**Excursus – The Spirit’s Work in Acts and FBC (Continued)**

Every Christian is an “unembarrassed supernaturalist,”[[1]](#footnote-1) but there is great debate about whether God is still giving miraculous gifts/powers to the Church today. Broadly speaking, there are two camps: The “continuationists,” who believe that God continues to give miraculous gifts to His people today, and the “cessationists,” who believe that God has ceased to give these gifts for now. The continuationist camp is especially diverse (see *Appendix 1*), but this commentary will simply address the broader, more fundamental question of whether the gifts have continued or ceased.[[2]](#footnote-2)

We believe that a biblical case can be made for the cessation of the miraculous gifts, and to demonstrate that, we will look to Scripture—the book authored by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:20–21; 2 Tim 3:16–17)—to see what He has told us concerning His will for these abilities.[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. The Promise
2. The Purpose
3. The Performers
4. **The Pause**

**The Pause**

* The language of “pause” has been chosen because we don’t believe that miraculous gifts/powers have ceased to be given *forever*.
* Rather, the Bible tells us that God will bring prophecy back when He raises up the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3–6 (cf. Joel 2), and so we know that this gift is not on pause for “*all* time” but only for “*a* time.”
* For now, however, we see that we are not called to look to prophets themselves but rather to “the prophetic word” of “Scripture” that has been delivered to us through them (2 Pet 1:19–20).

**Day 1 – The “What” Question & The Gift of Apostleship**

 **The “What” Question**

* It’s tempting to step into this conversation and first ask the “when” question—*when* the miraculous gifts would have ceased—but it is actually more helpful to start with the “what” question and take a look at *what* these gifts are, according to Scripture.[[4]](#footnote-4)
* We say this because the so-called “modern occurrences” of the gifts are *not the same* things that we see in the Bible. If the continuationists are correct, we would expect to see the same gifts today that were operating back in Acts. But instead, continuationists try to build their case by pointing to things like *fallible* prophets, *gibberish* tongues, and *dubious* healings—things that are clearly different from the *inerrant* prophets, *intelligible* tongues, and *undeniable* healings we find in the Bible. If the gifts have truly “continued,” they should be the same gifts. But, as we will show below, they’re not.
* By starting with the “what” question, then, readers can see that what was happening in the apostolic age of the early church is not happening today. For that reason, we can say, on the grounds of the biblical definitions of the gifts, the miraculous gifts have ceased.
* To show this, this commentary will define the four following gifts and then explain why God has put them on pause:
1. The Gift of Apostleship
2. The Gift of Prophecy
3. The Gift of Tongues (Languages)
4. The Gift of Healing

**The Gift of Apostleship**

* When ranking spiritual gifts, Paul mentions apostleship first (1 Cor 12:28), so we begin there as well. There are three key points to make:
1. ***Yes, Scripture designates “apostleship” as a spiritual gift.***

First On the List

* + Not everyone thinks of “apostleship” as a spiritual gift, but Paul speaks of it this way and we should too.
	+ In two places where Paul generates a list of spiritual gifts, “apostles” ranks first (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). (*For more on this, see* *Appendix 2.*)
	+ Some might object, “Isn’t apostleship an *office*?” To which the answer is, “Yes.” But just like prophets were those with the gift of prophecy, apostles were those with the gift of apostleship. Apostles qualified for their office because they have the gift of apostleship.

What the Gift Entails

* + Because it’s less common to recognize apostleship as a spiritual gift, some are confused about what the gift includes. After all, prophets can prophesy, tongues speakers can speak in tongues, but what exactly do apostles *do*?
	+ Thomas has sought an answer by analyzing the ways that apostles are described in Scripture. He concludes that “A person with the gift of apostleship possessed many and perhaps most of the other spiritual gifts.”[[5]](#footnote-5) His observations are helpful:
		- “Sign gifts of healing (Acts 5:12–16), miracles (Acts 13:8–11), prophecy (Acts 27:25), and tongues (Acts 2:4; 1 Cor 14:18) were given as badges of their apostleship (2 Cor 12:12). Since [the apostles] were the vehicles of revelation that eventually composed most of the New Testament books, they also must have been in possession of the gifts of wisdom and knowledge (1 Cor 2:7, 10, 13; 2 Pet 3:15–16). As spokesmen of this revelation and as prophets of future events, they likewise possessed the gift of prophecy (Rev. 1:1–3). Instances of their special abilities in other areas of gift bestowal could likewise be adduced…In light of the wide range of abilities and responsibilities of an apostle, it is no surprise that Paul gives this office and the associated gift of prophecy top ranking from the standpoint of benefit derived.”[[6]](#footnote-6)
	+ In summary, a close look at Scripture helps us understand that the gift of apostleship entailed the ability to do many if not most (perhaps even all) of the other miraculous works of the Spirit. This is critical to see because if the sign gifts are uniquely apostolic (2 Cor 12:12) then, with the exception of Acts 2 and Acts 10 (*discussed last week*), other people who had these miraculous abilities would have received them directly from the apostles’ hands (cf. Acts 8:17–18).
1. ***Scripture gives 3 qualifications to be an apostle****.*
2. Apostles Had to Be Eyewitnesses of Christ (1 Cor 9:1; cf. 15:3–9):
* This was required for the candidates who could replace Judas (Acts 1:22).
* Similarly, Paul says that Christ “appeared to me also” (1 Cor 15:8)—referring to the post-resurrection appearances of Christ. He then ties this experience to his apostolic credentials in the next verse (15:9) and in an earlier chapter when he writes, “Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” (1 Cor 9:1).
1. Apostles Had to Be Appointed by Christ (Luke 6:13; Gal 1:1):
* The Gospel of Luke highlights the specific nature of this appointment when he records how Jesus “called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles” (Luke 6:13).
* From this, readers can see (1) this is distinct from simply being called to be a disciple, and (2) Jesus personally named these individuals as “apostles.” So this is not an honor that someone can assume for him or herself.
* Paul reinforces this last point when he introduces himself as “an apostle—not sent from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:1).
* Even when Matthias was chosen to replace Judas, the men lean on prayer and lots as they ask the Lord Jesus “show us which of these two You have chosen to take the place of this ministry and apostleship” (1:24–25). It’s all of Christ.
1. Apostles Had to Be Empowered to Perform Miracles by Christ (2 Cor 12:12):
* The Bible tells us that apostles were also endowed with the ability to perform authenticating miracles. When Paul says to the Corinthians that “the signs of a true apostle were worked out among you…by signs and wonders and miracles” (2 Cor 12:12), this statement shows that “signs and wonders and miracles” were not given to everyone alike. Rather, they were uniquely tied to the apostolic office. If everyone could do signs and wonders, Paul wouldn’t be able to say that his abilities were *apostolic*.
1. ***The gift of apostleship has ceased for the present age.***
* **Paul’s Testimony: Paul testified that he was the last apostle (1 Cor 15:5–9).**
	+ Regarding the train of people who saw Christ after He rose again, Paul says he was the caboose.
	+ He says, “[Christ] appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brothers…After that, He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all [the apostles], as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles…” (1 Cor 15:5–9).
	+ The phrase “last of all” could be taken to refer to the entire list he gave, but the next phrase (“For I am the least of the apostles”) clarifies that he’s speaking about being “last of all [the apostles]” to see Christ. And because someone could only qualify as an apostle by seeing Christ (cf. 1 Cor 9:1; cf. 15:3–9), the fact that Paul was “last of all” apostles to do this means that he was the last of all apostles.
	+ **Aside: How Many Apostles Were There?** Thomas is correct to add the qualifier that there probably wasn’t a set number of apostolic chairs to fill. Obviously, “the twelve” are the primary apostles (1 Cor 15:5), but Paul served outside of that group. And in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul even lists “the twelve” (15:5) as a distinct group from “all the apostles” (15:7), so we know there were more than 13. This is not to suggest that there were dozens more apostles roving around, but the fact that Corinth was hoodwinked by “false apostles” (2 Cor 11:13) indicates that the door was not known to be shut at 13.[[7]](#footnote-7) If it were, the Corinthians could have simply checked IDs.
* **Paul’s Teaching: Apostleship constitutes the foundation of the Church (Eph 2:19–22).**
	+ In addition to Paul’s claim that he was the last of all the apostles, Paul also taught that the gift of apostleship had a historical purpose that is now fulfilled. For that reason, he helps us see why we do not *need* apostles today.
	+ Ephesians 2:20 is the fundamental passage for this. In the context, the Church body is pictured as a building, with different members comprising different parts of the structure (2:19–22; 4:15–16). Christ Himself is the corner stone (2:20), but in addition to Him, the apostles and prophets serve as the other foundation stones that comprise the greater foundation of the Church.
	+ This helps us to see that, during the period in which foundation was being laid, different men occupied the offices of apostles and prophets and carried out their duties, but since no one lays a foundation twice (cf. 1 Cor 3:11), there is no longer a need for such work today. Today, we build upon the foundation (Eph 2:21–22).
	+ **Are There Still Apostles Today?** – A modern movement known as the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) includes those who claim to be modern apostles. To support such claims, appeal has been made to the biblical credentials listed above.[[8]](#footnote-8) However, aside from the fact that these people have not demonstrated the true signs of an apostle, the mere fact that Paul said he was the “last of all” to see the risen Christ means that the claims of people today to have done so are false. On biblical grounds—according to the words of a true apostle—we can see that we ought not expect new apostles today.

