



THE HOLY SPIRIT

The neglected Person of the Godhead



Miraculous Spiritual gifts Intellectual gifts

Gifts that have to do with 'intellectual powers'.

a. Knowledge.

b. Wisdom.

a. Knowledge.

Knowledge, 'gnosis' is a knowing, knowledge. This gift is distinguished from the 'word of wisdom' in that information, 'knowledge' is in contrast with judgment and practicality of knowledge. The one with this gift had knowledge and the one with wisdom made application of that knowledge.

b. Wisdom.

Wisdom, 'sophia' is sound judgment, intelligence, practical wisdom. Individuals were given the gift of wisdom, and all other gifts, by being 'moved 'tell or announce' by the Holy Spirit', 2 Peter 1:21. The Holy Spirit simply told these people what to say and do.

Thaumaturgic gifts

Gifts involving 'miraculous powers'. 'Thauma' meaning 'wonder', thus, acts which produce wonder.

a. Powerful faith.

b. The gift of healing.

c. The Working of miracles.

a. Powerful faith.

This would not be the faith of Romans 5:1. This is a miraculous faith that enabled one to 'remove mountains', 1 Corinthians 13:2 / Matthew 17:20 / James 5:14+15.

b. The gift of healing.

I want us to consider the gift of healing and the claims of those who profess to exercise this gift today.

1. I would like you to think about the confusion, which we find in the religious world, on the subject of healing.

2. Then, I want you to think about the unscriptural, false and misleading claims that are often made by so-called 'faith healers' today.

3. Then we shall see what the true gift of healing meant in New Testament times.

4. Finally, how the gift was received and how long it was meant to last. Let us clearly understand what we are talking about.

We are talking about healing, not from the medical standpoint, but from the religious standpoint.

The religious world uses different names. It is sometimes called divine healing, or spiritual healing or faith healing. In fact, none of these descriptions is really accurate.

a. For instance, to call it divine healing is much too vague and too loose a description because examples of 'divine healing', that is, example of people being healed by God, can be found in the Scriptures centuries before spiritual gifts were bestowed. Elijah and Elisha and others healed people miraculously.

b. And to call it spiritual healing misses the point, because the ailments which the gift of healing dealt with were unmistakably physical, not spiritual.

c. And as for faith healing. When so-called 'faith-healers', fail to heal the sick people who come to them, they always claim that the failure occurs because the faith of the sick person is not strong enough, or that they lack faith altogether. But the gift of healing had nothing whatsoever to do with 'faith' healing. Healing was bestowed whether faith was present or not.

So what precisely are we looking at?

We are **not** asking if God **can** heal because we know He can. We are **not** asking if God **does** heal because we know He **does**.

We are **not** asking if God heals in answer to prayer, because we know that **James 5:15** tell us to pray for the sick. We are **not** discussing healing in response to **faith** which is, in fact, very closely related to healing in response to **prayer**.

What we are asking today is, **are there people who possess the gift of healing, which was bestowed by the Holy Spirit in New Testament times?** This is something I would like you to think about. **Do today's so-called 'faith healers' possess and demonstrate the gift of the Spirit, the gift of healing?**

You know, it is positively amazing how many confuse the **gift** of healing with **faith healing**, when the two are very different indeed. For example, I have a report concerning a healing campaign, which featured a man named **Theo Jones**.

At one of his meetings, well! Let the report speak for itself. **'There was a totally blind woman led in by her husband. You are not believing, sister,'** Jones warned her. **'Your faith is weak'**, the blind woman was hustled off the platform immediately. Now, I imagine you **know** what that **really** meant!

Faced with a **real** physical problem and not some psychosomatic, or neurological, or undiagnosed, or unproven ailment, **Mr. Jones** was absolutely **'powerless'**, and therefore tried to cover his impotence by brazenly accusing the poor woman of not having sufficient faith. The element that was lacking in that case was **not** faith, **but** power. **The man had no power.**

Note in **James 5:14+15** and **Matthew 17:14-20**, it's about the person doing the miraculous healing and not the person needing healed.

If we turn to **Acts 5:12-16**, we **see** the miraculous power in action. Many wonders and signs were done among the people by the hands of the apostles. They carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on bed and pallets, so that, as Peter came by, his shadow might fall on some of them.

Furthermore, people of the area around Jerusalem, **'brought the sick, those afflicted with unclean were ALL healed'**.

If we look at **Acts 19:11+12**, we see that the same thing happened in Paul's ministry. God did **extraordinary miracles** by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs and aprons were carried from him to the sick and the diseases left them.

You see that when a person possessed the **'gift of healing'** it didn't matter if the patient had **great** faith, or **faith**, or **little** faith or **no** faith at all! But the **power** which the Spirit of God had granted.

I repeat that, what produced the **'healing'** was **'gift possessed by the healer'**, and it didn't depend on the faith of the sufferer. This is why we say that **'faith'** healing and the **'gift'** of healing are very different matters. Needless to say, when people are suffering severe illness they are understandably willing to try anything in order to obtain a cure.

And the trust and confidence they demonstrate in so-called **'faith healers'**, who mercilessly take advantage of them, are really pathetic.

Putting it bluntly, most of what passes as **'faith healing'**, in modern **'faith healing campaigns'** is fraudulent and false. Some of the people who conduct the campaigns may be sincerely mistaken in their belief but the vast majority of faith-healing cases have proved to be frauds.

