect law of liberty was recorded in order to carry the saints to the end of

time. After the destruction of Jerusalem, therefore, there was no more a need to give a visible seal of approval of the church. Christians had by A.D. 70 been confirmed to be the people of God (See Hb 2:3,4).

Ephesians 4:11-16 is a very important passage where Paul defines the purpose of key ministries in the function of the body. Though the Spirit worked miraculously through gifts in the first century, He gave to those who worked in these ministries applications that can be made for both then and now.

Until the consummation of national Israel in A.D. 70, the Holy Spirit directly worked through members who carried out these ministries in the lives of the early Christians. He did so by the gifts and the inspired spoken word of the prophets. However, the Spirit continues to work through these ministries today. However, that which enhances these ministries today is the inspired written word of God.

Now consider each ministry in reference to their focus today. Though there are no Christ-sent apostles today, we do have **church-sent** apostles as in the first century church (See in Gr. *apostolos* in 2 Co 8:23). The word *apostolos* is a generic word that simply means one who is sent. It was used, for example, in reference to Barnabas (At 14:14), Epaphroditus (Ph 2:25), and James, the Lord's brother (Gl 1:19). These were all church-sent apostles. These men

were sent out by churches for world evangelism. A church-sent apostle was simply a missionary who was sent forth by the church to preach the gospel.

Prophets were local speakers of the inspired word of God. In the absence of the written word, they functioned as inspired teachers of the truth that was initially revealed through the Christ-sent apostles. We must not limit the ministry of the truth to the first century the ministries that are mentioned in Ephesians 4:11. Church-sent apostles would be equivalent to missionaries today. Prophets, who were often church-sent apostles in the New Testament, were preachers and teachers.

In the context of 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4, the Spirit enhanced the work of the church-sent apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. However, their function of ministry continues today. The direct inspiration of those who carried out these ministries in the first century has ceased. The miraculous gifts have ceased. Nevertheless, members continue to be sent out and churches edified through teaching. Preachers continue to proclaim the gospel. Evangelists go into all the world with the gospel. Pastors/teachers shepherd and teach the flock of God.

We must not confuse the miraculous work of the Spirit in the first century with the ministries themselves. Though the miraculous ceased, the ministries continue. The inspired word of

God is the foundation upon which the ministries of evangelism and edification continue.

In the text of Ephesians 4:11-16, the progression of thought is linked with key conjunctions. In the context of the first century, this was Paul's definition for the function of the ministries.

**PURPOSE OF MIRACULOUS GIFTS
and the
INSPIRED WORD
THROUGH MINISTRY
(Ephesians 4:11-16)**

VERSE 11

"He gave some to be"

Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors/
Teachers

VERSE 12

"FOR"

Equipping of the saints
Work of ministry
Edification of the body

VERSE 13

"UNTIL"

We come to the unity of the faith
We come to the knowledge of the Son
We come to the perfect man
We come to the measure of the stature of Christ

VERSE 14

"SO THAT"

We no longer be children
We no longer be tossed to and fro
We no longer be carried about by false teaching

VERSE 15

"BUT"

We speak the truth in love
We grow up in all things unto Him

VERSE 16

"FROM WHOM"

The whole body stimulates growth of the body
The body is edified in love

E. Ephesians 4:25-32:

In Ephesians 4:30, Paul gave an imperative command, “*Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.*” This statement is in the context of a series of instructions concerning gospel living. It is placed in a series of instructions that were given to the Ephesians as individual disciples. They were personally subject to obey each of the mandates that Paul gave.

The command not to grieve the Spirit was not given as the foundation principle upon which the other commands were to be implemented in our lives. It was simply listed as one of the commands. For this reason, this command in this context should not be used to teach that the Spirit is here **directly** producing the other commands. It is simply one in a series of commands that Paul gave to the Ephesians. Therefore, consider the command “not to grieve the Spirit” in the context of all the instructions that Paul gave:

INSTRUCTIONS IN GOSPEL LIVING

(Ephesians 4:25-32)

1. Speak truth to one another (vs 25).
2. Do not sin when angry (vs 26).
3. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath (vs 26).
4. Do not give place to the devil (vs 27).
5. Do not steal (vs 28).
6. Do not speak with corrupt speech (vs 29).
7. Speak edification (vs 29).
8. **Do not grieve the Holy Spirit** (vs 30).

9. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, malice and evil speaking be put away (vs 31).
10. Be kind to one another (vs 32).
11. Forgive one another (vs 32).

Paul meant that the command to not grieve the Spirit was to be understood in its historical context of miraculous gifts. As he told Timothy to stir up his miraculous gift (1 Tm 4:14), he was telling the Ephesians not to discourage those who had been empowered with miraculous gifts, specifically those who were their prophets among them. He was giving all of them instructions concerning a respect for the miraculous gifts as he also gave the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 12 - 14. Paul’s instructions concerning all the above were related directly to their spiritual needs in living the gospel they had obeyed.

Paul gave similar instructions to the disciples in Thessalonica (1 Th 5:14-22). Notice the list of instructions and the place in the list of the miraculous works of the Spirit:

1 THESSALONIANS 5:14-22

1. Warn the unruly (vs 14).
2. Comfort the weak (vs 14).
3. Be patient toward all (vs 14).
4. Do not render evil for evil (vs 15).
5. Pursue what is good (vs 15).
6. Rejoice always (vs 16).
7. Pray without ceasing (vs 17).
8. In everything give thanks (vs 18).
9. **Do not quench the Spirit** (vs 19).

10. **Do not despise prophecies** (vs 20).
11. Test all things, hold what is good (vs 21).
12. Abstain from evil (vs 22).

The miraculous gifts were a very important part of the ministries of the Ephesian and Thessalonian disciples. In Corinth, those who spoke in languages exercised pride and a divisive attitude toward those who prophesied. To some extent, the same problem existed in the Thessalonian church. Thus, this is why Paul wrote these instructions in the context of other problems they had in their spiritual growth.

The miraculous work of the Spirit was for the edification and establishment of the early saints. Those who rejected the word of God, did so by intimidating those who had the gift of inspired preaching and teaching. Paul, therefore, commanded the rest of the disciples to allow the preachers and teachers to communicate God's word. The instructions not to quench the Spirit and not despise prophecies were instructions to the rest of the saints as a whole not to discourage those who had the gift of prophecy.

In a similar way, Paul's instructions to the Ephesians and Thessalonians apply to us today. Though the miraculous gifts have passed away, the ministries of communicating the word of God continue. Anyone who despises the preaching and teaching of the Spirit-inspired word of God is doing the same as those who opposed preachers and teachers

among the saints in Thessalonica. They too are quenching the Spirit's impact upon the moral behavior of the members of the body. Rebellious disciples always quench the Spirit by refusing to submit to the preached and taught word of the Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:20 is a direct command that preachers and teachers not be discouraged in their efforts to preach and teach God's word. Those who would discourage them because they do not want to listen to the message of the word, are quenching the Spirit.

F. 2 Timothy 1:6,14:

In the context of 2 Timothy 1, verse 6 explains verse 14. In verse 6 Paul wrote, "*Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*" And in verse 14 Paul continued, "*That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.*"

The gift of God (the good thing) was to be kept by the Holy Spirit that dwelt in Timothy. Timothy received this gift by the laying on of Paul's hands. Reference, therefore, was to a miraculous gift. The indwelling of verse 14, therefore, would be a miraculous indwelling, though there was a difference between the gift itself and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was the engine who drove the gift. The indwelling, therefore, referred to the Holy

Spirit's close relationship with Timothy in the miraculous work of the spiritual gift that he possessed.

G. 1 Peter 4:10:

Peter instructed, "*As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*" Paul had told Timothy to "*stir up the gift*" that he had received (2 Tm 1:6). He commanded the Ephesians to "*be filled with the Spirit*" (Ep 5:18). And he commanded the Thessalonians to "*not quench the Spirit*" and not to "*despise prophecies*" (1 Th 5:19,20). In the historical environment of the early disciples, these statements would first apply to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit that were commonly distributed among the saints in the first century. Peter's instructions of 1 Peter 4:10 was an exhortation that the gifts be used for the edification of the body.

Since a gift was subject to the one who possessed it, the possessor could become discouraged. He or she could be intimidated as Timothy into not using the gift for the edification of the church. Peter and Paul, therefore, wrote to each one of those who possessed a gift that they should use it to the edification of the whole. Passages that refer to the work of the Spirit through the gifts, therefore, must first be understood in the context of their use among the early disciples.

1 Peter 4:10 was a statement to encourage Christians to use their miraculous gifts in their ministries to the church. Ephesians 4:11-16 was a commentary on this passage. Both passages were instructions to churches in the historical context when miraculous gifts were used for the edification of the church before the coming of the written word of God.

This point cannot be overemphasized because there is so much confusion in this area of biblical interpretation today. The ministries that are used to equip and edify the church are the same today as they were in the first century. However, individual natural abilities that originate from God have always existed, and must also be used for the edification of the body. We are born with talents that we can use either for the glory of God or for our own selfishness. Every individual has God-given talents that must be used for the ministry and mission of the body.

In the first century, however, the Holy Spirit directly enhanced the individual talents of individuals, as well as, revealed knowledge and wisdom to those who had the special blessing of prophecy. The written word of God has since replaced the miraculously revealed truth from God. However, the talents that one has to minister to the saints and sinner alike, are still exercised by every individual today.

We must rightly divide the word of God in the sense of making a distinction

between the miraculous enhancement by the Holy Spirit in the first century (miraculous gift), and the exercising of our natural God-given abilities today that we use to function as the body of Christ. Prophecies in the Thessalonian context referred to the inspired speaking of the prophet. Today, however, the teacher is not miraculously inspired to teach. **He is teaching an inspired book.** One may have the natural gift to speak, but the content of his message comes from the written word of God. Some of the Thessalonian disciples were evidently discouraging the teachers (prophets). They were despising their teaching (prophecies). Paul instructed them not to do such.

Those today who despise the teaching of the Spirit-inspired word are likewise quenching the Spirit. They are despising the teaching of the word of God.

H. 1 John 3:24; 4:13:

In 1 John 3:24, John wrote,

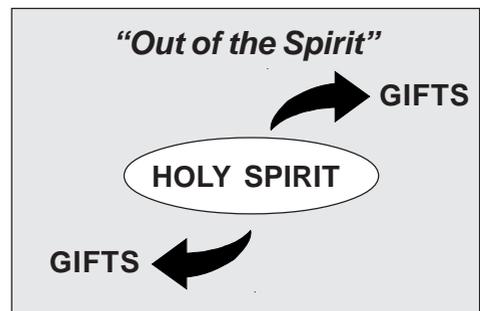
Now he who keeps His commandment abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

John added to this thought by stating, “By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us **of His Spirit**” (1 Jn 4:13).

These two passages illustrate the evidential nature of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit among the early disciples.

In the historical context of 1 John, there were those who were going about among the saints who claimed to have the Spirit and the truth (2 Jn 9,10). A gnostic heresy was growing in the early church at the time John wrote, which heresy would consume about half of the members of the body in the second century. We are lead to believe, therefore, that the Holy Spirit directed the hand of John to write the words of 1 John in preparation for this heresy that denied the gospel of the incarnate Son of God. 1 John 3:24 and 4:17, therefore, must be understood in the context of John’s argument against these gnostic false teachers who were arising in the fellowship of the disciples and were claiming special enlightenment concerning that which was beyond the physical world.

The gnostics were claiming to have “special knowledge” that gave them a special advantage in spirituality and salvation. They were claiming to be the true spiritual people of God because of



their supposedly self-awareness of that which was beyond the physical. By their arrogant and pious character, they prided themselves as the spiritual elite among the disciples.