**Conclusion: The gift of apostleship ceased when the last surviving apostle died.**

* 1. Realizing that (1) apostleship is a spiritual gift, (2) that no one today can meet its qualifications, and (3) that Paul testified and taught about the unique historical purpose that this gift accomplished, it becomes clear that when the last surviving apostle died, *at least this one, miraculous gift, ceased.*
	2. Paul would have been the last apostle to be appointed, but arguably the apostle John was the last apostle to walk the earth, since he lived longest. Regardless, the fact that the apostles have all died, and there will be no more, means that anyone who acknowledges this fact is therefore—to some degree—a cessationist.

Day 1 – Questions

1. Which passages list “apostle” on the list of spiritual gifts?
2. Summarize what abilities come with the gift of apostleship?
3. Name the three criteria to become an apostle.
4. Why are there no apostles today?

**Day 2 – The Gift of Prophecy**

* The gift of prophecy (1 Cor 14:1; Eph 4:11) must also be defined according to the Bible. Five points should be highlighted:
1. ***The nature of true prophecy is the same across the Testaments.***
* Some continuationist theologians have claimed that the definition of prophecy underwent a change between the Old and the New Testaments.
* According to them, this change was a change for the worse, because they argue that Old Testament prophets were always accurate, but New Testament prophets could now get some things wrong. This is a way of legitimizing “fallible prophets” in Christian circles. (*For more on this view, see Appendix 3.*)
* However, the apostle Peter explains the nature of New Testament prophecy by *citing* *the Old Testament* *definition* *of prophecy* found in Joel 2 (Acts 2:14–21). This means that Peter is using the definition of prophecy given in the Old Testament to describe what is happening in the New, and therefore the idea that the definition changed is incorrect. God used Peter to show us they’re the same.
1. ***True prophecy is always 100% accurate*.**
* Prophecy is always accurate because God doesn’t lie. Note two points:
	+ 1. **God Defines Prophecy as Perfect Communication from Him:** God defines prophecy as (1) a direct reception of verbal revelation from God *and* (2) the divinely-given ability to communicate that exact revelation to other people (Exod 4:11–16; 7:1–2; Jer 1:9). True prophets do not receive mere “impressions” or “feelings” but “the words” of God (Exod 4:15). At no point does God let go of the prophetic process, and at no point is there a margin for error. God puts words into His prophet’s mouth and then He also promises to “be with” the prophet’s mouth as he speaks (Exod 4:15–16). In this, God guarantees that the prophet speaks perfectly. For this reason, the prophet can be called God’s own “mouth” (4:16).
		2. **God Denies that a True Prophet Can Mess Things Up:** Scripture teaches that true prophets deliver God’s own words and leave nothing out (Exod 7:2; Deut 18:18). Similarly, Peter denies that true prophecy is made from someone’s own thoughts or personal interpretation. Rather, he describes prophets as those who were “moved by the Holy Spirit” therefore “spoke from God” (2 Pet 1:20–21). For this reason, it makes sense why any prophet who prophesied falsehood was awarded the death penalty (Deut 13:1–5; 18:20). They were not true prophets of God.
1. ***True prophets were upright and orthodox.***
* Jesus taught that false prophets could be known “by their fruit” (Matt 7:15–20) and Peter defines false prophets by their wicked character (2 Pet 2:1–3). For that reason, it is important to evaluate not only their words but also their lifestyle.
* More importantly, prophets in both testaments are called to have their revelations tested for orthodoxy (Deut 13:1–5; 1 John 4:1).
	+ 1. The Bible repeatedly mentions the hearer’s need to see if “new revelation” contradicted “old revelation” (Rom 12:6; Acts 17:11; 1 Thess 5:20–22).
		2. This point is so important that, under the Old Covenant, even if a prophet successfully predicted the future and did a miracle—but counseled people *away* *from* orthodoxy—that prophet was to be killed (Deut 13:1–5).
1. ***True prophecy is distinct from providential statements.***
* Christians can have moments of stunning providence—a word said unexpectedly at just the right time, or things that are too strange to be “coincidences”—but it’s important that we keep these things in their proper categories so that we keep our dictionaries from getting muddled.
* But because, “prophecy” is defined for us in the Bible, we must “retain the pattern of sound words” (2 Tim 1:13) and use the term the way the Bible does. This means that we should avoid using the word “prophecy” as a label for providential advice or insights. The Holy Spirit can certainly bring the word to mind at just the right times (Col 3:16; Eph 5:18; 1 Cor 2:10–16; Ps 119:18), but that’s not “prophecy” (that’s bringing us to *remember* a prophecy). Moreover, God is certainly behind all things (Eph 1:11), and the world is gloriously full of His providential handiwork, but that doesn’t mean that timely advice or coincidental statements should be called “prophecies.”[[9]](#footnote-9)
1. ***Prophecy and apostleship constitute the foundation of the Church, so alongside apostleship, prophecy has fulfilled its purpose and ceased for the present age*.**
* As described above, the apostle Paul taught that the gifts/offices of apostles and prophets constituted the foundation upon which the Church was historically built. (*see Day 1 for more*).
* Since apostleship has demonstrably ceased, and Ephesians 2:20 links “apostles and prophets” to the historic period of the Church’s founding, we ought therefore to believe that prophecy has likewise ceased for this age.
* Of the four miraculous gifts mentioned, then, there is biblical warrant to believe that two of them have ceased.

Day 2 – Questions

1. Explain why we should believe that the definition of prophecy does not change between the Old and New Testaments.
2. What are two reasons to believe that true prophets are always 100% accurate?
3. How were Christians supposed to evaluate whether someone was a false prophet?
4. How does Ephesians 2:20 teach us that the gifts of apostles and prophets have ceased to be given for our time?