People who are prepared even to **lie** in order to create a reputation for themselves. And, at the same time to make money for them under the guise of running non-profit making organisations, whose assets run in millions of pounds. My friend has in his possession, a letter sent by an organisation calling itself **'the Osborn foundation'**, of **Tulsa Oklahoma**.

It enclosed a piece of burlap, cloth, which, the letter said, had been ‘prayed over’ for seven days, by Osborne and his wife, and on receipt of ‘seed money’ they would spend more time in prayer, for whatever was asked for by whoever sent the ‘seed money’ to them.

To crown this fraud, the Osborne’s had the audacity to claim that they had sent the letter under the impulse of the Holy Spirit.

Do you think that this man and his wife are exceptions? Nothing of the kind! Some time ago a friend of mine cut an article out of a magazine called ‘Coronet’. It reported that such men as Jack Coe, Asa A. Allen, and the even better known Oral Roberts have all built up vast personal fortunes out of their so-called ‘healing’ campaigns.

I recall that a few years ago, Roberts hit the news headlines because he announced to the world that, if he did not receive the money that he needed for one of his projects that he was building by a certain date, ‘The Oral Roberts University’, the Lord would take him’.

Another fraud, Orval Jagers opened a brief case on a plane, and a stewardess caught sight of bundles of dollar notes. Thinking that they might have something to do with a bank-robbery which had recently taken place, the pilot, radioed ahead, and the police were waiting for Mr. Jagers when he stepped off the plane. It took him two hours to convince the police that the 70,000 dollars in the briefcase were what he had taken in from his latest campaign.

Similarly, A. A. Allen, the magazine reported was driving home from a ‘healing campaign’, with money in the boot of his car, when he was stopped by the Police and arrested for drunken driving. He had to deposit \$1000 in bail, which, I might add, he forfeited because he did not turn up at court.

He was excommunicated by the Pentecostal church of which he was a member, and his private secretary signed a sworn statement, which declared that not one of Allen’s alleged cures could be verified, despite his claims that people had been instantly healed.

Let me also mention at this point, that in the ‘faith-healing’ business, most of these men began in the so-called Pentecostal church, and today most of the religious bodies which hold such campaigns have originated, either directly or indirectly from that religious body. The men whom I have named, Coe, Jagers, Allen and Roberts, ALL began in the Pentecostal movement and were either disfellowshipped, or left to start their own organisations.

Oral Roberts, who began in Oklahoma City with \$30 and went on to make a fortune of millions, decided to move up into a higher social class and joined the Methodist church. The Methodist Church in the U.S.A. seemingly attracts people of a higher social class than in this country.

At least 60 of these ‘faith-healers’ have set up their own organisations, and some have made extremely grandiose claims for themselves. One black ‘healer’ from Detroit, gave him the title, ‘the Rev. Dr. James F. Hones. DD., Universal dominion ruler, internationally known as Prophet Jones’.

I believe that I could keep you entertained all day, telling you about these frauds, confidence tricksters, who can still be heard on American Radio and T.V. Here is a final example which would be hilarious, if it were not so tragic. My friend took it from an ‘associated press report’. From Washington DC, August 4th 1951. It concerned a meeting in Fairmont Heights, Maryland. And I quote.

‘A coffin was lowered into a grave, after a tent-meeting revivalist told his audience that the doomed man would be raised from the dead.’ As the earth was shovelled onto the coffin, someone saw the corpse crawl out of a tunnel just outside the tent. The corpse escaped during the ensuing riot’.

Some years ago, the British medical association, which, as you know, is the highest medical authority in the land, conducted a two-year long study of all kinds of healing, at the request of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

A special committee of eminent medical men was set up to conduct the investigation, and their report was published in a special report, during their Annual Conference. This is that report which was cut out of the British Medical Journal.

1. It states that **3 prominent RC doctors** were invited to be on the committee, but they declined. Probably because they knew that they would be expected to investigate the alleged miracles, which are reported from **Lourdes**.

2. Most of the ‘**cures**’ of organic diseases **claimed**, are explained in the view of the Committee, by mistaken diagnosis, or prognosis, alleviation or remission, spontaneous cure, or combined treatment. Some cases, which were said to be **epilepsy**, appeared to be cases of **hysteria**.

3. As for the ‘**miracles**’ of **Lourdes**. An authority in **Lourdes**, known as the ‘**Bureau Des Constatations**’ investigates cases of so-called ‘**miracles**’, in order to exclude psychogenic and hysterical conditions and here follows a quotation from the Bureau.

‘In spite of the immense pressure of popular enthusiasm, the number of miracles actually attested and registered over the years, has been exceedingly small (not even one a year), and every attempt is made to emphasize the spiritual value of the pilgrimage, rather than such healings as may be claimed’. There is much more in this report, as you see, but here is the conclusion.

‘As far, then, as our observation and investigation have gone, we have seen **no evidence** that there is any special type of illness cured solely by spiritual healing, which cannot be cured by medical methods which do not involve such claims’.

The report continues, ‘The cases claimed as cures of a miraculous nature present **no feature** of a unique and unexpected character outside the knowledge of any experience physician or psychologist.’ And the last word, ‘The Committee finds **no evidence** that there is any type of illness cured by spiritual healing **ALONE**, which could not have been cured by medical treatment, which necessarily includes consideration of environmental factors’.

c. The working of miracles.

This individual ‘produced,’ ‘miracles’, ‘**dunamis**’. ‘**Dunamis**’ is power, might, strength, then, generally strength, or power, ability to do a thing. In **Matthew 22:29**, the Word of God said, ‘**You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God**’.