In view of this problem that was making itself known among the disciples to whom John wrote, it would have been a weak argument on his part to ask the faithful to simply exalt the “fruit of the Spirit” as evidence that they were right and the pious gnostics were wrong. The gnostics would have mocked this subjective argument because it was they who claimed to possess the true spiritual character of God. If John used the “spiritual argument” against those who claimed to be of a high spiritual nature, then his argument would have had little impact. For this reason, John resorted to empirical evidence that did not exist among the spiritualistic gnostics.

For John to instruct his readers to use the fruit of the Spirit in their lives as the evidence of their possession of the Spirit, he would have instigated a “spiritual” competition between the faithful and the gnostics. Therefore, it was not John’s meaning in these verses to use the non-miraculous indwelling of the Spirit as proof of those who were the truth of the gospel.

We must carefully read what John said in the context of the preceding problem among those first recipients of his letter. “*And by this we know* [this is empirical evidence] *that He abides*

in us, by the [Gr., *ek tou*, literally, “out of the”] *Spirit whom He has given us*” (1 Jn 3:24). And again, “*By this we know* [empirical evidence] *that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of* [ek tou] *His Spirit*” (1 Jn 4:13).

John’s whole argument is based on the concept, “*He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world*” (1 Jn 4:4). In this context John argued for the evidence of the Spirit through the gifts as evidence that separated the faithful from the gnostic spiritualists. He called on the “witness” of the Spirit through the gifts to be as an open signal of those who were of the truth of the gospel. He had affirmed, “*The witness of God is greater*” (1 Jn 5:9).

The manifestation of the Spirit in the demonstration of the gifts was greater than the supposed spirituality of those who claimed to have a higher enlightenment of the spirit world. John reaffirmed, “*He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself*” (1 Jn 5:10). This is the same thought that Jesus promised in Mark 16:17-20. Jesus had promised that “*these signs will follow those who believe*” (Mk 16:17). And when those who believed went forth to preach, the Lord was “*working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs*” (Mk 16:20; see Hb 2,3,4).

John was arguing from the viewpoint of the collective body of Christ.

“Those who believe” were the collective to whom the gifts of the Spirit were originally given. The heretical group of gnostics who were moving away from the collective, could not appeal to any miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit. John’s whole argument was based on this empirical evidence. The faithful to whom he wrote knew that they were of God because of the evidence of the miraculous gifts among the membership of the collective faithful.

The context of the confirming signs about which Jesus spoke in Mark 16 referred specifically to the disciples being confirmed before the unbelievers, as well as the apostate gnostics. John’s argument is in reference to proving the true gospel believers in contrast to those who were promoting religion. There were those who were in the fellowship of the church who had given up the truth. They were deceivers who, as in Corinth, masqueraded themselves as spiritual leaders. John was using the miraculous gifts of some in his audience of 1 John in the same way that Jesus said the signs would signal those who believe before the unbelievers.

There were those in John’s audience who were not “of them.” They were false prophets in their midst who assumed a pseudo spirituality. However, John said that as a group they had already gone out from the fellowship of the believers. He wrote, “*They went out from us, but they were not of us*”

(1 Jn 2:19). They went out because they turned away from the truth of the gospel. These teachers were confusing the disciples who remained. And thus, John resorted to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit as proof that the pseudo spiritual gnostics were not abiding in the truth of the gospel.

In 1 John 4:13, the pronoun “we” would certainly include the apostles. The “we” of verse 13 “have seen” and “testify” in verse 14 that the Father sent the Son. They, the apostles, had **heard, seen, and gazed upon** the Word of life (1 Jn 1:1,2). This “we,” therefore, “**was given of His Spirit.**” We must conclude that reference here is to the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit in both the apostles and early disciples. The apostles had been baptized with the Spirit (At 1:4; 2:1-4). They had been endowed with power from on high (Lk 24:49). Those who were subsequently obedient to the gospel received the blessing of the Spirit through the laying on of the apostles’ hands (At 8:18).

The same Greek phrase that is used in 1 John 4:13, “of His Spirit” (*ek tou pneumatos*) is also used in 1 John 3:24 in reference to John’s audience. They too had received from the Spirit. In contrast, the gnostic deceivers who went out from the fellowship of the saints did not continue with the Spirit. At least in the context of Hebrews 6:4, the Spirit did not follow with them on their departure (Hb 6:4).

Jude stated, therefore, that **they did not have the Spirit** (Jd 19). In other words, they did not have the miraculous gifts from the Spirit in order to confirm their erroneous teaching when they left, the Spirit left them.

The actual Greek phraseology of 1 John 3:24 and 4:13 will not allow the Spirit Himself to be the evidence to which John refers. The evidence that John presents as evidence of true discipleship must be seen and heard. The evidence, therefore, is the outward work of the Spirit in the lives of John's audience.

John used the phrase, "*He abides in us, by the Spirit [ek tou pneumatou] whom He has given us*" (1 Jn 3:24). And, "*He has given us of His Spirit [ek tou pneumatou]*" (1 Jn 4:13). In 1 Jn 3:24 John is literally saying, "*Out of the Spirit, which to us He gave.*"

Arndt and Gingrich state that the Greek preposition *ek* in the context of this and similar passages means "to denote origin, cause, motive, reason." An example that better expresses the thought would be 1 John 3:9: "*Whoever has been born of God [ek tou Theou] does not sin*" (See also in Greek the readings in 1 Jn 5:1,4,18).

Christians are sons of God because they have been born out of response to the gospel. Another example is John 3:6: "*That which is born of the flesh [ek tais sarkos] is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit [ek tou pneumatou]*

is spirit." The definition is brought out here. **Reference is to origin from a source.**

Arndt and Gingrich specifically refer to the construction in which *ek* is used to refer to "the source from which something flows." The source or origin from which the miraculous gifts flowed was the Spirit. John, therefore, referred to that which was given to them from the Spirit. The gifts originated from the Spirit. John argued that the true Christian in the historical context of 1 John was proved to be such because he or she had been given the miraculous gifts out of the Spirit. His evidence for them being of the truth rested in that which the Spirit gave, not the Spirit Himself. The manifested evidence of the gifts revealed that they possessed the Spirit.

This understanding corresponds perfectly with the "Anointing" that John said instructed the faithful in "all things" (1 Jn 2:20,27). He wrote, "*But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things*" (1 Jn 2:20). John continued,

But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him (1 Jn 2:27).

The Anointing came from the Holy One and was the source of their knowledge (See Cl 1:9). This would obviously be a reference to the gift of prophecy that came as a result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the One with whom they were anointed by the laying on of the apostles' hands.

This is an exact parallel to the use of the gift of prophecy of the Thessalonian disciples. Paul wrote, "*For you yourselves are **taught by God** to love one another*" (1 Th 4:9). In this teaching through inspired prophecy, the Thessalonians were not to despise this teaching (1 Th 5:20). They were taught through the inspired teaching of the prophets to love one another.

The Greek construction of 1 John 3:23 and 1 John 4:14 do not refer specifically to the Spirit Himself, but to that which the Spirit did once He was given and received. That which the Spirit offered was miraculous wisdom and knowledge (1 Co 12:8). John's readers were being taught by the Spirit who had been given to them as a collective group ("those who believe"). In fact, John affirmed that they could know those who were of God by their attitude toward the message they were teaching. He wrote, "*He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error*" (1 Jn 4:6). Those who did not despise prophecy, but listened to the inspired teaching of

the word of God, were of God. Those who refused to listen, were not of God.

John's readers had been given understanding (1 Jn 5:20). They had miraculous understanding, knowledge and wisdom in order to be able to discern the spirits (1 Jn 4:1-3). Those who did not receive their teaching were not of God (1 Jn 4:6). This would similarly be applied today to those who refuse to listen to the word of God. Those who do not listen to teaching from the Bible are not of God. They may be religious and claim to be of God, but the evidence that they are not of God is revealed in the fact that they value their religion above the word of God.

Because miraculous gifts were to be terminated with the completion of the written word of God, the Holy Spirit did not overemphasize their use in the early church. The fact that gifts existed where a Christ-sent apostle had gone is without doubt. Thousands had gone to Jerusalem for the Passover/Pentecost feast, were converted, and subsequently had hands laid on them by the apostles who were in Jerusalem. The miraculous gifts permeated the early church in the absence of the written Scriptures.

The Spirit, however, knew that the miraculous gifts needed to pass away and that the disciples would then be subject to the written word of God. For this reason, therefore, we do not have pages of inspiration in the New Testament that are dedicated to their use. Because of

the problem of pride among the Corinthians, the Spirit of necessity had to produce some written instructions to correct the use of the gifts. Because these instructions are not in the other New Testament letters as they are in 1 Corinthians, should not mislead the cautious student. The Spirit worked abundantly through the gifts among the disciples throughout the world in the first century, or at least in those areas where sojourners to Jerusalem returned home to teaching the word of the gospel.

The distribution of the gifts of the Spirit by the apostles through the laying on of their hands would be the same as our passing out Bibles today. The early Christians had no written word of God to distribute among the people. They

had no Bibles to open in their laps during the teaching of the Bible in Bible classes. They had no way to study personally in their homes in order to be prepared for the assembly of the saints.

Those things that we casually consider to be a part of our Christian life today, they did not have in the area of written revelation. Nevertheless, God distributed among the disciples the spoken word of God through the inspired prophets who moved among the early disciples. The apostles freely received the Holy Spirit from the Lord, and thus, they freely distributed what they had received to all with whom they came into contact. In the spirit of how they received the Spirit, they freely gave the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

Chapter 7

CLARIFICATION OF TONGUES

7 Several confusing matters have entered into the religious world concerning the subject of speaking in tongues. Many religious groups throughout the world today are claiming that “speaking in tongues” is a religious experience that indicates great spiritual growth and direct contact with the Holy Spirit. It is believed that all religious people should seek this gift as a measure of their spiritual growth. For example, R. A. Brooks wrote in the *Charisma Digest* that ...

... speaking in tongues opens up a new dimension in personal prayer, which can affect deep changes and blessings in your Christian life. For the most part, this is not a gift to be displayed openly, but as a private language of adoration, praise, devotion and intercession between you and God.^{22:19-21}

It is taught in some religious groups that one should seek and expect to re-

ceive the gift of speaking in tongues.^{See 12:49} It is affirmed that we today can speak in tongues just as the apostles did on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.^{See 13:109,110}

This wave of modern-day “tongue speaking” accelerated in growth in the last half of the twentieth century and continues to grow today throughout the world. We are led to question that if this is the work of the Holy Spirit, then we would wonder why the Holy Spirit has waited for almost two thousand years to begin influencing men to speak in tongues as He supposedly does today. It is our belief that this is not the work of the Holy Spirit. It is only a misguided result of religious people who have failed to allow the Holy Spirit to define His own work through the word of God.

In a religious world that has generally given up a knowledge of the Bible, we would expect that religious people would allow themselves to be misguided in order to validate their faith through emotions or self-proclaimed revelations of truth through dreams, supposed visions, or simply arrogant proclamations. And we would expect that these misguided religious people would allow their imaginations to carry them away in uncontrollable assemblies of people who have enslaved themselves with presumptuous proclamations.

We must assert that the modern-day “speaking in tongues” is the result of a general ignorance of the Scriptures.

As has been proposed throughout the first part of this book, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were only the aids that the Spirit used to guide the church until the full inscription of the word of God. Once the Spirit had completed His ministry of inspiration, then He could dismiss with the miraculous gifts in order to allow His work through inspired Scripture to take the church into the future as He continued to work in the background of the lives of the saints.