**Day 3 – The Gift of Tongues (Languages)**

* Next, there are 3 points to make when discussing the gift of tongues.
1. ***The gift of tongues is a subset of the gift of prophecy.***
* The Bible defines the gift of tongues as prophecy in a foreign language.
* You can see this when the gift of tongues is given at Pentecost. Peter turns to explain what’s happening, and he cites Joel 2 (2:16). When he lists out the miracles that Joel predicted in Joel 2, he names “visions,” “dreams,” and the ability to “prophesy” (2:17–18). “Tongues” are not mentioned, but the only legitimate tie to Joel’s words is that these people are prophesying.
	+ 1. Both miracles involve speaking, but the difference is simply the manner/language. “Prophecy” refers to miraculous reception and communication of *content*. “Tongues” refers to the same thing, but in another *language*. It’s a subset of prophecy. It’s “prophecy plus.” The emphasis is the manner, and the manner serves its own purpose.
* Notably, Paul compares and contrasts “tongues” and “prophecy” in 1 Corinthians 14, but a careful reading of the chapter demonstrates that Paul uses “prophecy” as shorthand to refer to revelation in the understood language of the people, whereas he uses “tongues” to refer to revelation that comes “in an *uninterpreted* tongue” [[10]](#footnote-10) (emphasis added). We know from Acts 2 that tongues is still a form of prophecy. Paul’s concern is more pastoral in that he wants it to be translated so people can receive the prophecy it contains. (*For more on how Paul distinguishes tongues and prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14, see Appendix 4*.)
1. ***The gift of tongues refers to someone’s miraculous ability to speak in a foreign language that they did not previously know*.**

Real Foreign Languages

* This can be understood simply from the word used for “tongue” in Scripture, and it’s foundational to this discussion.
* When the term is not referring to the physical tongue (Mark 7:33; Luke 1:64), it refers to a real language. This is why it can be called “the gift of languages.”
* For example, when Acts 2 records the miracle of speaking in “tongues” (2:4, 11; Gk. *glōssa*) it mentions how the onlookers heard them speaking in the “language” in which they were born (2:6, 8; the Greek term is *dialektos*, from which we get “dialect”). Because these terms are used interchangeably, it’s clear that “tongues” refers to real foreign languages.
* As further support of this, the book of Revelation uses the same word for “tongue” as Luke does in Acts 2 when he describes how Christ has ransomed a people “from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev 5:9). Once again, “tongue” refers to a real language—just like tribes and peoples and nations refer to real ethnicities and societies.
* Even in Corinthians, Paul uses the same language of “tongues” without any distinction from what occurs in Acts (1 Cor 12:10). And because Luke and Paul were close traveling companions (Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11), it would make sense that they would share a dictionary (or distinguish terms where necessary). But in the absence of anyone making a distinction, readers should believe that the gift of tongues in Corinth is the same as the gift of tongues in Acts. (*See Appendix 5 for more*.)

Previously Unknown to the Speaker

* + - Simply put, if the person speaking in tongues already knows the language, it defeats the need for this to be a miracle.
		- For Paul to speak in Latin or Greek is to “speak in tongues/languages,” but this is distinct from him having the *gift* of tongues—which would miraculously enable him to speak a language that he doesn’t already know (like English).
1. ***As a unique form of prophecy, the gift of tongues served as a unique authentication of the gospel to unbelieving Jews*.**

Tongues Among the Jews

* + God designed the gift of tongues to serve a unique purpose in redemptive history. And when we understand this purpose, we can better understand why God chose *this* to be the main miracle of Acts 2.
	+ God has already laid down the purpose for this gift in Isaiah 28, which Paul cites to explain the gift of tongues in 1 Corinthians. Paul writes “In the Law it is written, ‘BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO, THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME,’ says the Lord [cf. Isa 28:11]. So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers” (1 Cor 14:21–22).
		- In this verse, Paul says that God will one day “SPEAK” to His unbelieving people in strange tongues. In context, “THIS PEOPLE” refers to the Jewish people, and “STRANGE TONGUES” refers to foreign languages (non-Hebrew/Aramaic).
		- While some may suggest that the point of this gift is to befuddle and confuse the Jewish people who hear men speaking in languages they *don’t at all* understand, the emphasis of Acts is the opposite. The Jews who were present *did* understand the languages being spoken (Acts 2:6–8). And more than that, they heard these people speaking “of the mighty deeds of God” (Acts 2:11). So it’s clear that they understood what was being said. This is not about God trying to confuse His people.
		- The significance of this miracle, rather, was that God was speaking the gospel to His people (Israel) *in every available language that they knew*. Though His people were scattered abroad, He was miraculously getting the gospel into their language and bringing it to them at Pentecost so they could hear it. This is a huge demonstration of God’s compassion and love for His chosen people. He was calling for them to believe the gospel, and readers can see this when the unbelievers of Acts 2 ask “What does this mean?” (Acts 2:12) and Peter explains how this is what authenticates the gospel of Jesus, who is both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:29–40).
		- So, this gift is neither about the gospel transcending Judaism nor about confusing the Jewish people. This is about bringing them the gospel so that they might be saved. And as Luke goes on to explain, 3000 unbelieving Jews were saved on that day (2:41).

Tongues Among the Gentiles…*for* the Jews

* + **In Acts:** Understanding this purpose of the gift explains why the gift would be mentioned so frequently at the beginning of Acts where Luke’s main emphasis is the Jewish people, and less frequently later on where his main emphasis is the Gentiles. But even so, the gift is still mentioned at key points even later in Acts to reinforce the fact that God is working among the Gentiles *as a way of evangelizing the* *Jews*. His heart is still for Israel.
		- **Cornelius:** For example, the phenomenon of tongues appears in the episode of Cornelius (Acts 10:46), but it’s not *for* Cornelius. The context goes on to describe Peter going to bear *witness* of this miracle of tongues *to the Jews in Jerusalem* (Acts 11). It was for *them*.God could have empowered Cornelius to do any manner of miracle. If He just chose for Cornelius to prophesy, then it would have simply been beneficial for his own household, but the fact that God chose him to have the specific gift of *tongues* serves the added purpose of demonstrating His heart for the Jews. So once again, God is reminding His Jewish people of the gospel, and here He is even doing so through, of all people, the Gentiles. This is a lot like what Paul did as he set out to “magnify” his ministry among the Gentiles “if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen [the Jews] and save some of them.” (Rom 11:13–15).
* **In Corinthians:** The purpose of tongues—serving as a sign to unbelieving Jews—helps people understand why Paul would be so insistent on counseling the (mostly Gentile) Corinthians to avoid speaking in uninterpreted tongues (1 Cor 14:5).
	+ - The Corinthians were caught in the trap of simply “flexing” their fluency other languages when they should have been more concerned about edifying the brothers and sisters in their church.
		- And because tongues are a form of prophecy, the *content* of their tongues could edify the church if they were interpreted, which is why Paul calls for them not to speak unless it’s translated (1 Cor 14:5). Paul wants the gift to be exercised for the collective benefit, not for collective confusion. (*For a discussion on whether tongues were a private prayer language, see Appendix 6*.*)*
1. ***The gift of tongues has fulfilled its biblical purpose***
	* Because Ephesians 2:20 argues that the prophets and apostles have fulfilled their function as the foundation of the Church, and because tongues are simply a special form of prophecy, we can therefore conclude that tongues are no longer necessary on the world’s stage. The modern designation of “tongues” is far from the biblical definition, and so, to forbid the modern phenomena is not to violate Paul’s command not to forbid tongues (1 Cor 14:39), since we are not forbidding the *real* gift.

Day 3 – Questions

1. What can you point to in Acts 2 to show how the gift of tongues was a special ability to speak in unlearned foreign languages?
2. What is the purpose of the gift of tongues?
3. Where does the Bible teach that the gift of tongues is a subset of the gift of prophecy?