The word translated ‘**power**’ is the same, translated ‘**miracles**’ in **1 Corinthians 12:10**. Jesus tells us that these powers include healing the sick of diseases, **Mark 6:5 / Luke 9:1**, inspired teaching, **Luke 1:17**, removal of unclean spirits, **Luke 4:36**, raising the dead, **John 11** and so forth.

Spoken gifts

Gifts which had to do with the spoken word.

a. **Preaching and Teaching, Prophecy, ‘pro fetes’**, to speak forth.

b. **The ability to distinguish between spirits**. Possibly relating to exorcism.

c. **The ability to speak in other languages**. Languages which had not been learned. **Acts 2:1-11**.

d. **The ability to interpret the languages used**. **1 Corinthians 12:10**.

I think we also saw that, at that time and in those circumstances, these were **not** merely extravagant demonstrations of miraculous power, but **gifts which were eminently practical**, the purpose being to edify, build up the entire church. **1 Corinthians 14:12**.

Since that was the Spirit’s purpose in bestowing the gifts, it wasn’t necessary that every member of the church should possess them, nor were members regarded as second-class Christians if they **didn’t** possess gifts. The closing verses of **1 Corinthians 12:29+30** proves this, ‘**Do all speak with tongues? Do all possess the gift of healing? Do all interpret?**’ The implied answer to these questions is **no!**

a. **Prophecy**.

‘**Prophecy**’, ‘**propheteia**’ is the gift of interpreting the will of the gods, in New Testament, the gift of expounding Scripture, of speaking and preaching. A ‘**propheteuo**’ is one who speaks and preaches under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Later Paul will reveal the importance of prophecy over tongues. **1 Corinthians 14:5**.

Gifts of prophecy, including the ability to foretell future events, were the endowment of certain Christians in the **apostolic age** and there would appear to have been **two orders** of these, the higher including those mentioned under **1 Corinthians 12:8**, and others whose ability concerned the prediction of events such as those prophesied by **Agabus Acts 11:28 / Acts 21:11**. But not always ‘prediction,’ but elevated and inspired discourse, the power of preaching to edification. **1 Corinthians 14:12**.

What does **1 Thessalonians 5:19-22** mean, when it says, ‘Do not despise prophesying’? ‘Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.’ **1 Thessalonians 5:19-22**.

When one encounters a problem passage, it is important to consider the context. In practice, this means looking at the verses which go before, and those, which follow. That is always sound advice, and it is advice worth following as we consider the question before us.

The previous verse, **verse 19** says, ‘do not quench the Spirit.’ Now, the Spirit referred to be unquestionably the Holy Spirit. Notice that in this verse the **present imperative** tense is used, which means that we have here a statement which relates to something which the believers in Thessalonica had evidently been doing and were continuing to do up to that moment.

An ‘imperative’ is a command or an instruction, so the sense of this verse is literally, ‘Do not continue to quench the Spirit’. This tells us that the Thessalonians were giving offence to the Holy Spirit. They were disregarding and perhaps even repressing, a particular manifestation of the Spirit.

We see from the **next verse** that the specific gift involved was the gift of **prophecy**, because the word which is translated ‘prophesying’s’, ‘propheteia’, occurs on only two other occasions, **1 Corinthians 14:6+22**, where Paul discusses the exercise of spiritual gifts.

The church at Thessalonica therefore is told, in effect, ‘Do not continue what you have been doing, quenching, or suppressing, this manifestation of the Spirit’. Certainly, at the very least, they were discouraging the exercise of the prophetic gift.

The apostolic command in **verse 19** is followed by the verse, at which we are now looking, **verse 20**, ‘And do not despise prophesying’. Here, again, this is a **present imperative**, and it means, ‘Do not continue to despise prophesying’. You will notice that there is a significant difference between the **Authorized Version** and many modern versions in the way in which **verses 19+20** are rendered.

In the **A.V.**, we find two short sentences, ‘Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesying’s.’ But in modern versions, **the Revised Standard Version for example**, the two verses are separated only by a comma, so that they read as one sentence, ‘Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying.’ The implication is that, to despise ‘prophesying’ was to quench the Spirit.

Clearly, then, Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Spirit, regarded the exercise of that particular gift, **the gift of prophecy**, as of very real importance to the spiritual growth and wellbeing of the infant church in Thessalonica.

Now, this letter was written during the **second missionary journey**, and is, therefore reliably regarded as one of the earliest of the apostolic letters, it was written from **Corinth**, where Paul arrived about **50 AD**, after leaving Thessalonica, and where he stayed for **18 months. Acts 18:11**. We arrive at this date because we know that the proconsul **Gallio**, which is mentioned in the **next verse, verse 12**, took up his position in Corinth about that time.

The letter was probably written about **51 or 52 AD**. It is even likely, although not stated, that it was Paul himself who imparted spiritual gifts to the Thessalonian church as he had at Corinth during the year and a half he remained in that city.

On the matter of spiritual gifts in the infant church we learn that Paul informed the Ephesian believers that prophets were among the Lord’s gifts to the church. **Ephesians 4:11**. Earlier in the same letter he had stated that apostles and prophets had laid the foundation on which the church is build, that foundation being Christ Himself, **Ephesians 2:20**.

He followed this, in **Ephesians 3:5**, with the assertion that the Spirit used apostles and prophets as instruments for the revelation of truth.