Once the Scriptures were copied and distributed throughout the worldwide body of Christ, then the disciples could use the written Scriptures to guide them in preaching, teaching, praying and singing. Since the message of the gospel had already been confirmed, then there was no more need to confirm the recorded gospel. The Spirit assumed that His work to record the testimony of those who witnessed the confirming miraculous would be sufficient to increase faith until Jesus comes again.

Now consider a true historical fact in reference to the lack of knowledge that many have in reference to the word of God on this subject. **The less one studies his Bible, the more he seeks for a cheap leap into spirituality.** Instead of growing in the knowledge of Jesus through diligent Bible study, he seeks validation of his own faith through his own emotions, or arrogant assumption that what he says has been revealed to him directly by the Holy Spirit through

dreams and experiences. He seeks an experiential validation of his faith.

We have witnessed throughout the world a great void in Bible study. The result of this void is a thirst for the continuation of the miraculous gifts, or at least some experiential validation of one's faith. Speaking in tongues is specific in this case since such a verbal phenomenon validates the struggling faith of those who have given up on the word of God as the source of faith (See Rm 10:17).

It is the purpose of the final chapters of this book to clarify the unique miraculous gift of speaking in tongues as it is defined in the New Testament. By limiting our definition of tongues to the New Testament, we will discover that the tongues of the New Testament were not the phenomenon of "tongue speaking" that is practiced today by some religious groups. We will discover that the miraculous gift of tongues (languages) of the first century was the actual inspiration of the Spirit to speak in a language that one had never studied. With the passing of all the gifts, this inspiration also passed away.

If we restrict our definition of tongues to that which is given in the New Testament, then we are forced to define the "tongue speaking" that exists today not to be the speaking in tongues in the New Testament. The fact that people utter sounds today that cannot be understood, cannot be denied. The fact that they are speaking the tongues that

are mentioned in the New Testament can be denied. However, since the New Testament teaches that the gift of miraculous speaking in languages has passed away, then we must find another definition for the phenomenon of what is happening throughout the religious world today. But in order to understand what is happening today among many religious groups, we must first confine our understanding of speaking in tongues to the source that first mentions such in history. In other words, we must search the New Testament and allow it to be our only dictionary in making any definition of speaking in tongues.

One of the first things we must do in studying this subject is to define words in the context of **their ordinary use**. This means that we must define Bible words as they were originally used in a biblical context by the inspired writers. Many confusing doctrines of men have been read into the Scriptures simply because people have defined words that are used in the Scriptures by their own experiences. As a result, modern-day definitions have been read into the Scriptures. The result has been an assortment of confused interpretations of the Bible that has resulted from the misinterpretation of key passages that mention speaking in languages.

In order to begin a study of tongues, we must first define the words **that are used in the Bible** in reference to tongues. In other words, the phrase

“speaking in tongues,” and other similar phrases, must first be defined as they are used in a biblical context. In our efforts to define biblical words, there are some complications that have been developed by some in the religious world. The complications are the result of preconceived definitions that we want to attach to words that are used in the text of the Scriptures. These are definitions that we define by our own personal experiences.

The first concern that the biblical interpreter must have, therefore, is the fact that his or her experiences in determining definitions will affect one’s biblical interpretation. We cannot escape the fact that all of us have a tendency to read into the Bible the definition of our words that are defined by our personal experiences. If we recognize this, then we will be cautious when developing our interpretation of any biblical text.

A. Definition of key words:

The phrase “speaking in tongues” has a variety of meanings in the religious world today. The term that is commonly used in reference to the modern-day phenomenon is the word **glossolalia**. This is an anglicized word that is constructed from the two Greek words *glossa* (tongue) and *lalia* (speech). When the two words are combined, they mean “tongue-speech” or “speaking in tongues.” Glossolalia has become a term that is used in the religious world today

to refer to the entire field of speaking in tongues.

It must be understood that we are here talking about two different phenomena in reference to speaking. First, there is the speaking in languages in the New Testament that happened as a result of the Holy Spirit miraculously enabling an individual to utter a foreign language that he or she had never before studied. This was a gift of the Holy Spirit that happened only in the first century.

Second, there is the psychological phenomenon that is called “ecstatic speech” that occurs today in many religious circles throughout the world. This is a real happening that individuals experience today while in a hyper-emotional state of speaking senseless sounds. In the context of this study, we must use the phrase “ecstatic speech” or “ecstatic gibberish” to refer to this psychological phenomenon. We must do so in order to distinguish such uncontrollable “speaking” from the actual speaking in languages that existed in the first century. However, in the religious world scholarship in general, the word “glossolalia” is commonly used to refer to ecstatic speech or tongue speaking.

Both speaking in languages by the aid of the Holy Spirit and ecstatic speech are real. One was directed by the Holy Spirit in the first century in order to accomplish specific purposes. The other is generated by the emotional hysteria of individuals, whether religious or non-

religious. In order to distinguish between the two, a clear definition of speaking in languages must be determined from the New Testament.

1. Biblical definition of speaking in languages: The English word “tongues” is translated from the Greek word *glossa* that is used in two different contexts in the Bible. In the first sense, it is used to refer to the physical organ of the body (See Mk 7:33; Lk 1:64; 16:24; Rm 3:13; 14:11; Js 1:26; 3:5,6,8). In a second sense, it is used to refer to the actual intelligent languages that people speak. It is used in this sense in Revelation 5:9: “*You ... have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue [glossa] and people and nation*” (See also 1 Jn 3:18; Rv 10:11; 11:9; 13:7). In the New Testament, this is the primary use and meaning of the word *glossa*.

When we discuss “tongues” in the New Testament in reference to languages, we are referring to individuals who spoke in languages with which men communicated to one another. This is intelligent speech. It is not ecstatic utterances or gibberish that cannot be understood as a distinct language.

2. Non-biblical ecstatic utterances or gibberish: Modern-day religionists have experienced what would be correctly referred to as “ecstatic utterances.” This is often referred to as “ecstatic gibberish.” Since this is a com-

mon occurrence among many religious groups today, this speaking phenomenon is often read into the text where the Bible word “tongues” is used to translate the Greek word *glossa*. Therefore, those interpreters who read their personal experiences of ecstatic utterances into the Bible, claim that the speaking in tongues in the New Testament is the same phenomenon of ecstatic utterances that they experience today.

Modern-day ecstatic speech is the phenomenon of uncontrollable utterances or gibberish in speech. The sounds that are spoken are unintelligible sounds that result from a hysterical compulsion and excitement on the part of the individual. There is nothing unusual about this ability. The problem is when we read this experience into the “tongues” of the New Testament.

Ecstatic gibberish is not a phenomenon that is unique with specific modern-day religious groups. The fact is that ecstatic speaking was practiced by various religious groups throughout the world and throughout history. L. Carlyle May wrote,

This survey [of the phenomenon of glossolalia in history] has shown that speaking-in-tongues is widespread and very ancient. Indeed it is probable that as long as man has had divination, curing, sorcery, and propitiation of spirits he has had glossolalia.^{14:92}

One of the interesting characteristics of glossolalia (ecstatic speech) is the fact that this psychological phenomenon is not related exclusively to religions that believe in Christ and claim to be Christian.

Donald Burdick wrote that “it is clear that pagans as well as Christians have their glossolalic experiences.”^{17:667} After studying the history of glossolalia among religious people, Jimmy Jividen concluded,

Incidents of glossolalia can be multiplied from religions ancient and modern; eastern and western; established and heretical. The glossolalia experience is to be found in all different cultural strata from non-Christian priests to medicine men.^{15:74}

This is a devastating fact that must be faced by those of the religious world today who believe that tongue speaking is the work of the Holy Spirit that is unique in the “Christian” world. If the speech phenomenon of glossolalia is a practice in some non-Christian religions, then those who practice such in the world of Christendom must confess that the Holy Spirit is also inspiring non-Christians to “speak in tongues.” Jividen added,

Such subjective personal experiences, when found in non-Christian religions like Islam, present a practical problem

to the glossolalist who claims to follow Jesus Christ. If a Christian finds validation in such subjective religious experiences, how can he reject the same kind of subjective religious experience in a Moslem who denies Jesus and rejects the Bible?^{15:76}

The practice of ecstatic gibberish (glossolalia) occurs throughout the spectrum of the religious world. Jividen again stated,

“It [ecstatic tongue speaking] is common in all world religions, both ancient and modern. It is found in pagan religions, spiritualism and throughout the broad spectrum of Catholicism and Protestantism. **Often times it is found completely outside the religious context** [emphasis mine, R.E.D.].”^{16:23}

Since the phenomenon of speaking in ecstatic gibberish is found among non-Christian religions, then we should immediately begin to question the origin of this speech phenomenon. Since the Bible would never teach that the Holy Spirit works among Hindus, Muslims and other non-Christian religions, then we must conclude that the phenomenon of glossolalia in those religions that claim to be Christian, is not the “speaking in tongues” that is mentioned in the New Testament. Donald Burdick correctly concluded,

Present-day glossolalia is deceptive. It often is a psychological attempt to recreate the supernatural gift of the first century. Because of the complexity of human nature, when the proper conditions are present man is able to work himself into an experience which he thinks to be the same as New Testament glossolalia. Careful examination, however, has shown us how different such experiences seem to be from the phenomenon clearly described in Acts 2.^{17:83}

Since the phenomenon of glossolalia occurs among those who do not claim the existence of the Holy Spirit, how can one claim that such originates from the Holy Spirit? Does the Spirit work among non-Christian religions? The *Encyclopedia Britannica* stated,

The same morbid and abnormal 'trance utterances' recur in Christian revivals in every age, eg. among the mendicant friars of the 13th century, among the Jansenists, the early Quakers, the converts of Wesley and Whitefield, the persecuted Protestants of the Cevennes, the Irvingites, and the revivalists of Wales and America.^{18:283}

If glossolalia occurs among non-Christian religions, as well as Christian religions, then we must conclude that this is actually a deception of Satan that has

been introduced into "Christianity" under the disguise of spiritual experiences. We must keep in mind that it has its origin in non-Christian religions. It is thus a non-biblical experience that has been brought into the Christian experience, and thus claimed to be from the Holy Spirit.

The emotional counterfeit of modern-day ecstatic utterances that is experienced among Protestant and non-Christian religions today must not be confused with the true speaking in languages we read about in the New Testament. Any effort to read such emotional experiences into the pages of the Sacred Scriptures is simply a misunderstanding of the true speaking in languages of the first century.

One must not be confused here. Though there is a psychological phenomenon of gibberish utterances that results from the uncontrollable emotional outburst of certain individuals, we must not be deceived into believing that this is the work of the Holy Spirit. We must not forget that Satan is the father of all deception (Jn 8:44). And truly, ecstatic utterances is a deception of Satan. However, our understanding of the human mind leads us to believe that it can be easily self-deceived.

Ecstatic utterances is a simple case of self-deception if we equate the phenomenon with the speaking in languages in the New Testament. Therefore, we must attribute this self-deception to Sa-

tan. Psychologically speaking, the phenomenon of glossolalia can be explained in reference to the ability of the emotionally uncontrolled person to speak senseless sounds. After much research on this matter, Anthony Hoekema rightly concluded in his book, *What About Tongue Speaking*,

To the same effect is a statement by Psychiatrist Stuart Bergsma, Superintendent of the Pine Rest Christian Hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan. After mentioning a number of experiences which have helped him arrive at an evaluation of glossolalia, he says, **“All these [experiences] have left me with the conviction that glossolalia especially can be psychologically explained and is not, in general, a ‘spiritual’ phenomenon.”** Another Christian psychiatrist gives a similar evaluation in an article in which he analyzes the phenomenon of tongue-speaking: **“The product of our analysis is the demonstration of the very natural mechanisms which produce glossolalia. As a psychological phenomenon, glossolalia is easy to produce and readily understandable”** [emphasis mine, R.E.D.].^{19:120}

Psychiatrists understand that glossolalia (“tongue speaking”) is a natural psychological experience of many people when they are in a high emotional

state. Uncontrollable utterances of sounds from hysteria are nothing new, nor unusual with individuals who are emotionally out of control. But this is not the Holy Spirit at work. It is the mind of individuals who have lost a conscious control of their speech while in a state of hyper-emotionality.