**Day 4 – The Gift of Healing**

* Lastly, five points should be noted about those who could miraculously heal others.
1. ***When miraculous healing was effected through a human agent, the healing was immediate and undeniable.***
	* Scripture demonstrates that those who were healed were healed quickly (Mark 1:42) completely (Matt 14:36), and undeniably (John 11:47–48).
	* Scripture also highlights the gift being used on those who had *obvious* health defects, like being “blind from birth” (John 9:1) or “lame from his mother’s womb” (Acts 3:2). Some were bleeding for *years* (Mark 5:25), and others were *visibly* leprous (Luke 17:11–15). Scripture doesn’t mention Jesus healing headaches, low-grade nausea, or people who felt depressed. That’s because the purpose of the *gift* of healing was to give *obvious* signs that God was at work, and thus, it was intended for people with obvious ailments.
2. ***Faith was not a requirement on the part of those who were healed.***
	* Many of those healed were *dead* (Matt 9:18–31; Luke 7:1–17; Acts 9:40). Others were demon-possessed (Matt 8:28–29; Acts 16:18). Sometimes only *part* of an entire group had faith (Luke 17:11–19). And one man was healed without knowing who Jesus was (John 5:12–13). This alone should prove that faith was not required for Christ and His people to heal.

**What About Someone’s Faith Healing Them?**

* + Granted, there are several instances in which Christ says, “Your faith has made you well” (cf. Mark 5:34) in reference to someone who got healed of a sickness, and these passages need to be read carefully in their contexts.
		1. The Greek word used for “made you well” is the same word for “saved,” and thus Jesus is teaching something about spiritual salvation. The context of the Gospels bears this out.[[11]](#footnote-11)
		2. When this language is used, readers can see that the author is showing how Christ is performing an outward miracle to *illustrate and authenticate* the inward spiritual healing of the soul that occurred when the person believed. The outward healing is an illustration of faith and a talking point to further demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah.
		3. For example, when the blind beggar Bartimaeus is healed, readers can see how Mark does not make this a paradigm for all Christians to get healed, but instead he highlights the irony of this happening in that place and at that time. Mark employs a wordplay on the topic of blindness: As Strauss says, “The prideful and self-righteous religious leaders reject the kingdom proclaimed and so receive blind eyes and deaf ears (4:11–12 [speaking metaphorically]), while blind Bartimaeus regains his [physical] sight by crying out to God for mercy.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Mark is showcasing the irony at work in this miracle. He is not making this out to be a promise that everyone everywhere with faith will be physically healed.
1. ***This gift of healing is distinguished from answered prayer for healing.***
	* God certainly heals through prayer—whether through medicine, your immune system, or miracles—but that is all a very different thing from the healing wrought by a miracle-*worker*. There is a critical distinction between healing and the *gift* of healing.
	* James helps us make this distinction because his letter speaks about healing but does not instruct the sick members of his audience to find a healer. Rather, he instructs his readers to go to the *elders* for *prayer* (Jas 5:14–15). The “gift of healing” is not mentioned.
	* If someone had the gift of healing and could heal on demand, this begs the question of why that person is not busy glorifying God by clearing out hospitals all over the world.
2. ***This gift authenticated messengers of new revelation.***
	* This has been noted for Christ (Matt 9:5) and His apostolic representatives after Him (Acts 3:6). Should this gift be present among others, the purpose is the same, and because miracles are among the “signs of an apostle” (2 Cor 12:12), then anyone else who had the gift would have received it through the laying on of hands by the apostles (like Philip, or the Corinthians).
3. ***This gift is not around today.***
	* Believers are instructed to pray for healing (Jas 5:14–15), but no minister of Christ today is seen healing on demand as we see in Scripture. The apostles who could perform these healings or pass that ability along have all passed from the scene—and Scripture teaches that there is no endless succession of those with apostolic power (cf. Acts 8:14–15)—Thus, this supernatural gift has passed along with the apostles.

# Day Four – Questions

1. Why was it important for biblical healing miracles to be instant, complete, and undeniable?
2. What passages help you to see that faith was not a requirement for healing?
3. How is the gift of healing different from answered prayer for healing?

**Day 5 – The Cessation of Miraculous Gifts**

* If someone reads the words of the Holy Spirit carefully, they will be able to see that the four extraordinary gifts outlined above are not present today. The phenomena that are marketed as modern presentations of these biblical gifts do not match the definitions laid down for us in the Bible, and beyond that, the Spirit’s teaching about the purpose of these gifts helps us to see why these gifts are not around like they used to be.

**Apostleship**

* + Apostleship is a spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11) that came with unique authenticating signs and miracles (2 Cor 12:12), including the other major miraculous gifts of prophecy (Acts 27:25), tongues (Acts 2:4; 1 Cor 14:18), and healing (Acts 5:12–16; 19:11–12).
	+ Because the “signs of an apostle” were the miraculous gifts (2 Cor 12:12), then that means other people who had these miraculous gifts (e.g. prophecy, tongues, healing, etc.) would received them from the hands of the apostles (cf. Acts 8; *with the exceptions of Acts 2 and 10, which were unique events with unique purposes. See the previous commentary for more explanation*).
	+ Importantly, there are three main reasons to support the idea that the gift of apostleship has ceased to be given.
		- There were three qualifications to be an apostle that no one meets today (1 Cor 9:1; cf. 15:3–9; Luke 6:13; Gal 1:1; 2 Cor 12:12).
		- Paul taught that the apostles had a limited window of service when they would serve as the foundation stones upon which the church was historically built (Eph 2:20–22).
		- Moreover, Paul called himself the “last of all” the apostles (1 Cor 15:5–9) and so we should not expect to see apostles today.
	+ Because the apostles have passed from the scene, we can understand why all the other miraculous gifts that served as the signs of an apostle went on pause as well.

**Prophecy**

* + The gift of prophecy can be defined simply as God putting His very words in the prophet’s mouth, and then guiding the prophet to speak those words perfectly (cf. Exod 4:11–16; 2 Pet 1:20–21).
	+ There is no evidence that the definition of prophecy changed in the New Testament, such that the church should tolerate or legitimize “fallible prophets.” Instead, Peter teaches in Acts 2 that New Testament prophecy is the same as Old Testament prophecy (Acts 2:16–18), so we expect it to be 100% accurate.
	+ Furthermore, and more relevant to the question at hand, Ephesians 2:20 links the prophets with the apostles and says that *together* they—in their persons—comprise the foundation stones upon which the church was historically built. Prophets were present early on after the ascension of Christ in order to be the foundation of revelation that the Church would thrive on today, but because they’ve fulfilled their purpose (like the apostles), this gift has gone on pause.

**Tongues**

* + The gift of tongues can also be called “the gift of languages” and it refers to someone’s miraculous ability to speak in an unlearned foreign language (cf. Acts 2:4, 6, 8, 11).
	+ The apostle Peter explains how the gift of tongues is a special form of the gift of prophecy (Acts 2:4–18), and for that reason alone, we can see that this gift has also gone on pause per Eph 2:20.
	+ The reason for this gift becomes clear when we realize that it was designed to fulfill a prophecy to Israel given in Isaiah 28, in which God said that He would speak the gospel to Jews in many foreign languages, and yet—as a nation—they still would not listen to Him (1 Cor 14:20–22). When this happens in Acts, some were saved (Acts 2:41), but not all. Many instead showcased a hardened rejection to God (cf. Acts 4:1–31) and that is why the gospel kept spreading to the Gentiles as Gentiles. But even so, when someone like Cornelius received the gift of the Spirit upon his conversion, God authenticated it with tongues as a way of telling the Jews back in Jerusalem that He was still after their salvation.