Although we don't believe that there are such inspired men alive today, it shouldn't be difficult for anyone to understand that in those days, apostles and prophets fulfilled an essential role in the revelation of the truth and the establishment of the church.

Bear in mind that the New Testament had not then been compiled. Indeed, as I have already implied, many of the books, which comprise our present New Testament, had not even been written. Therefore, instead of being able to study written instruction and teaching, we find that prophecy, 'oral,' that is spoken instruction, was the means by which the early Christians were taught.

Bear in mind, also, that the word 'prophesying' doesn't mean that a **new revelation** was presented every time the prophet opened his mouth! The word 'profetes' means 'to speak forth', and covers preaching and teaching generally. And, if you examine the Old Testament books, you will find that many of the writers never fore-told future events, but simply delivered a message on God's behalf.

In fact, in the Old Testament, 'a prophet'.

1. Delivered a message from God.
2. Interpreted current events, he explained what was happening at that moment. **And very often, the explanation the prophet gave, was very different from what the people thought!**
3. And sometimes was able to tell the people what God was going to do.

In the New Testament, the exercise of **the gift of prophecy** simply meant that men were led by the Holy Spirit to speak in order that the church might be strengthened and built up.

Now it is clear from **1 Thessalonians 5:20**, that some of the Thessalonian Christians had been inclined to undervalue this particular gift, because the word 'despise' means 'set at nought'. So Paul is urging them, not to 'set at nought' these Spirit-led teachers, or the messages they delivered.

However, he also issues this warning, 'Test everything'. In other words, 'Be on your guard, and hold fast what is good', **1 Thessalonians 5:21**. I stress again, that this instruction, to pay attention to the prophets, was valid as long as the spiritual gifts, which included apostles and prophets, remained. But when they were removed, the specific sense of these words ceased to apply.

Yet there is a sense in which they contain a message for us today. 'Prophesying' means 'speaking forth'. And prophecy, in the general sense of the word, is that which is preached. It is preaching and teaching. There is no one today who possesses 'the gift of prophecy', about which Paul writes. Be on your guard, and do not trust those who claim to predict future events.

Remember that almost **2000 years ago**, Paul said that prophecies would fail, the word means 'cease'. The gift of tongues, which was the ability of people to speak in languages they had not learned, would cease, and the gift of miraculous knowledge would end. **1 Corinthians 13:8-10**.

We have no inspired, Spirit-led messengers, no apostles and prophets such as those who served the infant church. But we do have those who preach and teach that which the Holy Spirit has preserved for us and presented to us in the Word.

We have inherited the rich blessing of 'all things that pertain to life and godliness', in the New Testament Scriptures. We have the recorded words of 'holy men of God who were moved by the Holy Spirit.' **2 Peter 1:3 / 2 Peter 1:21**. It is as imperative today as it ever was, that we who love the Lord should not under value, despise the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

We should never forget that the Lord Himself told His apostles. 'He who listens to you, listens to me; he who rejects you, rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects Him who sent me'. **Luke 10:16**.

I wonder how anyone can claim to accept the authority of Christ, whilst rejecting the writings of the apostles whom He authorized to speak on His behalf.

And so as a quick recap, we need to remember to keep this in the context of its date, when the writer is writing they were **still** in the age of miraculous revelations from God. We know **miracles, wonders** and **signs** had a purpose and was to **confirm** the preached Word, **Mark 16:20 / Hebrews 2:4**.

We also know what these **miracles, signs** and **wonders** were given for the common good, **1 Corinthians 12:7-11** and finally we also know when the miraculous would cease, **1 Corinthians 13:8-13 / Ephesians 4:7-16**.

It was the Holy Spirit who was the one who empowered those who prophesied for the purpose of giving **God's revelation to men** and so to despise prophecies, would be to quench the work of the Holy Spirit, and so remove one's self from the life giving revelation of God. **Ephesians 4:30**.

Today, if we turn our back on the result of the Spirit's work, **'the word of God'**, we can, in a sense, quench the Spirit. God's Word was made known through His Holy Spirit, **John 16:13**, in Old Testament times, God did this through prophets, **1 Peter 1:10+11 / 2 Peter 1:20+21** and in New Testament times, God did this through the apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ. **John 16:13 / John 14:26**.

Throughout history mankind has always had problems accepting God's Word, even God's own people Israel struggled with this, **Hosea 4:1. Romans 1:18-23** reminds us that even the Gentiles had problems accepting God's Word.

And so what the writer is telling the Thessalonian church is, don't refuse to listen and obey what the Holy Spirit was making known to them through revelations at that time. He's reminding them not to despise prophecies, in other words don't belittle the prophecies which were being made through the prophets, don't refuse to accept what God was revealing through them.

But and this is important, they cannot simply just accept any **'new'** revelation, they have to **test** them, and the reason they had to test them was because they had to recognise that **not every claim** to be from God was true. John reminds us in **1 John 4:1** that were are **'not to believe every spirit, but test the spirits.'** **Why?** Because **'many false prophets have come into the world'**.

And so today especially within the charismatic churches, we need to test what people say when they claim they have a **'new'** revelation from God, or God is still performing miraculous, signs and wonders through them. Today we need to be like the **Bereans** in **Acts 17:11**, they received the word with great readiness but they also searched the Scriptures daily to find out for themselves as to whether what Paul was teaching was true or not.

We should accept everything which is in harmony with the Scriptures and it's teaching, and reject everything which is not. **1 John 4:6 / Acts 2:42**. We are hold on to everything that is good and reject everything which is evil. **Amos 5:15 / Psalm 97:10 / Romans 12:9**.