B. The promise of the gift of languages:

The first mention of speaking in tongues in the New Testament is made in a prophecy of Jesus in Mark 16:17. Jesus promised, *“And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues.”*

In the context of this statement, Jesus spoke of “signs” and “casting out demons.” Mark 16:17 is thus a miraculous context in which people would speak with “new languages.” We would conclude, therefore, that there would also be something miraculous about the speaking in the “new” languages.

1. Jesus referred to a new manner by which languages would be spoken. The Greek word *kainos* (new) is used in Mark 16:17 in reference to tongues, or languages. This word refers to a **newness in quality**. Reference is not to a newness in chronological order. In other words, there would not be a new kind of language spoken that had

never before been spoken by man. **Emphasis was on a fresh new way of knowing and speaking language.**

In the fulfillment of the prophecy of Mark 16:17, the fresh new way would be the manner by which men would speak languages. What Jesus was prophesying was that the Holy Spirit would empower individuals to speak in languages that they had never studied. The new manner by which they would speak languages would be in contrast to having to spend months and years to learn a language. They would speak “new” languages without going through the ordinary process of learning and speaking a language. Therefore, the newness of the language would refer to the individual who had never before known or studied the language. It would be new to the speaker because he would have never before studied the language.

2. The new languages would be visibly perceived: In the prophecy of Mark 16:17, Jesus said that the tongues would be a **sign**. This is precisely what is stated in Hebrews 2:3,4. God bore “*witness both with signs and wonders.*”

A sign is something that is perceived through the senses of men. A sign is perceived through hearing, seeing, smelling, touching or tasting. The languages about which Jesus spoke would be heard and seen. Therefore, when Jesus’ prophecy of tongues was fulfilled, it had to be something that was heard and seen. And

because the tongues could be heard and seen, they would be an empirical evidence that would confirm the message and messengers of the gospel.

The Mark 16:17 prophecy of Jesus gives one of the first purposes for which the gift of languages would be given to men. The Spirit-inspired ability to speak languages that had not been studied was to be a clear manifestation of God’s confirmation of those who preached the gospel. In the context in which Jesus gave the prophecy, He spoke of those who went forth to preach (Mk 16:20). The sign of the miracles in the text followed them in order to confirm the message of the gospel. Therefore, the use of the gift of languages was not only for the purpose of preaching the gospel. In the context of where Jesus mentioned the new languages, these languages were to confirm the message of what was preached by those who went forth.

As the story of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus unfolded in the first century, the definition and purpose of the gift of languages became clear. The gift was meant not only to be a sign that God was working with those who preached the gospel, it also aided in the proclamation of the gospel to the world. In other words, those who went forth to preach did not have to spend months or years in learning new languages in order to preach the gospel. The Holy Spirit inspired the preachers to be able to preach immediately in the language of the

people to whom they went.

In this way the speaking in languages became a signal to the unbelievers, not to the believers, that God was with His people. This was Paul's argument in the context of the Corinthians' misuse of the miraculous gift of speaking in languages.

In Isaiah 28:11,12, God had prophesied that He would confirm His people by allowing them to speak in a foreign language. Paul quoted this prophecy in reference to the speaking in languages among the Corinthians during their special assembly wherein foreigners were present (See 1 Co 14:21). He then stated in reference to the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, "*Therefore,*

languages are for a sign, not to those who believe, but for unbelievers" (1 Co 14:22). In other words, if there were an assembly of only believers, then there was no place for those who spoke in languages. Those who were gifted with the speaking in tongues must remain silent in assemblies where there were no unbelievers. They must remain silent because their speaking in languages was to signal to the unbelievers only that the believers were now the true children of God. In the context of what Paul argued in 1 Corinthians 14:21,22 it takes little reasoning to conclude that those who are supposedly "speaking in tongues" today in the assemblies of the believers are out of order.

Chapter 8 LANGUAGES

8 In the New Testament there are four recorded cases when men and women spoke in languages in fulfillment of the promises of Joel 2:28-32 and Mark 16:17. As we examine each of these cases, we can clearly define the meaning of tongues and the purpose of the gift in the context of the evangelistic work of the early disciples.

A. Languages spoken in Jerusalem:

On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-13, Jews and proselytes to Judaism

from every nation of the Roman Empire were gathered in Jerusalem (At 2:9-11). The apostles were in an upper room in Jerusalem on this day when the Holy Spirit came upon them. They were empowered by the Holy Spirit and began to "*speak with other tongues [glossais], as the Spirit gave them utterance*" (At 2:4). Verse 6 states that "*everyone heard them speak in his own language [dialekto].*" Those who were present asked concerning what was happening, "*and how is it that we hear, each in our own language*

[dialekto] *in which we were born?*” (At 2:8). They also stated, “*We hear them speaking in our own tongues [glossais] the wonderful works of God*” (At 2:11). If one would simply read these verses without reading into them any modern-day ecstatic gibberish sounds, then we would clearly understand that Luke was describing a miraculous endowment of speaking in languages that was received by the apostles when they were baptized in the Spirit.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to speak in the languages of the people who were present. **The people heard them speak in their own dialects the wonderful works of God.** The people understood what was being said by the apostles because they said they did.

Luke records that they heard the apostles speaking the wonderful works of God. Therefore, the apostles were not speaking gibberish sounds because of some emotional state of hysteria. They were not speaking some language that was unknown to those who were present. They were speaking the wonderful works of God in the languages of the people who were present.

There is nothing difficult about understanding that the apostles miraculously received the ability from the Holy Spirit to speak the gospel on this occasion in “new languages” (Mk 16:17) to those who were present. They had not studied these languages in which they

spoke. Therefore, we would conclude that the reason for the gift of languages for the apostles was evangelistic for the time in which they preached the gospel. People from throughout the Roman Empire were present, many of whom spoke many different languages and dialects. These people needed to hear the wonderful works of God.

In the context of Acts 2, Luke used two different Greek words in reference to the languages that were spoken. The Greek word *glossa* is used in the plural (*glossais*) in verses 3,4,11 and 26. This word refers to a **known foreign language**. It is used in this manner in the context of these passages. The apostles were not speaking a language that was unknown to man. They were speaking known foreign languages that were new to them, for they had never before studied these languages. But the languages were not new to those who came from the areas where the languages were spoken. The people could have never discerned that they were speaking of the wonderful works of God if they did not understand the languages that the apostles used to explain these works.

In verse 4 the apostles “*began to speak with other tongues [glossais], as the Spirit gave them utterance.*” The tongues here are defined in verse 11 where the word *glossais* is used again. “*We hear them speaking in our own tongues [glossais] the wonderful works of God.*” Therefore, it is certain

that the apostles were speaking in the languages of the people who were present from every nation. They were speaking languages that could be understood.

The Greek word *dialektos* is used in verses 6 and 8. This term can refer to either a **dialect** or **language**. It was used in this manner in the context of Acts 2. Those from every nation who heard and saw the apostles preaching, stated, “*And how is it that we hear, each in our own language [dialekto] in which we were born?*” Not only were the apostles speaking in the languages of the people who were present, they were also speaking in the dialects of the languages of the people.

A mother language may have several dialects that are unique to regions other than where a mother language is spoken. What seems to be indicated in the context of Acts 2 is that the apostles not only spoke the mother languages, but also the regional dialects of the mother languages. This fact may be what truly stimulated the curiosity of those who heard. They could not understand how these Galileans could fluently speak in their dialects.

From the use of the above two Greek words in the same context, it is evident that in some way Luke used *glossa* and *dialektos* interchangeably. *Dialektos* was used in verses 6 and 8. *Glossa* was used in verses 4 and 11. Both of these words were actually used

by the people in the context that Luke records. In other words, the audience used these two words interchangeably in the context. Therefore, we would understand that these were synonymous words in the culture when used in reference to spoken languages. At least we must conclude that the people not only heard their languages spoken (*glossa*), but they also heard the derivatives of their languages (dialects) spoken.

The miracle of the apostles speaking in languages was magnified in the sense that the Spirit not only inspired languages to be spoken, He also inspired all the dialects of the mother languages to be spoken.

The Jews in Acts 2 came from areas where hysterical (or, ecstatic) gibberish was undoubtedly practiced among idolatrous religions. However, when they came to Jerusalem and experienced the events of Acts 2, they recognized that the languages that the apostles spoke were the languages of their homelands. The apostles were not speaking hysterical nonsense. They were speaking the actual languages of the people who were present. The proclamation of those who heard on the day of Pentecost proves that the “tongues” that the apostles spoke were languages.

In Acts 2:13 Luke recorded, “*Others mocking said, ‘They are full of new wine.’*” This statement has been used by some to affirm that the apostles were actually speaking in gibberish

sounds that sounded like men who were drunk. But this was not the case.

We must keep in mind that the apostles were speaking in different languages. Those from Parthia would not have understood the language that was spoken by those from Libya. Those from Galilee, who knew that the apostles were from Galilee, would likewise not understand either of the languages of those from Parthia and Egypt. To them, the apostles' speaking in any other language than what they understood would only sound like men who were drunk. And drunk men speak gibberish sounds. Therefore, the irreverent mockers dismissed as drunken the apostles who were speaking in a language that they did not understand.

This event of the apostles' speaking in "tongues" on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 becomes the dictionary to define the rest of the New Testament when "tongues" are discussed. This is a consistent manner by which we must allow the Bible to interpret itself. Therefore, when we come to the next three records of miraculous speaking in languages, we must understand these biblical contexts from the commentary text of Acts 2.

B. Languages spoken in Caesarea:

Luke recorded in Acts 10,11 that when Peter and his company of Jews went into the house of Cornelius, Peter

began to speak to them concerning the gospel. However, as he began to speak he was interrupted by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the entire household of Cornelius. The other Jews who were with Peter "*heard them speak with tongues [glossa] and magnify God*" (At 10:46).

Two very important events explain that Cornelius and his household spoke in languages, and not in some hysterical gibberish or "unknown" sounds.

1. Peter related this experience with the Acts 2 experience of the apostles in Jerusalem. When Peter arrived back in Jerusalem after the experience in the house of Cornelius, he explained to the Jewish Christians who confronted him that "*the Holy Spirit fell upon them [Cornelius' household], as upon us [the apostles] at the beginning*" (At 11:15). The fact that the Spirit had fallen on them was evidence of the fact that the household of Cornelius actually spoke in discernible languages. The speaking in languages by the household of Cornelius was the same as the apostles' speaking in languages in Acts 2. In Peter's explanation to the Jerusalem brethren, therefore, he associated the experience of speaking in languages by the household of Cornelius with the languages of Acts 2. Cornelius and his household, therefore, spoke in actual languages, not in gibberish sounds.

2. The household of Cornelius

was heard to be glorifying God. If the Jews who were present in Cornelius' house could not understand what Cornelius and his household were speaking, then how could they have known what they were saying? Acts 10:46 plainly states that they heard them **magnify God.** If the languages were some unknown hysterical gibberish, then they would not have known if they were magnifying God.

Because of the fact that the attending Jews who had gone to the house of Cornelius with Peter could understand what the Gentiles were speaking, indicates that the Gentiles spoke in Hebrew, or Arabic. As Gentiles, we assume that the household of Cornelius normally spoke the common language of all the Gentiles. But in this case, they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to clearly speak in the dialect of those Jews who were present. This certainly must have been a startling experience for those Jews who were present.