**Healing**

* + The gift of healing refers to someone’s miraculous ability to heal another person’s physical ailment(s) on demand.
	+ As was so often reiterated in Jesus’ ministry, the gift of healing served to authenticate the truth of the gospel as it was going forth (cf. Luke 5:17–26). Both Peter and Paul are said to perform miraculous healings (cf. Acts 5:12–16; 19:11–12), and so we know this is one of the signs of an apostle and that, along with the apostles themselves, it has ceased.
	+ To those who would argue that the gift continues today, it’s important to see from the Bible how this gift is distinct from answered prayer. We are called to pray for the sick in James 5, but that passage says nothing about healers, and so we know the healing of James 5 is distinct from the kind that comes through healers—those who could readily clear out a hospital in much the same way that Jesus cleared sickness out of an entire crowd in Capernaum.

**Conclusion**

Living upon the foundation of the apostles and New Testament prophets (Eph 2:20), being continually edified by their biblical writings (Eph 2:20), we are instructed to turn our attention to “the prophetic word” (2 Pet 1:19) that they gave us and be sure to “retain the pattern of sound words” (2 Tim 1:13) by upholding the biblical definitions of these gifts. In this way, we can better worship the Lord “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24) and appreciate what He did in the church’s early days to authenticate the advance of the gospel to us at the ends of the earth.

# Day Five - Review

* Review any previous day(s) of your choosing.
* Try to memorize the contents summarized on Day 5.

**Appendix 1 – A Survey of the Different Views**

1. The Pentecostal View
	1. “*Pentecostal* refers to any denomination or group that traces its historical origin back to the Pentecostal revival that began in the United States in 1901, and that holds the following doctrines: (1) All the gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the New Testament are intended for today; (2) baptism in the Holy Spirit is an empowering experience subsequent to conversion and should be sought by Christians today; and (3) when baptism in the Holy Spirit occurs, people will speak in tongues as a “sign” that they have received this experience. Pentecostal groups usually have their own distinct denominational structures, among which are the Assemblies of God, the Church of God in Christ, and many others.”[[13]](#footnote-13)
	2. “Pentecostals often believe that the doctrine of the atonement includes healing; that is, Christ’s sacrifice healed us physically as well as spiritually. Thus, we are healed, and any sickness is directly due to sin. Many of these groups believe that the gifts of the apostolic age continued but were squelched by the organized church due to a lack of belief in the miraculous. Others hold to a “latter-day rain” theory; that is, the gifts stopped until the end times and are now recurring in order to prepare for the Lord’s coming…The success of this movement of Pentecostal ideas into non-Pentecostal churches has resulted in a continuing worldwide expansion of charismatic ideas and practices.”[[14]](#footnote-14)
2. The Charismatic View
	1. “*Charismatic*, on the other hand, refers to any groups (or people) that trace their historical origin to the charismatic renewal movement of the 1960s and 1970s and that seek to practice all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament (including prophecy, healing, miracles, tongues, interpretation, and distinguishing between spirits). Among charismatics there are differing viewpoints on whether baptism in the Holy Spirit is subsequent to conversion and whether speaking in tongues is a sign of baptism in the Spirit. Charismatics by and large have refrained from forming their own denominations, but view themselves as a force for renewal within existing Protestant and Roman Catholic churches. There is no representative charismatic denomination in the United States today…”[[15]](#footnote-15)
3. The Third-Wave View
	1. “In the 1980s a third renewal movement arose, a movement called *The Third Wave* by missions professor C. Peter Wagner at Fuller Seminary (he referred to the Pentecostal renewal as the first wave of the Holy Spirit’s renewing work in the modern church, and the charismatic movement as the second wave). Third wave people encourage the equipping of all believers to use New Testament spiritual gifts today and say that the proclamation of the gospel should ordinarily be accompanied by “signs, wonders, and miracles,” according to the New Testament pattern. They teach, however, that baptism in the Holy Spirit happens to all Christians at conversion and that subsequent experiences are better called “fillings” or “empowerings” with the Holy Spirit. Though they believe the gift of tongues exists today, they do not emphasize it to the extent that Pentecostals and charismatics do.”[[16]](#footnote-16)
4. The Open-But-Cautious View
	1. “There is yet another position, held by a number of evangelicals who think of themselves as belonging to none of these groups…They are open to the possibility of miraculous gifts today, but they are concerned about the possibility of abuses that they have seen in groups that practice these gifts. They do not think speaking in tongues is ruled out by Scripture, but they see many modern examples as not conforming to scriptural guidelines; some also are concerned that it often leads to divisiveness and negative results in churches today. They think churches should emphasize evangelism, Bible study, and faithful obedience as keys to personal and church growth, rather than miraculous gifts. Yet they appreciate some of the benefits that Pentecostal, charismatic, and Third Wave churches have brought to the evangelical world, especially a refreshing contemporary tone in worship and a challenge to renewal in faith and prayer…we have called it the *open but cautious* position. It represents a broad middle ground of evangelicals who do not fall in one of these other camps.”[[17]](#footnote-17)
5. The Cessationist View
	1. “*Cessationism* is the view that the sign gifts (e.g., the performing of miracles, gifts of healing, speaking in tongues) and the revelatory gifts (i.e., the reception and proclamation of new revelation from God) passed away when the foundation stage of the church ended. Those kinds of miraculous phenomena did not continue beyond the apostolic era and thus have not been given to believers since. Miraculous gifts will not return until the tribulation period…during the ministry of the two witnesses (cf. Rev. 11:3–11). In contrast to cessationism, the *charismatic* or *continuationist* position asserts that the miraculous and revelatory gifts are still in operation today.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

**Appendix 2 – Why Apostleship Is a Spiritual Gift**

* In his discussion of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:1), Paul says that “there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit” (12:4) and that “the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills” (12:11). He then explains this idea of gifting through the analogy of a body and how a body has members with different functions (12:12–27).
* Then, when he lists the different members of the body who have different functions, he writes, “And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues” (12:28).
* Contextually then, apostleship ranks first on the list of spiritual gifts.
* Paul goes on to make this even more clear when he stresses the uniqueness of each gift in asking, “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all translate? But you earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I will yet show you a more excellent way” (12:29–31). When Paul speaks about “the greater gifts,” this grammatically refers back to the list he just gave where he ranked them—and that list includes “apostles.”
	+ Furthermore, in Ephesians, Paul says that Christ, upon His ascension (John 7:39; 14:16–17; Acts 1:8), “gave gifts to men” (Eph 4:8). Paul then catalogues the gifts, and once again “apostles” makes first on the list (4:11).
	+ For these reasons, we understand apostleship to be a spiritual gift.