That word **'reject'** is sometimes rendered **'abstain'**, the Greek word for **'abstain'** is the word, **'apechomai'** and it literally means to run in the opposite direction. **Are we actively running away from evil or running towards it?**

b. The ability to distinguish between spirits.

1 Corinthians 12:10 'the discerning of Spirits'. We must remember to try to understand these gifts in the context of the historical period during which they were exercised. This verse, which seem so strange to us, would be perfectly understood by the people alive at the time of the writing of Paul's letter.

For example, his readers would understand that, when he writes in **1 Corinthians 14:37** about those whom he describes as **'spiritual'**, he was referring to those who were believed to be possessed by a spirit, because this was the name by which such people were known.

Also, Christians weren't the only ones who believed in **'spirit- possession'** i.e. individuals who were regarded as being under the influence of spirits which used them as their **'instruments'**. Both Jewish and Pagan religions also had their prophets, whom they believed were under spirit-control.

Paul hints at this in **1 Corinthians 12:1+2**. But, because men recognised the existence of both good and evil spirits, it was essential to determine by which spirit a person was being ‘possessed’ and ‘controlled’.

We know that during the ministry of the Lord Himself, there were times when He encountered and dealt with people who were possessed by evil spirits. The man at **Gadara**, and the spirit-controlled son of the man who came to Jesus because he said, the disciples couldn’t cure the lad. **Matthew 17:14-20**. **Acts 16:16-19** records the experience of Paul at Philippi, in dealing with a spirit possessed girl.

With this in mind, Paul lays down **two criteria** that must be used in making this judgment.

1. ‘Sanity’.

For centuries about **500 B.C.**, in fact, the Greeks had flocked to temples where priests or priestesses were believed to contact and be controlled by the gods, for who they acted as ‘**mouthpieces**’, as the gods spoke through them to deliver messages.

Whether it was real or fake, when these people were under the control of their gods they foamed at the mouth, their hair streaming out, and their limbs wildly flailing, as in an epileptic fit, all of which was taken to prove that they were being ‘**moved**’ by the spirit of the god whom they served.

‘**Not so the prophets of the church**’. They did not scream or foam at the mouth, or roll on the ground! The Holy Spirit enlightened their minds and sharpened their vision. They didn’t claim that they were the mouthpiece of God, but the messengers of God.

2. The credit of honour to Christ.

The well-used Christian confession of faith in New Testament times was ‘**Jesus is Lord**’, and as Paul reveals in **1 Corinthians 12:3**, this was the formula by which the prophets were to be judged either true or false. Bear in mind that, beginning with **Caesar Augustus**, **Roman Emperors** had begun to regard themselves ‘**gods**’, and everyone in the Empire was required to recognize and acknowledge this!

Citizens had to declare their loyalty to **Caesar** as a god by saying the words, ‘**Caesarea Kyrios**’, ‘**Caesar is Lord**’. In fact, at the entrance to every Roman Camp there was an altar onto which the soldiers were expect to throw a pinch of incense in the worship of the Emperor, whilst saying those words, ‘**Caesar is Lord**’, and, woe betide any man who failed to do so!

But when the favour with which Rome had originally looked on Christians turned into persecution, this affirmations of loyalty to **Caesar** was something that the Christians also were required to make, and failure to make it usually meant death.

At the same time, there was a quite different affirmation that was being freely made by both Jewish and Pagan enemies of the church. **They** were saying, as Paul records in **1 Corinthians 12:3**, ‘**Jesus is accursed**’, and obviously, only the enemies of Christ would utter those words!

Furthermore, when a Christian refused to speak those words which were taken as an acknowledgment of **Caesar’s deity**, their refusal was taken as a **denial** of his deity and that was treason which brought the death-sentence.

Thus, the distinction between the prophet inspired by the Holy Spirit, and the false prophet was, in this way, easily made. The one was happy to say, ‘**Jesus is Lord**’, whilst the other, because he was under the influence of an evil spirit said, ‘**Jesus is accursed**’.

John also writes about the importance of making this distinction in **1 John 4:1-3**. One needs little imagination to understand that in a pagan world, there were many who **pretended** to be possessed and controlled by the gods, so that they might claim to be speaking in their names.

The significant contrast between these frenzied fakers, and the calmness of the Spirit-led Christian prophets are, as Paul states in **1 Corinthians 14:26-33**, ‘**The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets**’. In other words, there was no wild abandonment in the manner in which they delivered their message.

Everything was done in an orderly manner, because ‘**God is not the author of confusion, but of peace**’. A final observation, the exercise of the ‘**gift of discerning of spirits**’ was to be used when several prophets spoke in the service. See **1 Corinthians 14:29**.

c. The ability to speak in other languages.

The word ‘**divers**’, ‘**genos**’ is race, stock, family. The word ‘**genos**’ is used **21 times** in the New Testament and for the most part indicates one’s nationality. This helps us understand what **the gift of tongues** was all about. The word ‘**tongues**’, ‘**glossa**’ is defined as a tongue, language. Clearly, the language spoken was of differing nationalities.

One who had **the gift of tongues** was able to speak a language of another race of people **without ever studying the language**.

Modern day ‘tongue speaking’. What is it?

1. Books, giving instruction how to speak in tongues are easy to obtain, and instruction is often given in ‘**Pentecostal**’ assemblies to those who are anxious to learn!