The fact is that Cornelius and his household were speaking in a language that they had not beforehand studied. They were thus speaking to them in "new languages." This is why the speaking in languages in this context was a sign from God. The gift to speak in languages was a sign to the Jews that the Gentiles had a right to the message of the gospel and the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Just as God had signalled and confirmed His people with languages in the

beginning of the church, so He also confirmed to the Jewish Christians that the Gentiles were also to be included as obedient subjects of the kingdom reign of Jesus.

C. Languages spoken in Ephesus:

When Paul came to Ephesus in Acts 19, he found about twelve disciples who had not been baptized in the name of Jesus. After he had taught them, and "*they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*" (At 19:5), Paul laid hands on them. As a result of the laying on of Paul's hands, "*the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues [glossa] and prophesied*" (At 19:6).

Paul's authority to lay hands on them in order that they receive the gift of speaking in languages manifested proof that he was a Christ-sent apostle. Paul here gave them the "sign of an apostle" about which he spoke in 2 Corinthians 12:12. According to Mark 16:20, their speaking in languages after he had laid hands on them proved that he was from God. The speaking in languages by the Ephesians, therefore, was also a fulfillment of the promises of Joel 2:23-32 and Mark 16:17.

The speaking in tongues in Acts 19:6 is not defined in the immediate context to be a spoken language. However, tongues do not need to be defined. In recording the incident, Luke assumed that

Theophilus—the one to whom Acts was addressed—would use common sense in order to understand that the tongues here were the same as the miraculous events in the contexts of chapters 2 and 10.

Luke was writing to Theophilus who undoubtedly did not have any other New Testament documents in hand other than the letters of Luke and Acts. Therefore, from how Luke defined the speaking in languages in Acts 2, he knew that Theophilus would conclude that the actual languages of men were under discussion in chapters 10, 11 and 19. Since Luke connected the events of the speaking in languages as inspired speaking, then he assumed that Theophilus could make the connection of the apostles' speaking languages in Acts 2. We must understand these chapters in the same manner. Acts 2 is the dictionary on languages throughout the New Testament.

In the context of Acts 19, Theophilus would understand the speaking of the Ephesians as the speaking in the languages of men. Luke would certainly not be stating that Acts 2 and 10 were references to languages, and at the same time, and without explanation, infer that the Ephesians spoke in some hysterical gibberish sounds as drunken people. We must understand the context of Acts 19 as Theophilus would have understood it. To be consistent, we must allow Acts 2 to be the dictionary. In doing this we understand that the speaking

in tongues in Acts 19 was the speaking in languages that the Ephesians had not studied.

D. Languages spoken in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 12 – 14 are some of the most controversial chapters of the New Testament. They are controversial simply because misguided interpreters have allowed their personal emotional experiences in speaking gibberish to be the dictionary by which they have understood what Paul discussed in these chapters.

These chapters in the New Testament have often been used to support the belief that Paul was discussing hysterical utterances or gibberish sounds among the disciples in their assemblies. However, a consistent interpretation of these chapters indicates that the tongues about which Paul spoke must be understood to be the spoken languages of men. In fact, the instructions Paul gave in these chapters makes sense only if the tongues among the Corinthian disciples were the languages of men.

The letter to the Corinthians was written to correct some unfortunate wrong behavior and attitudes that prevailed among the Corinthians. The Corinthians were boastful about their forbearance of the immoral brother. Some were arrogant by questioning the apostleship of Paul. Paul's letter was a direct and loving condemnation of their

present situation in a last minute effort to correct their sinful attitudes before his arrival. In the context of his judgments, he discussed their misuse of the miraculous gifts that he had imparted to them by the laying on of his hands (2 Co 12:12). These gifts were to sustain them in the absence of the written word of God. Unfortunately, they were allowing their dysfunctional attitudes to use their gifts to encourage division.

This discussion of miraculous gifts in the context of the first century disciples was incurred only because there were problems among the Corinthian disciples. We would not have the record of this material if it were not for the problem of arrogance that prevailed among these disciples. Since we do not have similar discussions in the New Testament concerning the miraculous gifts as Paul gives in this context, we would assume that the Holy Spirit did not consider the gifts to be a primary function of the body. At least other disciples did not encourage dysfunctional behavior and attitudes that were characteristic with the Corinthians. Nevertheless, we would give the Corinthians a break in this matter. After all, they were Gentiles who had been Christians for only about five years.

The miraculous gifts were originally distributed among them by Paul in order to mature them in the faith. The gifts, therefore, were only temporary in order to initiate the beginning of their faith in the absence of the written word of God.

Edward Fudge correctly concluded,

One wonders if tongues would have been mentioned in even this epistle had the Corinthians not been so confused and abusive regarding their proper use. The gift does not seem to demand attention apart from a problem. Even here, most of what Paul says about tongues is designed to play down their importance and to urge the Corinthians to completely revamp their attitude toward this gift.^{20:20}

It is believed by some that Paul was speaking of ecstatic gibberish or utterances in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14. This assertion is made on the basis of the following:

1. The speaking was addressed to God (14:2,28).
2. The speaker was speaking mysteries (14:2).
3. The speaker edified himself and not others (14:4).
4. The speaker's understanding was unfruitful (14:14).
5. The audience did not understand what was said (14:19).
6. Outsiders would call the disorganized speaking to be madness (14:23).

Though some affirm that the above thoughts of Paul should be understood in view of supposed gibberish or “unknown” sounds, the fact that he spoke

of known languages is the consistent understanding of the context. Simply because the above points of Paul are twisted to mean that he was possibly referring to hysterical gibberish, does not mean that the context infers this interpretation. His instructions to correct the misuse of the tongues clearly reveals that he was speaking of known languages.

In the following discussion we must emphasize the fact that Paul was discussing **the misuse of the gift of languages in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14**. He was not dealing with some strange gibberish sounds that arose from among some misguided emotionalists among the Corinthian disciples. In fact, understanding the context of these three chapters can be realized only when we understand that Paul was discussing the misuse of the gift of languages in the context of the Corinthian assembly.

The Greek word *glossa* is used throughout the context of Paul's instructions. We must interpret this word as we would in Acts 2 and 10. If we are to be consistent in our interpretation of the speaking in tongues in the New Testament, we must bring the same speaking in languages we learn in other contexts into the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14. When we do this, we interpret Paul's meaning of tongues in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14 to refer to different languages that the Corinthians spoke as a result of the direction of the Holy Spirit.

The original *King James* transla-

tors unfortunately inserted the word "unknown" in 1 Corinthians 14:2. This word, however, **is not in the Greek text**. It is an addition by the translators of that version who sought to add an interpretive meaning to the text. On the other hand, they possibly added the word to explain the fact that the tongues that were spoken were unknown to those who heard. The tongues (languages) were languages of men, but unknown to the audience.

Regardless of the intentions of the *King James* translators, the charismatic movement of this century has assumed that the speaking was a gibberish that was unknown to man. Unfortunately, the addition of the word "unknown" has caused much confusion concerning our understanding of 1 Corinthians 12.

In a similar manner, the *New English Bible* translators used the phrase "ecstatic speech" to translate *glossa* in 1 Corinthians 14:2. This is another unfortunate translation and one that has again caused much confusion. There is no reason why these translators should have added either the words "unknown" or "ecstatic" with the word *glossa* in this verse. Both textual additions reveal a bias on the part of translators who were seeking to interpret rather than translate. The word *glossa* should be translated as it is in Acts 2 and other passages in the New Testament where it is used. In those contexts, it is translated "tongue" or "language."

The following points clarify what Paul discussed in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14. We address these points in view of the charismatic world in which there has been so much confusion concerning the context of these chapters.

While examining these contexts, we must keep foremost in our minds that our personal experiences must not be used to define what Paul wrote. We must simply allow Paul to make clear statements concerning the misuse of tongues without the addition of our emotional experiences.

We must also keep in mind that what is discussed in the New Testament concerning tongues that occurred after Acts 2 must be defined by the context of Acts 2. The Holy Spirit would not confuse us by speaking of two different kinds of “tongue speaking” in the New Testament without alerting us to the fact. Since the languages of men is clearly understood in the context of Acts 2, then we must assume that the same is in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14.

1. “Kinds of tongues” (1 Co 12:10): It is believed by some that this is a reference to different ecstatic utterances. However, the word “kinds” (*genos*) that was used by Paul here refers to that which is different, **but at the same time, to that which is of the same nature, kind or species.** In other words, Paul referred to the different languages the Corinthians spoke. Though the languages were different,

they were all languages of men. He was speaking of the different kinds of languages that were spoken by men.

2. “Tongues of angels” (1 Co 13:1): Paul wrote, “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.*” This is not some heavenly language that was being spoken by some of the Corinthian disciples.

It is not necessary to assume that Paul even speaks of a real language of angels. This is indicated by the use of the subjunctive mood in the text. The word “though,” that is sometimes used to translate *ean*, should actually be translated “if.” *Ean* is subjunctive. The subjunctive “if” (*ean*) suggests probability. In other words, Paul used the subjunctive mood in this verse to express a hyperbole, that is, an exaggeration to express a truth.

This is the logical interpretation of this passage since angels are not physical beings. They are spiritual beings who do not have literal tongues and vocal cords by which to express speech through the reverberation of the air in the atmosphere. In the Bible, angels were manifested at different times and spoke in the languages of men in order to communicate the will of God. However, in their natural habitation, they are not as men who must use their supposed mouths in order to formulate words by which communication is made possible.

When any angel spoke, he always spoke with the language of man by which he could be understood by man.

We could paraphrase 1 Corinthians 13:1 to say, “Just suppose that it might be that one could speak in the language of angels.” What Paul is saying was that even if he had the ability to speak with the languages of angels, but did not have a loving behavior, such an ability would be useless. Therefore, it is ridiculous to suppose that Paul, or any of the Corinthians, actually spoke in the language of angels. He spoke in the languages of men. He never claimed to have spoken in the language of angels. If the Corinthians were actually speaking in the tongues of angels, then they were blessed with a greater ability than even the apostles on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, for the apostles spoke only in the languages of men, not the languages of angels.

Paul used this same manner of argument in Galatians 1. He wrote, *“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed”* (Gal 1:8). Paul was not saying that an angel would actually be able to preach verbally the gospel to the Galatians. He was emphasizing a point. **He used an exaggeration in Galatians 1:8 to prove his point. Even if it were possible, he emphasized, the Galatians should not even listen to angels, who if they could, preach an-**

other gospel to them. 1 Corinthians 13 and Galatians 1 are not affirming either actual languages of angels or the preaching of another gospel by angels. Paul was emphasizing an important point by using a hypothetical situation.

3. “Speaking mysteries” (1 Co 14:2): As stated before, the word “unknown” is not in the Greek text of 1 Corinthians 14:2. Therefore, Paul was not talking about some language that was not known by man. The word “mystery” in the verse does not refer to ecstatic sounds of gibberish. Paul was simply using the word “mystery” as it was commonly used to denote spiritual truth that is communicated to man by God (See Rm 16:25; 1 Co 2:7; Ep 3:3-5; Cl 1:25-29).

The phrase “in the Spirit” refers to inspiration. As previously discussed, a consistent understanding of this phrase as it is used in the Bible would lead us to understand that inspiration to speak in a language by the Holy Spirit is under discussion in the context of 1 Corinthians 14:2. Therefore, it was by inspiration of the Spirit that the Corinthians spoke the mysteries of the truth (See Ep 3:3-5).