**Appendix 3 – Why No Christian Prophet Was Fallible**

* Noteworthy conservative scholars have recently sought to legitimize the idea of fallible prophets existing within contemporary Christian circles.
* Since 1977, the unique view of prominent systematic theologian, Wayne Grudem—which states that non-apostolic, Christian prophecy could include an admixture of truth and error—has resounded throughout circles of evangelicalism.[[19]](#footnote-19)
* The arguments are largely twofold:

**The Unique “Authority” of Apostolic Prophecy?**

* + First, continuationist scholars have asserted that the New Testament isolates apostolic prophecy as having been unparalleled “authority.”
		- For example, Grudem states that, since the apostolic prophets could write Scripture (1 Cor 14:37; 2 Pet 3:16; 1 John 4:6), the apostolic agency clearly had the exclusive, God-given guarantee of prophesying infallibly and with “the authority of Scripture.”[[20]](#footnote-20)
		- Similarly, D. A. Carson states that since the apostles only pointed saints to Scripture (cf. 1 Thess 5:27) and never to non-apostolic prophecy, non-apostolic prophets therefore “never enjoyed the authority status of apostles.”[[21]](#footnote-21)
		- In essence then, Grudem and Carson would suggest that the prophecies of the apostles were “more divine” than others, and because of that, they were guaranteed to be true. Others, by contrast, were “less divine” and so perhaps the prophet messed up his message.
		- However, in response to that, the use of the word “authority” needs to be defined. We would argue that Grudem and Carson’s reasoning mistakenly conflates prophecy’s authoritative *essence* (e.g. more divine/less divine) with prophecy’s varying authoritative *scope* (e.g. it is intended to be canonized in Scripture for all future saints vs. being intended simply for a limited group for a limited time).[[22]](#footnote-22) God is the King of the whole world, and His word must be obeyed, but that does not mean that every one of His words is intended for every individual of all time.
		- Scriptureitself distinguishes between the authoritative scope of different prophecies by indicating that not all prophecies were written down and preserved for all future saints (cf. Num 11:25; 1 Kgs 16:7; 18:13; Acts 15:32).[[23]](#footnote-23) But this does not mean that they were therefore “less divine” or “less authoritative” revelations from God. Rather, *all* of God’s words carry the full weight of His divine authority behind them.[[24]](#footnote-24) The difference is not in the essential authority of the revelation, but in the intended authoritative *scope* of the revelation.
		- The revelation of the apostles was unique in its “reach” or in its “scope” because their prophetic content collectively comprised all canonical truth necessary for the Church age (John 16:13). God used them to write Scripture for everyone. It was a difference in scope, not in whether or not they were speaking with “more divinity” in their words.
		- So, the fact that the apostles pointed people to Scripture (Col 4:16; 2 Thess 2:15) should not be explained by saying that the apostles’ biblical prophecies were “more divine” than non-apostolic prophecies, but it is better explained by noting how Scripture is uniquely preservable as a written document.[[25]](#footnote-25)

**The Account of an Inaccurate Christian Prophecy?**

* Second, continuationists have put forth the idea that the New Testament indicates that non-apostolic, Christian prophecy could (and did) contain error.[[26]](#footnote-26)
	+ Succinctly put, God was allegedly no longer with the *mouths* of these prophets (like He was for Moses; cf. Exod 4:12) but was now only giving impressions to their *minds* (cf. 1 Cor 14:30).[[27]](#footnote-27)
	+ As a result, some Christian “prophecy” then became “merely human words” that were non-binding but still Spirit-given “guidance.”[[28]](#footnote-28)
	+ To support this idea, continuationists point directly to the prophet Agabus (Acts 21:10–11) as a glaring instance wherein a Christian prophecy “proved inaccurate.”[[29]](#footnote-29)
	+ After all, Agabus predicted that the Jews themselves would “bind” Paul’s hands and feet and “deliver him” to the Gentiles, but, it is argued, only the Romans bound Paul (Acts 21:33), and the Jews never consensually handed Paul over.[[30]](#footnote-30) So, did Agabus get it wrong?
	+ No. Numerous scholars have noted that, while the Romans eventually bound Paul in chains, attention to the fact that the Jews “dragged” Paul a significant distance (Acts 21:30) does not preclude or deny but rather indicates the likelihood that the Jews bound Paul’s hands and feet “in some sense.”[[31]](#footnote-31)
	+ Moreover, Paul⎯the subject and recipient of Agabus’ prophecy⎯details his own transfer into Roman hands using the same word for “deliver” (Gk. παραδίδωμι) as Agabus, even calling himself a “prisoner” of his countrymen (Acts 28:17).[[32]](#footnote-32)
	+ Beyond this, Agabus is introduced as a proven prophet of God (Acts 11:28) who claimed to speak the very words of the Holy Spirit Himself (Acts 21:11). If Agabus got it wrong, it seems that neither Paul nor Luke nor Agabus knew it.
	+ Instead, in light of how Scripture backs up the legitimacy of this prophecy, we should understand that Agabus nailed it. There’s no warrant to think that he didn’t.

**Appendix 4 – How Paul Uses “Tongues” as Shorthand for “Uninterpreted Tongues” — And Why That Matters**

* As mentioned above, Peter defines the gift of tongues as “prophecy” in Acts 2. However, Paul’s language in 1 Corinthians 14 could be understood to say that he does not understand tongues to be prophecy because he contrasts “tongues” and “prophecy” repeatedly throughout the chapter.
* However, since we know that Peter’s not wrong, the simple solution is that Paul is using “tongues” to refer to *uninterpreted tongues*. The context makes this clear.
	+ For example, Paul begins the whole discussion by saying that prophesying is superior to tongues because people can understand prophecy, but “no one understands” tongues (14:2). And yet, we know this must refer to uninterpreted tongues, because he says shortly after this that “greater is the one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying” (14:5). So we know that if tongues are interpreted, people can understand them.
	+ In verses 6–8, Paul says that uninterpreted tongues can’t be understood, and so they don’t edify because no one knows how they should respond to them. Uninterpreted tongues are like meaningless sounds from instruments.
	+ In verses 9–12, Paul says that our tongues should be used for speech that is clear and understandable, so that people do not think we are barbarians.
	+ In verses 13-19, Paul says that the one who speaks in the tongue (e.g. Mandarin) should pray that he may also interpret, and he goes on to describe how his “spirit” can pray in the tongue but his “mind”—which makes that tongue intelligible to other people—is not being fruitful unless it is employed to help translate so that others can understand it. This is why Paul says, “in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in an [uninterpreted] tongue” (14:19). And this is also why any outsider who joins the church and hears uninterpreted tongues will accuse them of being (prepare for the wordplay) “out of your mind” (literal translation of 14:23). The tongues speaker knows what *he* is saying, but if Eric the interpreter is out sick that Sunday, then the tongues speaker should pray in such a way that engages his mind and edifies other people in the church, lest he be “out of his mind.”
* All this matters a great deal because it helps us to understand that the miracle of tongues in Corinth was the same kind of miracle that one finds in Acts. Many from charismatic circles have stated that the Corinthian tongues are different, but a simple reading of Acts and 1 Corinthians together reveals the same language used for the same miracles.

**Appendix 5 – Are the Tongues in Corinth Different than in Acts?**

* Sometimes it is suggested that the tongues spoken in Corinth could not be known languages on the grounds that there was a need for someone with the miraculous gift of “interpretation” (1 Cor 14:5).
* It is thought that perhaps the gift of tongues in Corinth were the “tongues…of angels” (13:1) or could refer to ecstatic, unintelligible speech that required a miracle to interpret (like what is claimed for those who defend the phenomenon of “modern tongues”).[[33]](#footnote-33)
	+ However, this logic doesn’t follow. Note three observations:
		1. The need for a miraculous *interpreter* only demonstrates that the *audience* is unfamiliar with the language of the tongues-speaker (unlike the foreigners in Acts 2:7–11, who readily understood the languages being spoken).[[34]](#footnote-34) The need for a miraculous interpreter does nothing to require us to think that the tongues-speaker must be speaking some kind of ecstatic, unintelligible speech.
		2. Beyond that, the Greek word used for this gift of “interpretation” refers consistently to the translation of *linguistic* *communication* (in Luke-Acts, no less, cf. Luke 24:27; Acts 9:36).
		3. Lastly, Paul is even concerned to make sure that the Corinthians interpret their messages that come in tongues because he wants them to avoid what amounts to *the same kind of* accusations that Peter and the others received by those who didn’t understand what was going on (1 Cor 14:23 with Acts 2:12–13, 15).