When **Philip Slate** worked with the **Wembley congregation**, a man who professed to possess the ‘**gift of tongues**’, offered to give him a ‘**demonstration**’! This could hardly be described as ‘**the work of the Holy Spirit**’.

2. Scientific studies by highly qualified people have proved that ‘**glossolalia**’ is a learned behaviour.

This is how it is described by **Dr Felicity Goodman**, a **Psychological Anthropologist**, in her work entitled ‘**Speaking in tongues. A cross-cultural study in Glossolalia**’, which was published by the **University of Chicago Press**, in **1972**. She studied tape-recordings of tongue-speaking, made in **Pentecostal Churches in American, Spain Mayan**, and in other English-speaking groups, as well as pagan rituals in **Japan, Africa, Borneo and Indonesia**.

Her concluding statement reads, ‘**Glossolalia is a learned behaviour, because direct instruction is given on how to speak in tongues.**’ Just over **25 years** ago in **1987**, in fact, in ‘**The Encyclopaedia of Religion**’, **Dr Goodman** wrote, ‘**Modern researchers accept that there is an association between trance and glossolalia.**’

Another Researcher, **Dr. Sheila A. Womack**, pointed to the similarities between modern tongue-speaking and what is called ‘**T.S.**’, the abbreviation used for ‘**trouette syndrome**’, which is a disorder of the nervous system that is demonstrated by ‘**uncontrolled movements and sounds**’

And one more testimony, the **University of Pennsylvania** took brain images of **five women** who were said to be speaking in tongues and discovered that the **frontal lobes**, the ‘**thinking**’ reasoning part of the brain, through which people control what they **do** were inactive. And the sounds were being produced by the part of the brain that is responsible for **emotions** and **feelings**.

Furthermore, the scans also recorded a reduction in the activity of the **left claudate**, the part of the brain which is active when the subject is experiencing positive emotion or pleasure. The researchers came to the conclusion that the subjects had yielded some control over their bodies and their emotions. And they knew it. And were enjoying it.

Philip’s Slate was told that to speak in tongues one must put his mind into ‘**neutral, take a deep breath, and let the sound come out**’! It is impossible to believe that they were acting under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

‘**Tongues**’ are mentioned **three times** in the **Book of Acts**. Note that in **16ll**, the word ‘**tongue**’ meant ‘**language**’. **Acts 2:3+4. Pentecost**. Notice the definition, ‘**other tongues**’. The phrase, ‘**unknown tongues**’ is not found in the Scriptures. What was heard were not incomprehensible noises, not ‘**babble**’, but ‘**known**’ languages.

In fact, considering the number of nations represented in the chapter, **16 in all**, the miracle was that they all heard in the language in which they were born. This fact has raised an interesting question, **was this only a miracle of speech, but was there also a miracle of hearing!**

The House of Cornelius. Acts 10:44-48. Although Cornelius was a Roman it seems evident from the special attention he received from the Holy Spirit, that he was a proselyte. He had embraced Judaism, to some extent, so that his prayers were being heard in heaven.

Notice also, **Acts 11:15**, that the reference is to ‘the same ‘gift’ as at the beginning’ suggests that the bestowal of this gift wasn’t something that had recurred very frequently up to that time. This kind of event wasn’t something with which Peter and his Jewish brethren had encountered before.

Ephesus. Acts 19:1-7. The men involved in this incident were also Jews who had received the baptism of John **after** it had been superseded by the Lord’s Baptism. These examples suggest that the gift of tongues was bestowed, initially at least, to enable the message to be preached in a manner that provided the Jews that the Gospel was from God.

1. Peter in **Acts 2**, refers to **Joel 2:28**. ‘It shall come to pass.....pour out My Spirit...’

2. In **Isaiah 28:11** the **A.V.** use of the word ‘stammering’ is likely to be misunderstood but doesn’t mean stuttering!

Look at **1 Corinthians 14:21** and you will see that Paul reveals that the statement of **Isaiah** predicted the gift of tongues! Using Paul’s statement, we see that through the prophet **Isaiah**, God declared that He would speak to ‘**this people,**’ the disobedient Jews through the gift of language.

Now look at **Acts 18:7**, and you will see that one of the first converts in Corinth, was **Justus** a ‘**God worshipper,**’ which is a term for a devout keeper of the Law. And his house was ‘**next to the synagogue**’.

You must imagine the first meetings of the Christians in Corinth meeting with the apostle Paul, in the **House of Justus**, next door to the synagogue, exercising the gift of tongues, **after** they had the hands of Paul the apostle laid on them! If this occurred, the Jews would wonder what was happening!

The gifts were **originally** bestowed by the Holy Spirit, as witnessed on the Day of Pentecost. **Later**, they were bestowed by the imposition of the hands of the Lord’s apostles. Hence, Paul writes to Timothy, ‘**do not neglect the gift**’. **2 Timothy 1:6**.

In **Acts 8**, the apostles Peter and John went to Samaria, and laid hands on the converts, **Acts 8:17**, and Simon the Sorcerer **saw** that in this way the Holy Spirit was given. This can only refer to the bestowal of the gifts of the Spirit, because at their baptism, the Samaritans would have received the ‘**dorea**’ of the Spirit, as promised in the Gospel. **Acts 2:38+39**.

Furthermore, the laying on of the hands of the apostles must have been followed by a demonstration of spiritual gifts, because Simon ‘**saw**’ something that led him to ask that he also, might be given the same power, **Acts 8:18**. However, since those who received the gifts in this way weren’t able to pass on the power, the bestowal of spiritual gifts by the laying on of the hands of an apostle passed away with the deaths of the apostles themselves.