In the context of 1 Corinthians 14:2, **no one understood what the speaker was saying simply because there was no one present who had the gift of interpreting the specific language that was being spoken.** This is why Paul made the exhortation of verse 13: *“Therefore let him who*

speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.” This is also why Paul prohibited one from speaking in tongues when there was no interpreter present. *“But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the assembly, and let him speak to himself and to God”* (vs 28).

The phrase, *“does not speak to men but to God,”* does not assume that the speaker cannot understand what he is saying. 1 Corinthians 14:28 emphasizes the fact that if there were no interpreter present, then the individual was speaking **to himself** and to God. Therefore, he did understand what he was saying, though those around him did not. This is why Paul gave the instruction that this person should keep silent if there were no interpreter present. In other words, he should not disturb the assembly of the disciples for his own benefit.

Almost all of the disciples of the New Testament with whom a Christ-sent apostle encountered, were given the miraculous gifts. Therefore, the gifts were exercised in almost all the assemblies of the early church. Because of the problems that prevailed in Corinth, confusion arose concerning the use of the gifts. The confusion that was occurring among the Corinthians led to Paul’s writing of the instructions of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14.

a. The Corinthians were speaking without consideration for one another. The gift of tongues was

being used in Corinth without brotherly love. They were speaking in foreign languages in the assembly without respect to foreigners who did not understand the particular language that was being spoken. Because no interpreter was present, therefore, those in the assembly could not understand.

b. The Corinthians were speaking in confusion. Those who were speaking were speaking at the same time. They were thus causing confusion in the assembly by exercising a gift that was meant to edify instead of manifesting pride.

c. The Corinthians were speaking out of order. Those exercising their gifts were not respecting the orderliness by which the gifts were to be used in the assemblies. In 1 Corinthians 14:26-33, therefore, Paul gave them instructions concerning an orderly manner of using the gift of languages.

The point is that those who were speaking, were speaking mysteries because they could not be understood by the audience. They were only manifesting their pride by speaking. And in this way, they were speaking in a manner that caused confusion in the assembly. Paul exhorted them to check both their attitudes and the manner by which they used their gifts. 1 Corinthians 14:26-35 includes Paul’s instructions to correct the disorderly practices of those who were causing confusion in the assembly. They

had been ignoring these courteous procedures because of their pride and divisive spirits.

4. “He edifies himself” (1 Co 14:4): Some have used this statement to prove that those who spoke were seeking to edify only themselves, and not the assembly. But in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 - 14, the edification of the entire assembly was under consideration. The use of speaking in languages was to be for the benefit of the assembly, not any particular individual in the assembly.

1 Corinthians 14:5 states that the assembly was not edified if there were no interpreter present who could translate the language that was spoken. Verse 6 states that there was no profit to the assembly unless there was communication of the teaching that was spoken.

Verses 7-11 affirm that such speaking was useless unless it could be understood by the entire assembly. For this reason, Paul exhorted, “*Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret*” (1 Co 14:13). What Paul was saying to the Corinthians in the context was that **if there was no understanding, then there was no edification**. If ecstatic or hysterical gibberish is what was being discussed in the context, then the meaning of what is said must be understood in order to edify both the individual and the assembly. But if the assembly could not be edified by

what was said, then neither can the one who is making gibberish sounds. This is why we must affirm that ecstatic gibberish **was not** in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14. Ecstatic gibberish cannot be interpreted. It is simply unintelligible sounds made by an individual who is either emotionally out of control at the time, or is simply making gibberish sounds to draw attention to himself.

Paul did not address speaking in tongues as something that was self-edifying. But what was spoken in a language must edify. The action of speaking was not what edified. In other words, **the gift of languages was not meant to be for the benefit of the one who was speaking** simply because he was inspired with the ability to speak. This would also be true of the one who would utter ecstatic gibberish. If his actual speaking such sounds was meant to be for himself alone, then the one speaking has missed the purpose for which the gift of languages was given in the New Testament. He was speaking for himself, and thus not using his gift to minister to others.

All gifts were given for the purpose of ministering to the needs of others. **No gift was given for the purpose of one to edify himself or to manifest pride before others. The gifts were given to individuals for the purpose of aiding the individuals in their ministry to others.** Therefore, any gift that was used in the assembly that did not func-

tion in edification of the entire assembly, according to Paul's instructions, must be silenced.

5. "Pray that he may interpret"
(1 Co 14:13): This statement is made to affirm that one should pray for the gift of interpretation. In the case here, it is made in reference **to those who already had the apostles' hands laid on them in order to receive the gift of languages or some other gift.**

We must remember that **it was the Spirit who distributed the particular gifts** (1 Co 12:11). Therefore, those who already had hands laid on them were to pray that the Spirit might give them the additional gift of interpretation if they had already received another gift, specifically the gift of languages.

We cannot assume that Paul was teaching here that they pray for a miraculous gift if they had not had the apostles' hands laid on them. It took more than praying to receive the gift of tongues. This gift did not come simply in answer to prayer. The Corinthian situation proves this. They were in a situation where there was no interpreter of the various languages that were being spoken. **If prayer was the only thing necessary in order to receive the gift of interpretation, then there would never be a situation where an interpreter is not present, for one could simply pray and receive the gift from God.**

God would give the gift of interpretation in order to stop the confusion. But

in this case in Corinth, there were languages being spoken without an interpreter of the language being spoken. Paul's instructions in this case are mentioned in verse 28. **If no interpreter was present, then the one who was speaking in a language that could not be understood by the assembly, must be quiet.**

Other contexts prove that more than prayer was needed in order to receive a miraculous gift. If prayer alone were the only prerequisite for receiving a gift, then why did Paul desire to go to Rome in order that he might impart to them some spiritual gift (Rm 1:11)? Could he not simply have instructed them through the Roman letter to pray for gifts to be added among the Roman Christians? Why did the apostles Peter and John have to go from Jerusalem to Samaria in order to lay hands on the newly converted disciples in order that they receive miraculous gifts (See At 8:18)? Could not Philip have instructed them to pray for the gifts?

The answer to the preceding questions is simple. **It was only through the laying on of the apostles' hands that the gifts could be given.** Prayer for the gifts was for the purpose of receiving from the Spirit another gift of personal choice, since it was the initial choice of the Spirit to distribute the gifts according to His will (1 Co 12:11).

Prayer for the gift of interpretation would be necessary because the gift of

languages did not assume that one would also be blessed with the gift of interpretation. Languages was a gift of confirmation before unbelievers. For evangelistic purposes, those who spoke in languages to unbelievers **did not** need the language they spoke to be interpreted because the particular group of unbelievers to whom they preached the gospel already knew the language. It was their native language. In fact, the gift of speaking in languages to the foreign unbelievers was for the purpose of communicating the gospel to the foreigner in his own language. No interpretation was needed. Because of his mission to many language groups, Paul could say to the Corinthians, “*I speak with languages more than you all*” (1 Co 14:18).

But in the case of a mixed assembly of believers, and possible unbelieving foreigners, the spoken language of the assembly needed to be translated for the local Christians, or the visiting unbelievers. This is another point to prove that the assembly about which Paul was addressing in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14 was a special biannual assembly of all the Christians throughout Achaia who came together in Corinth for the Isthmian Games that were conducted in the city. In this assembly, the women were to keep silent, and the gifted prophets and language speakers were to sort themselves out in order that the possible participants of the Games who possibly attended this occasional bian-

nual assembly not think that the assembly of Christians was an assembly of madmen.

We must keep in mind also that 1 Corinthians 14:13 addressed the brother who **already had** the gift of languages. **Paul said that he must then pray that he interpret for the visitors.** Therefore, he had already had hands laid on him to receive the gift of languages. His prayer would be that the Spirit also distribute to him the gift of interpretation (1 Co 12:11). Since one could possess more than one gift, then we assume from what Paul meant was that one should pray for other gifts if he had already had hands laid on him by a Christ-sent apostle.

1 Corinthians 14:13 could refer to one praying that an apostle be able to be present in order that one receive a spiritual gift (At 18:8). One should “*desire spiritual gifts,*” and pray that the medium through which they were distributed would come into his or her presence.

One who had not had hands laid on him by an apostle could not receive a spiritual gift simply by praying for it. A Christ-sent apostle had to be present in order that the gift be imparted by the laying on of his hands. Only if one had already had hands laid on him could he pray for another gift. Since there are no Christ-sent apostles today, it would be futile to word a prayer for a miraculous gift. This would be asking for more than

what God has promised for us today. It would be a direct attack against the sufficiency of the inspired word of God that God says is sufficient to supply us unto all good works (See 2 Tm 3:16,17).

There is a practical argument concerning praying for the gift of interpretation that must also be considered in order to understanding what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 14:13. The one who was speaking in tongues was speaking the word of God. So it would be today if one stands up in an assembly and preaches in a language no one understands. If we have the miraculous gift of interpretation today, then certainly a brother could immediately pray for this gift, and thus, translate into the common language the meaning of what was being said. In this way, we could understand the message. If the speaker spoke in Mandarin Chinese, some brother could pray for the gift of interpretation in order to translate Mandarin into the common language of the assembly. The fact that this does not happen proves that we do not have the gift of interpretation today. In a practical sense, it proves that the gift of interpretation could not be arbitrarily received by the Corinthians.

6. “Understanding is unfruitful” (1 Co 14:14): This statement is misunderstood by some to refer to one not understanding some gibberish sound the speaker was supposedly speaking. Those who make this unfortunate interpretation affirm that they do not have to

understand what they are saying. The fact is that if they are speaking gibberish they do not and cannot know what they are saying themselves. However, this is not what Paul is discussing in 1 Corinthians 14:14.

Such interpretations of the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14 are certainly beneath the dignity of the Scriptures and certainly outside logical reasoning concerning the work of God. And above all, such interpretations make God use men as talking toys for His own amusement. The Holy Spirit does not work in a way to make God speak to Himself through the medium of men. God does not use the occasion of our assemblies to talk to Himself.

What Paul means is **if the audience does not understand what is being prayed in a language**, then there is no fruit produced from the prayer of those in the audience. If the audience does not understand the communication in prayer, then the prayer is useless to them.

The entire context of 1 Corinthians 14 is centered around the edification of the church in the assemblies (1 Co 14:26). The prayers that are under discussion refer to those prayers that are made in the assembly of the church. The church is not edified, therefore, if the prayers are in a language that cannot be understood by the assembly. This is why Paul said, *“I will pray with the spirit, and I will also **pray with the under-***

standing” (1 Co 14:15). In other words, **if God’s revelation flows through the inspired individual, but straight back to God, then the assembly benefits nothing. It was not the work of the Spirit in the first century to inspire people to speak to God in public prayer in a language that could not be understood by the audience.** This would be God speaking to Himself.

7. “Strange tongues” (1 Co 14:21): This statement in the original *King James Version* is also used to read the practice of speaking gibberish utterances into the context of 1 Corinthians 14. From the English word “strange,” it is assumed that the language that was spoken was unknown by any man. However, Paul was here quoting from Isaiah 28:11. In the context of Isaiah 28:11, Isaiah referred to the language of the Assyrians who took Israel into captivity in 721/722 B.C. He was not referring to ecstatic utterances, but to a specific language that was known by man.

The fact that Paul used the quotation of Isaiah 28:11 is proof that he was discussing the known languages of men in 1 Corinthians 14. Isaiah referred to languages when he wrote Isaiah 28. The same meaning must be carried with the quotation into the context of 1 Corinthians 14.