**Question: But do the “Tongues of Angels” Refer to Unintelligible Speech?**

* **A Case to Be Made:** *In 1 Corinthians 13:1, when Paul is describing the gift of tongues, he mentions the possibility of speaking in the “tongues of angels.” Some could use this reference to suggest the possibility of speaking in elevated, ecstatic, and unintelligible language. After all, Paul elsewhere describes how he was himself “caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words” in heaven (2 Cor 12:4). Is this the gift of tongues?*

**Answer: No; The “Tongues of Angels” Refer to An Actual Angelic Language**

* There are several issues with understanding the tongues of angels to refer to unintelligible gibberish, and all of them ignore the biblical context into which Paul is speaking.
	+ First, the context into which Paul mentions “the tongues…of angels” is hyperbolic (note the underlined portions).
		- He says, “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels…If I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (1 Cor 13:1–2).
		- In these verses, Paul is not saying that the Corinthians *are* speaking in the tongues of angels—just like he’s not saying that he knows “all mysteries” or has “all faith.” Instead, he’s giving an extreme hypothetical (note his use of “if”) and an extreme example of a miracle that proves his point about the *even-more-supreme* importance of love. The text of does not prove that the Corinthians *were* speaking in anything other than foreign human languages.
	+ Second, in 2 Corinthians, when Paul mentions the “inexpressible words” that he heard in heaven, he then goes on to explain what he means by “inexpressible” with the next phrase, “which a man is not permitted to speak” (2 Cor 12:4).[[35]](#footnote-35) Paul is not saying that he heard heavenly gibberish. He is saying that he heard what he was not allowed to say.
		- But even if we assume—for the sake of argument—that the tongues of angels *were* being spoken in Corinth, and we add to that the assumption that the tongues of angels were the same “inexpressible words” which Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians, then every tongues-speaker in Corinth would have been in sin. After all, anyone speaking words “which a man is not permitted to speak” is doing what the apostle Paul would call “a no-no.” The suggestion that the tongues of angels in 1 Corinthians are the inexpressible words of 2 Corinthians runs into a flat contradiction.

**Appendix 6 – The Use of Tongues as a Private Prayer Language?**

**Question: Does the Bible Speak of Tongues as a “Private Prayer Language”?**

* **A Case to Be Made:** *When Paul speaks about the use of tongues in Corinth, he says things like how “one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God” (14:2), and how “one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but one who prophesies edifies the church” (14:4). He also speaks about how he could “pray in a tongue” (14:14), and how, if there was no translator present, “let him speak to himself and to God” (14:28). So, does this mean that tongues are intended, at least in part, as a private prayer language?*

**Answer: No—not in the sense that Charismatics understand it.**

* Each of these statements should be taken in turn.
* **14:2 –** When Paul says that “one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God” (14:2), he is not speaking about the use of tongues as a private prayer language. In that part of the chapter, he is putting his finger on the *problem* that he wants to address in the Corinthian church. This is clear form the next phrase, “for no one understands” (14:2). In other words, when someone stands up and starts speaking Mandarin—a language nobody in Corinth knows, and there’s no translator—only that person and God understand what he or she is saying. And as Paul goes on to say, this is not a proper use of the gift of tongues.
* **14:4 –** When Paul then says the “one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but one who prophesies edifies the church” (14:4), he is comparing the benefit of uninterpreted tongues with the benefit of a readily-understandable prophecy (e.g. Mandarin prophecy vs. Greek prophecy). Because tongues are a form of prophecy, the tongues-speaker is receiving some kind of revelation that benefits him, and so he “edifies himself,” but to speak Mandarin over a Greek congregation is *not* edifying to them. Instead, the tongue-prophecy should be translated so that everyone can understand it in their own language and be edified. That’s why Paul says, “When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has a translation. **Let all things be done for edification**” (14:26).
* **14:14 –** When Paul talks about how he could “pray in a tongue” (14:14) the context clarifies that this is a public prayer that the church would hear (vv. 13–17). But if they didn’t understand it, because it wasn’t translated, then Paul asks how someone would say “the ‘Amen.’” That’s the problem, praying in Mandarin over a Greek congregation—and not translating it—doesn’t help anyone but the person praying. So therefore it’s not a good demonstration of the gift.
* **14:28 –** The last thing Paul says is that if no translator is present, then “let [the tongues speaker] speak to himself and to God” (14:28). This is as close as you get to Paul endorsing the private use of tongues, but it’s not an endorsement of closet prayers. When Paul says this, he is guiding a church that was prone to misusing the gift in public. He says that if there’s no interpreter during the time when the church is assembled (vv. 26–28), then it’s better that the tongues speaker keep his mouth shut than open it and add confusion to the service. This is the kind of mentality that should govern the people—as opposed to hastily standing up to flex one’s gift. So even if the speaker isn’t speaking out loud, he or she would be able to state the prophecy to God in Mandarin, for example, (14:2). This is not exactly a “prayer” since the content of the speech is a prophecy given by God, but more importantly, this is not the intended use of the gift. The gift is not intended for closet prayers any more than God wants there to be closet apostles. Rather, Paul calls them to “Let all things be done for [corporate] edification” (14:26).

**Appendix 7 – Christ’s Atonement and The Promise of Healing**

**Question: Does Isaiah 53 Promise Physical Healing to Every Christian Today?**

* + **A Case to Be Made:** *Isaiah 53 records that Messiah would bear our “griefs” and “sorrows,” and the words can also be translated “sicknesses” and “pains.” The New Testament even references this passage to have been fulfilled when Christ healed those who were physically ill and demon-possessed (Matt 8:14–17). Moreover, the next verse ties healing to the death of Christ when it says, “by His wounds we are healed” (Isa 53:5). So, should we believe that the death of Christ means that every Christian should expect to be healed of sickness this side of glory (as Pentecostals teach)?*