We have already looked at the claims of those people who profess to speak in **tongues** today and, I hope we have seen how mistaken they are. Perhaps ‘**self-deceived**’ is the kinder and more accurate description of their condition.

Biblical tongue speaking.

1. In **1 Corinthians 14**, the term ‘**unknown**’, in regard to tongues was italicized in the **KJV** because it doesn’t appear in the original Greek text, **1 Corinthians 14:2+4+13+14+19+27**.

By inserting this word into their translation, the translators were attempting to aid the English reader. They undoubtedly were hoping to convey the idea that the languages to which Paul referred were ‘**unknown**’ to the speaker, i.e., **the speaker had no prior training by which to learn or know the language**.

He spoke the language strictly by God’s miraculous empowerment. ‘**Unknown**’ certainly wasn’t intended to convey the idea that the tongues were unknown **to all humans** and, as such, were non-earthly, non-human languages.

2. The events reported at the very beginning of the Christian religion. **Acts 2** set the precedent for understanding that tongue-speaking entailed no more than the ability to speak a foreign human language, which the speaker **had not studied**, to people from a variety of geographical locales, **Parthians, Medes, Arabians. Acts 2:9-11**.

The unbiased Bible student must conclude that what is described in detail in **Acts 2** is the same phenomenon alluded to in **1 Corinthians 14**. All tongue-speaking in the Bible consisted of **known human languages**, ideally known to the

very audience being addressed that were unknown, i.e., unstudied, unlearned, by the one who was speaking the language.

3. There is simply no such thing as an ‘ecstatic utterance’ in the New Testament.

The tongue-speaking of 1 Corinthians 14 entailed human language, not incoherent gibberish. A simple reading of the chapter demonstrates that known human languages are under consideration.

For example, Paul paralleled tongue-speaking with the use of the trumpet in warfare. If the bugler sounded meaningless noise, the military would be thrown into confusion.

It was imperative for the bugler to blow the proper notes and tones, i.e., meaningful musical ‘language,’ so that the army would understand what was being communicated, whether to charge, engage, or retreat. Sound without sense fails to achieve the very purpose of tongue-speaking.

Paul then stated, ‘So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me.’ 1 Corinthians 14:9-11.

Obviously, Paul was referring to human languages, those that exist ‘in the world.’ He envisioned a scenario where two individuals, who spoke different languages, are attempting to communicate with each other. If one speaks in Spanish and the other in German, as they attempt to speak to one another, each would be a ‘foreigner’ to the other.

Neither would understand what the other was attempting to say. Hence the need for tongue-speaking, i.e., the ability to speak human language unknown to the speaker but known to the recipient.

Later in the chapter, Paul quoted Isaiah 28:11+12 where God threatened the Israelites with the fact that their failure to listen to Him, by means of the words spoken by His prophets, meant that He soon would be communicating to them through the language of their Assyrian conquerors, conquerors whom God would send against them.

This powerful illustration presupposes the fact that in both Isaiah and 1 Corinthians, human languages are under consideration.

After quoting Isaiah, Paul drew the conclusion that tongue-speaking was intended by God to be directed to unbelievers, 1 Corinthians 14:22. Why?

Because it would prove to the unbeliever that the tongue-speaker, who didn’t possess the natural ability to speak that language, was being empowered by God to speak in the language spoken by the unbeliever.

The unbeliever would recognise the divine origin of the tongue-speaker’s ability, and thereby be willing to consider the words being spoken as the instructions of God. Again, an examination of 1 Corinthians 14 yields the result that no contextual justification exists for drawing the conclusion that the Bible refers to, let alone endorses, the notion of ‘ecstatic’ speech.

But what about Paul’s passing reference to the ‘tongues of angels’ in 1 Corinthians 13:1? Wouldn’t this reference prove that tongue-speaking could involve languages beyond those spoken by humans?

In the first place, consider the role, purpose, and activity of angels described in the Bible. The word ‘angel’, in Greek is ‘angelos’, in Hebrew it is the word ‘malak’ and it simply means ‘messenger’ one who ‘speaks and acts in the place of the one who has sent him’. It doesn’t mean merely ‘to send,’ but rather ‘to send a messenger, message’.

It is true that angels in both the Old and New Testaments carried out a wide range of activities beyond message-bearing, including, worshipping God, Revelation 5:11+12, comforting, aiding, and protecting, Daniel 6:22 / Matthew 4:11 / Luke 22:43 / Acts 5:19 / Hebrews 1:14 and executing judgment and inflicting punishment and death, Matthew 13:49 / Acts 12:23.

But it still remains true to say that the meaning of the term ‘angel’ is a messenger, one who communicates a spoken message. Therefore, their principal role in God’s scheme of things was to function as messengers to humans. Consequently, angels always are represented in Scripture as communicating in ‘human language’.

In the second place, what logical reason exists for humans to speak in an alleged ‘angelic’ language that is different from human language? What would be the spiritual benefit?

The Bible certainly makes no provision for humans to communicate with angels in such a language, nor would there be any need for an angel to communicate to a human in a non-earthly language.

The whole point of 1 Corinthians 12+13 was to stress the need to function in the church in ways that were meaningful and understandable. Since God, by His very nature, never would do anything that is superfluous, unnecessary, or frivolous, it follows that He wouldn’t bestow upon a human being the ability to speak in a non-human language.