The “strange tongues” about which both Paul and Isaiah spoke were “foreign languages” to the Jews. In fact, this

passage is better translated in recent versions to read “other” tongues or languages. The *Revised King James Version* reads, “*With men of other languages and other lips I will speak to this people.*”

8. “Interpretation”: Some have misunderstood the meaning of the gift of interpretation. It has been claimed that Paul meant that one is to “decipher” an ecstatic utterance or gibberish, not interpret a foreign language. However, the Greek word *diermaneutas* (interpretation) is used in thirteen different places in the New Testament in one form or another. **It is almost always used in reference to translating the words of one known language into another known language** (See Jn 1:38,41; 9:7; At 13:8; Hb 7:2).

An exception to this would be Luke 24:27 where Jesus interpreted the Scriptures for the disciples. But even in this case it was the interpretation of thought from one known language into another that was under consideration.

In the context of 1 Corinthians 14, therefore, we must understand that the word *diermaneutas* was used in its most common manner. It was not used to refer to the translation of gibberish sounds into a language of man. The word was never used to refer to the translation of some unheard of gibberish into a language that is known by man. It was used in the sense that the interpreter translated a spoken language that was

known by mankind into the language of others who were present.

There is no justification to read ecstatic utterances into the context of 1 Corinthians. Fudge rightly concluded,

The idea of some ecstatic language, some unintelligible gibberish, or a mystical prayer-language finds absolutely no support in the text of First Corinthians. Any teaching growing out of that notion is based entirely on supposition and assumption, and finds no ground in the Scriptures – here or elsewhere.^{20:21}

There are no unknown languages discussed in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14. There was no ecstatic gibberish in the assembly of the Corinthian church. When Paul discussed the subject of tongues, Bible students must understand that he was referring to the languages of men. In fact, his instructions concerning tongues throughout the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14 can be understood only if we understand that he was speaking of known languages of men in the context of his instructions. This is the only consistent manner by which 1 Corinthians 12 - 14 can be understood.

Chapter 9

THE PASSING OF THE GIFTS

9 Seated in the middle of Paul's discussion of miraculous gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 – 14, are the instructions of chapter 13. Therefore, we must understand chapter 13 in reference to the Corinthians' problem in their misuse of miraculous gifts. Chapter 13 is the solution to the division that was caused by the misuse of the miraculous gifts among the disciples.

In chapter 13 Paul exalted brotherly love. This was his long-term solution to correcting those attitudes that lead to division among the brethren. However, in exalting love as the long-term solution to the Corinthians' problem, he minimized the use of the miraculous gifts.

He did this by revealing that the gifts must pass away in order that love be restored to their fellowship with one another in their personal ministries.

He spoke of the passing of the gifts in order that love be the foundation upon which the members of the body would come together to function as a unified body. Historically speaking, therefore, the miraculous gifts were only inconsequential to the long-term function of the body.

The statements of 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 are seated in the context of Paul's discussion of miraculous gifts of chapters 12 and 14 in order to show that gifts were only temporary in the estab-

ishment of the church. Love among brethren must be exalted above miraculous gifts. Therefore, the subject of love in 1 Corinthians 13 is stated by Paul as the “*more excellent way*” and the long-term solution to the Corinthians’ problems concerning the misuse of the gifts (1 Co 12:31).

After emphasizing the greatness of love in chapter 13, Paul then explained the temporary use of the miraculous gifts. The gifts would pass away, whereas the behavior of love would continue throughout the history of the church. Paul’s argument, therefore, was to place less emphasis on the gifts in view of the greater behavior of love by which the disciples must be known to be of Christ.

Though Jesus sent the Holy Spirit into the world, He did not use any of the miraculous gifts as the signal of the identity of His disciples. He said, “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another*” (Jn 13:34). Love would forever be the identity of the church of Christ. Jesus continued, “*By this will all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*” (Jn 13:35). The identity of the true disciples of Jesus would never be based on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It would be in the disciples love for one another as Jesus had loved them (1 Jn 4:19). Therefore, Paul wrote,

⁸*Love never fails. But whether there*

are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. ⁹*For we know in part and we prophesy in part.* ¹⁰*But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away* (1 Co 13:8-10).

A. The part and the perfect:

Paul affirmed that when the “perfect” (that which was whole) had come, then that which was in “part” (the miraculous gifts) would be done away (1 Co 13:10). In this context the perfect refers to the “*perfect law of liberty*,” the law of Christ in its fully revealed written form (Js 1:25). This is defined by Paul in the context. Though there is often much discussion concerning the “perfect” about which Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 13:10, the context of Paul’s discussion infers the final revelation of what God would have the church depend unto the coming of the Son of God at the end of time. The fact that the “part” is in contrast to the “perfect,” assumes that the “perfect” is the final solution for the unity of the faith. In another context Paul revealed that the “perfect” was able to make the man of God complete, “*thoroughly equipped for every good work*” (2 Tm 3:17).

The Corinthians exalted the gifts. On the other hand, Paul exalted that which would carry the church until the

end of time. Love, not miraculous gifts, would identify the disciples before the world until Jesus comes again. We must view Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 13 in reference to what Jesus stated in John 13:34,35. Love, not gifts, would be the final identity of the body of Christ.

The perfect would refer to that which would sustain the church until the end of time. Paul referred specifically to the gifts of prophecy, languages and knowledge. These three gifts would be replaced with the written and complete word of God that could easily be translated (interpreted) into every language of man. For this reason, it is logical to conclude that the "perfect" of 1 Corinthians 13:10 refers to the written word of God. We must conclude this for the following reasons:

1. *The perfect is contemporary with faith, hope and love.* That which is whole (the perfect) would exist at the same time when faith, hope and love existed. The object of hope and faith will be realized when Jesus comes again. That for which we have been hoping will have arrived at the final coming of Jesus. In other words, after Jesus comes, faith and hope will no longer exist because we will have realized that for which we hoped (See Rm 8:25; Hb 11:1).

Paul is saying that faith and hope coexist with that which is perfect. Therefore, the perfect must exist during this gospel dispensation before the com-

ing of Jesus. The perfect cannot be something that is yet to come. The perfect will coexist with faith, hope and love. It is the foundation upon which we have faith and hope, and the source through which we know and respond to His love.

2. *The perfect is in contrast to the part.* That which is perfect in verse 10 is greater than that which is in part. The perfect is greater because it will take the place of the part. The perfect would specifically be greater than the gifts of knowledge and prophecy in that the context represents all the miraculous gifts. Since Paul's point in using these two gifts over which the Corinthians disputed as to which was greater, would pass away, then all the gifts would pass. If these two gifts that they thought were greater than the other gifts would eventually pass away, then all the gifts would pass.

3. *The perfect is the complete revealed will of God.* This point must be understood in the context that at the time of the disruption in the fellowship of the Corinthians' fellowship there were no written New Testament documents to guide them. The gifts, therefore, were only temporary in order to get the church through the first twenty to thirty years of establishment. When the New Testament documents were finally written and circulated, then the church could move on with these documents.

At the time, the gifts of prophecy and knowledge were means through which only parts of the revelation of God

were made known to the Corinthians, and the church in general. In contrast to this partial information, Paul said that the perfect or complete revelation of God's word would take the place of the partial.

The completion of the revelation of God in written form made the gifts of prophecy and knowledge unnecessary, and thus redundant. The gift of languages was made unnecessary because the written word could be translated into other languages. The perfect law of liberty supplanted the miraculous gifts. The gifts were not necessary after the faith "*was once for all delivered to the saints*" (Jd 3). God's power "*has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue*" (2 Pt 1:3). Through the inspired Scriptures, the Christian is made "*complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Tm 3:17).

Once the written revelation of God was produced to build the faith of the disciples, then there would never be another occasion where the miraculous gifts would be used to exalt any one disciple over the other disciples. Everyone would have the opportunity to read and understand the revealed mystery of the gospel through the written documents of the New Testament (See Ep 3:3-5).

If the purpose of the miraculous gifts was to establish and edify the church until the writing of the New Tes-

tament documents, then the purpose for which the word of God was put into written form made the gifts unnecessary. The purpose of the written word of God was to be God's direction for the church until the final coming of the Son of God (1 Pt 1:25). The establishment of the written word through the inspired pen of chosen writers, therefore, signaled the end of the gifts.

The gifts were limited to those on whom the apostles had laid their hands. However, the written word of God could go to all without the condition of the laying on of the apostles' hands. In view of the purpose for which God intended the written word of God to be among the disciples, it is difficult for us to understand the perfect of 1 Corinthians 13 to refer to anything other than the inspired word of God.

1 Corinthians 13:8-10 teaches that miraculous gifts—the gifts of prophecy, knowledge and tongues are used in the context to represent all the gifts—were to be done away (1 Co 13:8). Paul taught that these gifts were only a part of the whole. They were part of the whole that was to come (1 Co 13:9). When the perfect came, then the partial would be done away (1 Co 13:10). The complete revelation of God, therefore, was to replace the partial revelation that existed at the time Paul was writing the letter.

As the destruction of Jerusalem ap-

proached in reference to the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and the writing of the New Testament letters, the miraculous gifts were coming to an end. Throughout the letters that were written to the early church during the decade before A.D. 70, little emphasis was placed on the miraculous gifts. Therefore, it would be correct to assume that the miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit through the gifts ceased by A.D. 70. It would also be a fair assumption to say that all New Testament books, including Revelation, were written before A.D. 70.

B. The purpose of the gift of languages:

There were three purposes for the gift of languages in the first century. It is important to understand why God worked through this gift in order to understand why the gift passed away. When the purposes for all the miraculous gifts were accomplished, there was no more need for their use. And thus, the Holy Spirit ceased to work among the disciples through these gifts.

1. *Inspired languages were a sign to unbelievers.* Speaking in languages was one of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, and thus, the gift was referred to as a sign. Jesus had promised that signs would go with those who believed (Mk 16:17). When the early

disciples went forth, therefore, the Lord worked with them, “*confirming the word through the accompanying signs*” (Mk 16:20). God bore “*witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and **gifts of the Holy Spirit**, according to His own will*” (Hb 2:4).

The gift of tongues, as well as other miraculous abilities, were ‘signs’ designed to convince unbelievers of the heavenly origin of Christianity.^{21:n.p.}

A sign was to signal something that was greater than the sign itself. The gift of languages was a sign in the sense that the inspired languages signaled the presence of the Holy Spirit.

God intended that the miraculous speaking in languages that had not been studied, to be a sign to the unbelievers. Paul wrote, “*Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe **but to unbelievers***” (1 Co 14:22). The gift of languages was an open manifestation that God was miraculously working among His people. Unbelievers who were acquainted with local Christians in any particular area witnessed their friends speaking in languages that they knew their friends had never before studied. The languages, therefore, became a signal to the unbelievers in communities that God was with the believers.

2. *Inspired languages were for individual edification when no in-*

terpreter was present. Paul wrote, “*He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church*” (1 Co 14:4). If an interpreter were not present when one spoke in a foreign language, then only the one who spoke was edified. However, if an interpreter were present, **then the speaking in languages could edify the entire assembly by speaking or praying according to the word of God.**

1 Corinthians 14:4 refers to a time when no interpreter was present in the assembly. In this case, Paul commanded the one speaking in languages to be silent in the assembly because he would only be disrupting the assembly by his edification of himself through the use of his gift. However, if an interpreter were present, then the entire assembly could appreciate what he had to say.

We could assume that the one who spoke in a language that only he could understand edified himself by what he was saying. But he was saying it to himself, not to the assembly. He was thus to keep silent in the assembly if no one could understand what he was saying. Self-edification, therefore, would probably be only in the sense that he knew he had the gift because he knew he had never studied the language.

It is possible that Paul made this statement only to emphasize a point. The point was not that the gift of languages was given for the purpose of self-edification. He simply made the statement

to emphasize the point that if one spoke in a situation wherein only he understood, then only he reaped edification from what was said or his experience of speaking in the language. Therefore, self-edification through the gift of languages was not the purpose of the gifts.