**Answer: No; The New Testament Authors Use Isaiah 53 Differently than Pentecostals**

* + - **Isaiah 53:4**
			* First, Isaiah 53:4—which speaks about Messiah bearing our sicknesses and pains—is picked up by Matthew in His Gospel of Matthew because it fits his purpose for writing: To present Jesus as the Messiah-King who has come to offer the Kingdom to His people Israel. Matthew is all about “the Kingdom.”
			* Matthew’s angle is important because the Isaiah has already foretold that the Millennial Kingdom of Christ would be a time of amazing health (cf. Isa 65:20).
			* Therefore, when Christ comes to present Himself as the King of the Millennial Kingdom, it makes sense how He would heal people to give them signs that the King of the Kingdom is moving among them. The signs serves as previews of the Kingdom and a further authentication of the King.
			* During the future Kingdom, everyone will be healthy, and so it’s no wonder that Matthew skillfully states this tie to Isaiah 53:4 right after saying that Jesus healed “***all*** who were ill” (Matt 8:16). A Jewish reader of Matthew’s Gospel would see this and recognize that Jesus is the future King of the Millennial Kingdom, for He had fully eradicated sickness among these people.
			* However, importantly, Matthew goes on to write about how Jesus was rejected as Israel’s Messiah-King, and so therefore the Kingdom has been postponed to a future time (Matt 13:10–17). The fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4, then, served the purpose of previewing the potential Kingdom to come, but because Messiah was rejected, this promise is not realized among the church today.
			* Matthew’s writing even suggests that many of those who were healed in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4 were never believers (Matt 11:23–24), and so, if that is the case, this cannot be directly applied as a unique promise to believers.
		- **Isaiah 53:5**
			* In response to the idea that Isaiah 53:5 teaches that Christ’s atonement purchases physical healing for believers now, there are two points to see:
1. The apostle Peter cites this verse in the New Testament and uses it in reference to the spiritual healing that we receive upon conversion (1 Pet 2:24–25). He does not mention physical healing now, which would have been easy to do. But the verse includes at least spiritual healing and not just physical healing.
2. Isaiah has used the term “healed” elsewhere to refer to holistic healing (spiritual and physical)—*in context of eschatological renewal* (Isa 6:10; 19:22; 30:26; 57:19).
	1. “Numerous people have taken this verse to refer specifically to physical healing. Although this verse is dealing with spiritual problems, the Hebrews tended to think holistically, not creating a strong division between spiritual and physical healing because they were tied together. The clearest connection between these two types of healings is in eschatological texts that interrelate God’s final salvation with both aspects of healing. Thus atonement through the forgiveness of sins will result in the eschatological healing of heart and body (25:7–8; 26:19; 30:19; 35:10; 51:11; 65:19).”[[36]](#footnote-36)
	2. This makes sense of the close connection to verse 4 (which refers to Kingdom healing previewed in the Gospels.
	3. It also makes sense of the context of Isaiah 53 which, as some have argued,[[37]](#footnote-37) is a prophecy of what the saved nation of Israel will say in the Kingdom as they look *back* on their history of how they handled Messiah. The vantage point is from Israel in the Kingdom, not from Gentile Christians today.
	4. So, if Isaiah 53:5 is intended to refer to holistic healing being purchased for us by Christ at the cross, then it must refer to the “healing” that is ours in the resurrection—in the future Millennial Kingdom—for Paul has already said elsewhere that “our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor 4:16). He also says that as long as we are in fallen bodies, “we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven” (2 Cor 5:2). The time that we receive truly healthy bodies will be in the Millennial Kingdom, not now.
1. Waldron, *To Be Continued: Are the Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. We readily admit that not everyone who believes in the continuation of these gifts does so for the same reasons. The same goes for cessationists. But regardless, the only view that we should all aspire to is that of Scripture. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Credit for this approach goes to Nathan Busenitz. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For example: <https://www.christianpost.com/voices/michael-browns-nar-straw-man-is-the-new-apostolic-reformation-just-a-conspiracy-theory-or-something-more.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Contra Piper in “[What is Prophecy in the New Covenant](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiW3bjY8c2BAxV9I0QIHWaxB3wQwqsBegQIDhAF&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3Dsf1cdXdgFxU&usg=AOvVaw0ZDrqYAhfwj-vgYTTDNNTN&opi=89978449)?” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Edgar, quoting Gundry, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Williams, [*Mark*](https://ref.ly/logosres/9781535905985?ref=Bible.Mk5.34&off=454&ctx=of+God%E2%80%9D+(10:23%E2%80%9325).+~The+primary+mng.+of+), 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Strauss, [*Mark*](https://ref.ly/logosres/exegcomm62mk?ref=Bible.Mk10.46-52&off=20036&ctx=d+of+him+(2:14%E2%80%9317).+~The+prideful+and+sel), 473. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Grudem, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, 12–13. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Grudem, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Grudem, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, 11–12. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Grudem, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, 12–13. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 804. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. See Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988), 14, 63–64, 67–134. The footprint of Grudem’s view encompasses various evangelical scholars such as D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1987), 93–100, C. Samuel Storms, “A Third Wave View,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?: 4 Views*, Zondervan Counterpoints Series, eds. Stanley N. Gundry and Wayne A. Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 207–12, and Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God: How God Speaks Today Through Prophecies, Dreams, and Visions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 282. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 14, 31, 46, 56–57, 63–64. He asks, “if [non-apostolic] prophets were speaking the very words of God, is it not reasonable to suppose that many of these words would have been recorded and preserved for us as Scripture?” (pp. 56–57). He later concludes that “[non-apostolic] prophets… did not speak with a divine authority of actual words… [their prophecy] had only the authority of the merely human words in which it was spoken” (p. 87). He later clarifies, “The distinction I... am attempting to make... [is in] the type of authority that attaches to the words spoken in a prophecy. When the prophecy is spoken (or written) by an apostle, then the words have unique authority⎯absolute divine authority... That is why the apostles’ words can be written down and included in Scripture⎯they have the authority of Scripture. But such absolute authority simply does not apply to the words of ordinary prophets in local New Testament congregations” (pp. 63–64). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Carson’s quote goes farther than Grudem’s and also conflates what F. David Farnell sees as social prestige of the prophet and the source-authority of an utterance. For a detailed treatment of the need to recognize nuances in the English term “authority,” specifically in relation to the social hierarchy of Old and New Testament prophets, see F. David Farnell, “The New Testament Prophetic Gift: Its Nature and Duration” (ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1990), 237–43. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Contra W. A. Grudem, “Prophecy, Prophets,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 702–3; The Mosaic Law is another case-in-point for the distinction between authoritative essence and scope, for the Law is binding upon some and not others (Rom 3:19; Gal 5:18), while yet remaining God’s word (Lev 10:11) and thus a channel for His absolute, essential authority to be expressed through (Rom 2:12–16).

Granted, numerous cessationists have overstated their own case by arguing that the presence of extra-biblical, inspired, authoritative, and infallible revelation automatically threatens the bounds of the *biblical* canon. See, for example, Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “A Cessationist View,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?: 4 Views*, eds. Stanley N. Gundry and Wayne A. Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 45–47; 63. Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, 278–81, hangs his argument for continuationism on how such overstatements are erroneous (and, in fact, he rightly clarifies the uniqueness of Scripture’s authoritative *scope*). However, one can see that it is not intrinsic authority but divine *intent* that predicates inscripturation and (biblical) canonicity (cf. John 20:30–31). See also Robert L. Saucy, “An Open but Cautious Response to Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?: 4 Views*, eds. Stanley N. Gundry and Wayne A. Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 69–70. Saucy argues that Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians, who actively received genuine prophecy, “not to exceed what is written” (1 Cor 4:6), indicates that all prophecy does not necessarily “somehow relativize or add to the canon.” [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See alsoFarnell, “The New Testament Prophetic Gift,” 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. For a lengthier discussion clarifying the need for a written canon, see John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 120–21. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 14. He plainly says that this prophecy was “a very human⎯sometimes partially mistaken⎯report of something the Holy Spirit brought to… mind”; Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Storms, “A Third Wave View,” 209. “God *reveals* something to the mind of the prophet not found in Scripture… Since God never makes a mistake, we know that this revelation is true and free from error. But the gift of prophecy does not guarantee the infallible *transmission* of that revelation. The prophet may *perceive* the revelation imperfectly, he may *understand* it imperfectly, and consequently he may *deliver* it imperfectly.” Emphasis in original; Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 97–99, 161; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1056–57. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1055; Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 14, 244–52. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Storms, “A Third Wave View,” 208; Also, Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 98; Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 96–102. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 96–97. Paul was “*forcibly rescued*” from the Jews. Emphasis in original. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Thomas R. Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit: Affirming the Fullness of God’s Provision for Spiritual Living* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 82; Also, John MacArthur, *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2013), 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. MacArthur, *Strange Fire*, 122, makes the apt point that “prisoner” again implies “one who is bound”; Also, Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise*, 82; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1053, says Paul’s testimony refers to the events of Acts 23. Yet, he neglects that Paul was there *already* and *continually* in Roman hands (22:30; 23:10). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. For example, Poythress referred to the modern practice of tongues as a sort of “*coded* language” that is nonetheless “impossible” for any linguist to test or decipher without a “supernatural ‘key.’” Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Garland, [*2 Corinthians*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nac29?ref=Bible.2Co12.2-5&off=10295&ctx=es+(cp.+1+Cor+2:9).+~Was+it+impossible+to), 516; Also, this is much like what happened with Daniel, who could hear but not tell of a certain revelation that he received (Dan 12:4, 9). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Smith, [*Isaiah 40-66*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nac15b?art=fn.8.379). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. This view has been popularized by John MacArthur. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)