The gifts were given for the benefit of others. They were not given to be used for selfish reasons. In fact, selfish uses of the gifts would work against the very reason why the gifts were given. They were given in order to enhance one’s ministry to others, not to oneself.

Paul desired to go to Rome in order that he might impart to the believers some miraculous gift (Rm 1:11). Such would profit the entire church of Rome by firmly establishing them in the faith (1 Co 12:7). The gifts would enrich their ministries and confirm them in the faith (See 1 Co 1:4-9).

The early Gentile converts were converted out of the idolatrous religions of Greek and Roman mythology. In the absence of the written word of God, the Holy Spirit had to directly guide the early disciples in the faith. The gifts were under the control of the possessors of the gifts (1 Co 14:27-34, 40), though the type of gift was evidently determined by the will of the Spirit (1 Co 12:11). Thus the Spirit ministered to the new Christians through the individuals who had received a gift through the laying on of the apostles’ hands.

All the gifts were given for the pur-

pose of building up the body of Christ as a whole. The individual who possessed a gift was only indirectly encouraged as he or she administered to others through the use of his or her gift.

3. *Miraculous languages were given for evangelism.* Not only were some of the assemblies of the early churches composed of those who spoke many languages, the early evangelists were commissioned to go to every ethnic group of the world (Mt 28:19-20).

In order to effectively preach and teach in a new language, it takes six months to a year of hard study and practice. It would be difficult to imagine Paul taking this much time just to be able to speak in the language of one particular ethnic group of people to whom he went. He said in 1 Corinthians 14:18, “*I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all.*” Paul was gifted by the Holy Spirit to speak in many languages. This allowed him, as well as other evangelists, to be able to rapidly evangelize the first century world. Their going forth was to the ends of the world in order to accomplish the commission of Jesus. Therefore, the gospel “*which was preached to every creature under heaven*” went forth in every language of every creature by A.D. 61,62 (Cl 1:23).

C. The cessation of the gift of languages:

The New Testament teaches that the open manifestation of miracles to confirm the spoken word of God—this would include speaking in languages—has passed away. The confirming miracles have passed simply because there is no more a need to confirm the word by miracles today. Miraculous gifts, as speaking in languages, were given to the early Christians for the purpose of confirming and firmly establishing the early disciples in the faith (See Mk 16:17-20; Ep 4:11-16; Hb 2:3,4).

When the evangelists in the first century went forth to preach, the gospel was confirmed wherever it was preached by the power of the Holy Spirit (See At 20:23; 1 Co 4:19,20; 1 Th 1:5). Paul’s preaching was confirmed by miracles. The preaching of the prophets and evangelists was also confirmed by God (Rm 15:18,19; Hb 2:3,4). However, when the word was confirmed by the miracles, and the New Testament documents written, then the miraculous gifts ceased because they had fulfilled their purpose (1 Co 13:8-10).

There is no need to confirm our faith today by miracles. We confirm our faith by the authority of the written word of God. A select number of the miracles of the first century were recorded in the New Testament for this purpose. We have the record of the confirming miracles (the New Testament). John recorded only a few of the miracles of Jesus.

However, he affirmed that his record of miracles **was sufficient to produce faith in Jesus as the Son of God** (Jn 20:30,31). Men today, therefore, can believe on Jesus and have eternal life without the gift of speaking in languages. God says that what is recorded in His written word is able to make the man of God complete, “*thoroughly equipped for every good work*” (2 Tm 3:17).

Zechariah prophesied that the miraculous revelation from God would eventually be terminated (Zc 13:2-5). He did not say when this would take place. He simply prophesied that the cessation of the miraculous would take place in the future from his time of writing. In 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 Paul affirmed the cessation of the miraculous gifts. He also taught such in Ephesians 4. Paul simply continued the prophecy of Zechariah that the open miraculous manifestation of God among men to confirm the message of the gospel would come to a close.

In the context of Ephesians 4, Paul affirmed that the miraculous gifts were to last only until the time when **the faith** had been completely delivered to the saints (See Jd 3). Though in this context one might argue the presence of natural gifts, it cannot be denied that in the historical context of the Ephesian disciples, Paul was also discussing the work of miraculous gifts in the lives of those who ministered with their natural gifts. This is clearly understood in Ephesians 4:8: “*When He ascended on*

high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.” The word “gifts” here would not refer to natural gifts that we possess, which gifts should be used in the edification of the church.

Natural gifts were possessed by men **before** Jesus ascended on high. Every individual is given natural gifts by God when he is born. However, the miraculous gifts were given **after** the ascension of Jesus. They were given for special purposes. One of those purposes was to miraculously signal God’s work in the early church in order to let the world know that God was with His people (Hb 2:3,4).

After Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave miraculous gifts to Christians. These gifts were given for the “*equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*” (Ep 4:12). The duration of the miraculous gifts is explained in Ephesians 4:13: “*Till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*”

“Coming to the unity of the faith” refers to the church being unified upon the foundation of the truth of the gospel. Coming to “the knowledge of the Son of God” refers to the foundation upon which our unity is based (Mt 16:18,19). Through the inspiration of the apostles, all truth was delivered to the saints (Jn 14:26;16:13; Jd 3). Since this truth of

the gospel has been recorded, then there is no more need for the church to be maintained in unity by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit through the miraculous gifts.

The unity of the church is now maintained through the saints' study of and obedience to the truth of the gospel. This gospel is revealed in the New Testament. In other words, the duration of the miraculous gifts was until the church had received the complete revelation of **that upon which they would build their faith**. Once this was accomplished, the miraculous gifts ceased. Unity and growth of the church now depend on the saints' study and thanksgiving for the truth of the gospel that is learned through a study of the written word of God.

The word "faith" in Ephesians 4:13 is not used to signify a simple belief in Jesus. The use of the article "the" with faith indicates that Paul was using the word in the same sense as in Jude 3 where Jude wrote, "*I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for **the faith** which was once for all delivered to the saints*" (See also Rm 10:8; Cl 2:7). **The faith is a reference to the totality of Christian knowledge of the gospel as revealed through the Scriptures**. Jude said that this faith had once and for all time been delivered to the saints. Therefore, miraculous gifts, including the speaking in tongues, were to exist only until the completion of the final revela-

tion of the truth of the gospel. This revelation was completed in the first century. The gifts subsequently ceased, and thus, tongues have also ceased.

D. The curse of subjective religion:

A subjective religion is the submission of individuals to emotional suggestions, with little regard to direction from inspired written revelation. The practice of ecstatic gibberish falls into the category of one of the practices of a subjective religion. As a subjective religious practice, it is contrary to those biblical teachings that are against being led astray by subjective religiosity.

Subjective religions originate from within the individual and are dependent on the mood of the individuals who participate in the religion. In subjective religions, **the people become the central authority of the religion**. This happens when the subjective experiences of the people have more authority in the religion than the word of God. The members of a subjective religion become the final authority upon which the beliefs of the members are founded. There are many biblical warnings against such religions because they lead one away from God.

God calls men today unto obedience of the gospel. Obedience of the gospel is objective. When one studies the written word of God, he objectively concludes the reality of the gospel of the

Son of God, and subsequently, responds.

God continually pleads through His word that all men respond to the gospel of His grace through His Son (See Mt 11:28-30; Mk 16:15). Subjective religion leads one to reject the call of God through His word. It encourages people to trust in the authority of one's own emotional experiences. A subjective religion leads one to reject the Bible as the only authority in matters of belief and behavior.

Many of those who are adherents to this system of religion claim that the "ecstatic speech experience," and the feelings that result from such an experience, are more important proofs of spirituality than the gospel. This is revealed in the fact that most people who are adherents to subjective religions have little knowledge of their Bibles. They have little knowledge of the Bible because they are not given to the word of God in order to learn more of the gospel of the Son of God.

It is generally true that those who are of a subjective religion will trust their feelings more than they will trust objective Bible teaching. They thus stumble over one of the most basic principles of the Bible that Jeremiah mentioned in Jeremiah 10:23: "***O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.***"

This fact is true simply because God said it was true. It is **not in man** to

direct his own behavior. Any religion, therefore, that teaches submission to human emotions and feelings as the authority of faith cannot be from God. Such religions are from man because the adherents trust in the experiences of men.

When one properly understands 1 Corinthians 13, he can understand why the charismatic movement is a movement of subjective religiosity that is contrary to the word of God. This is true because it is often believed among subjective religionists that when one preaches or teaches, he or she does not have to depend on a study of the word of God. It is affirmed that one should allow "the Spirit to take control," and thus allow whatever is spoken to be from the Spirit. The preacher, therefore, often becomes arrogant about what he asserts. He assumes that what he says is directed by the Holy Spirit, and thus the opinions or statements of other members are inconsequential.

This arrogance sets aside the word of God. It diminishes the importance of the Bible. It attacks the very reason why the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures to be written. Therefore, experientialists are in a digression from the truth of the gospel. They are headed into a religious chaos that leads men and women into destruction (See 2 Th 2:10-12).

The Bible claims to be the only authority in matters of faith (See 1 Co 14:37; Gl 1:6-9; 2 Tm 3:16,17; Rv 22:18,19). The Bible teaches that it is

the Christian's source of faith (See Jn 20:30,31; Rm 10:17). Therefore, if anyone desires to come to the Father, he or she must come through a knowledge of the written word of the Father. One can never understand the gospel unless he or she studies his or her Bible. If one ignores the direction of the word of God in belief and behavior, he or she will not draw closer to God. Those who ignore the word of God will be drawn to their own subjective feelings to that which is contrary to the will of God.

To accept any authority for belief and behavior other than the Bible is to submit to that which will lead one away from God. It is rebellion against God to follow either the religious traditions of men or subjective religions that have been invented after the misguided emotions of man (See Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:6-9; Cl 2:8; 2 Th 3:6).

If we reject the Bible as our final authority in matters of faith, then we have no authority for faith. This is true because the traditions of men are always contradictory to one another and always changing. In the area of experiential religions, the experiences of the adherents of such religions are also often contrary to one another. For this reason, God expects us to respond to the gospel. Only in doing this can people of faith come closer together. We must not forget that religion leads us away from one another because it is either traditionally or experientially based. Gospel leads

us to one another because it is based on God. We can determine if we are religionists, therefore, if we wake up one morning and discover that we are a great distance from others who believe in Jesus.

Christianity has never been a subjective belief or behavior in the sense that God leaves us to be carried about by our own emotions or imaginations. Paul wrote, "*And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets*" (1 Co 14:32). Not even the Holy Spirit subjected the individual possessor of any gift to His will. The use of a miraculous gift was always subject to the one who possessed the gift. Paul had to command Timothy, who had power over the use of his gift, to stir up the use of his gift (2 Tm 1:6). He told Timothy not to neglect his gift (1 Tm 4:14). Paul told the Thesalonians, who could voluntarily suppress the miraculous gifts, not to quench the Spirit's work through the gifts (1 Th 5:19,20). This picture of the first century disciples is certainly different from that which we see today among subjective religionists.

Religions that thrive on the emotions of those who are out of control are completely foreign to the church of disciples in the first century who had objectively responded to Jesus as the Christ and Son of God. These religions are the work of the uncontrolled emotions of misguided religionists who are persistent to maintain their humanistic faith. These

are religionists who would do well to read again Proverbs 14:12: “*There is a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way of death.*” In this context, we must always remember what Paul said God will allow in the religious life of the one who does not follow the direction of the word of God. Paul wrote,

And with all unrighteous deception

among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth [of the gospel], that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth [of the gospel] but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Th 2:10-12).

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ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**