The ability would serve no purpose! The Bible simply offers no rationale nor justification for identifying the ‘tongues of angels’ in 1 Corinthians 13:1 with some heavenly, otherworldly, non-earthly languages.

In the third place, if, in fact, the ‘tongues of angels’ refer to known human languages, what was Paul’s point? Since angels were God’s appointed spokesmen, they naturally would perform their assignment in such a way that God would be represented as He would want to be.

God’s own angelic messengers would have complied with their responsibility in such a way and manner that they would have God’s approval. In other words, angels would naturally articulate God’s message as well as it could be expressed, i.e., perfectly.

When God inspired mere humans to communicate His will, He integrated their own educational background, stylistic idiosyncrasies, and vocabulary into their oral and literary productions. No such need would have existed for angels.

Their communications would have been unfiltered through human agency. Their announcements would have been the essence and pinnacle of eloquence and oratorical skill.

Perhaps, then, Paul wasn’t drawing a contrast between human and nonhuman languages at all. Before referring to the ‘tongues of angels,’ he referred to ‘the tongues of men.’ Why would Paul say, ‘Though I speak with the tongues of men’?

After all, isn’t that precisely what all adult humans do? We humans speak at least one human language! Paul must have been referring, then, not to the ability to speak a human language, but to the ability to speak all human languages.

No tongue-speaker in the first-century church had the ability to speak all human languages. In fact, the textual evidence indicates that most tongue-speakers probably had the ability to speak only one human language, which he, himself, didn’t understand, thus necessitating the need for an inspired interpreter, 1 Corinthians 12:30 / 1 Corinthians 14:26-28.

Paul could apparently speak more languages than any of the others, 1 Corinthians 14:18. If the ‘tongues of men’ referred to the number of human languages, rather than referring to the ability to speak a human language, then the ‘tongues of angels’ would refer not to the ability to speak an angelic language but to the ability to speak human languages ‘the way angels do’.

Here, then, would have been Paul’s point, even if a tongue-speaker could speak every human language known to man, and even if that tongue-speaker could speak those human languages with the efficiency, skill, and perfection that God’s angelic messengers have spoken them in history, without love, the ability would be wasted.

With this understanding of the text, Paul wasn’t contrasting human with nonhuman language. He was encompassing both the quantity, if I could speak all human languages and the quality, if I could speak them perfectly, of speaking human language.

One **final point** on the matter of the **'tongues of angels'** merits mention. Even if the expression actually refers to angelic tongues that are nonhuman, it still is likely that tongue-speakers were incapable of speaking such languages. **Why?** Paul was speaking hypothetically and hyperbolically.

No human being, with the exception of perhaps Jesus, has ever been able to speak in **all** human languages. For Paul to suggest such was to pose a hypothetical situation. It was to exaggerate the facts.

So Paul's meaning was, **'even if I were capable of speaking all human languages, which I'm not.'** Likewise, no human being has ever been able to speak the tongues of angels. So Paul's meaning was, **'even if I were capable of speaking the languages of angels, which I'm not.'**

This conclusion is supported further by the verse that follows the reference to the **'tongues of angels.'** There, Paul used **two** additional hypothetical events when he said, **'If I, know all mysteries and all knowledge'** and **'if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains,'** 1 Corinthians 13:2.

But no one on the planet, with the exception of Deity, has understood **all** mysteries and **all** knowledge, nor has had faith that could literally remove mountains. Again, Paul was merely saying, **'even if I could do such things, which I can't.'**

4. Paul stated very clearly that tongue-speaking was a **'sign to unbelievers'**, not believers. 1 Corinthians 14:22.

Tongue-speaking was to be done in **their** presence, to convince **them** of the truth being spoken, i.e., to **confirm** the Word.

The tongue-speaking being practiced today is done in the presence of those who **already believe** that tongue-speaking is occurring and, when an **unbeliever**, who is sceptical of the genuineness of the activity, makes an appearance in such an assembly, the claim often is made that tongue-speaking cannot occur because of the presence of unbelief.

Once again, the New Testament teaches the **very opposite** of those who claim the ability to speak in tongues today.

5. The recipient of a miraculous gift in the New Testament could **'control himself'**. 1 Corinthians 14:32.

He wasn't overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit so that he began to babble or flail about. Tongue-speaking today is frequently practiced in a setting where the individuals who claim to be exercising the gift are speaking uncontrollably at the very time that others are either doing the same thing or engaging in some other action.

This overlapping activity is in direct violation of **three** of Paul's commands.

1. That each individual takes their turn, one at a time.

2. That no more than **three tongue-speakers** speak per service, and

3. That tongue-speakers **remain silent** if **no interpreter** is present. 1 Corinthians 14:27+28.

The claim by many today, to be able to speak in tongues is simply out of harmony with New Testament teaching. Anyone can babble, make up sounds, and claim he or she is speaking in tongues. But such conduct is **no sign** today. It is precisely the same phenomenon that pagan religions have practiced through the centuries.

In the New Testament, however, no one questioned the authenticity of tongue-speaking. **Why?** The speaker was speaking a **known human language** that could be understood by those present who knew that language and knew that that particular speaker **didn't know** that language **beforehand**.

If and when self-proclaimed tongue-speakers today demonstrate that genuine New Testament gift, their message could be accepted as being from God. But no one today has demonstrated that genuine New Testament gift.

d. The ability to interpret the languages used.

As one had the gift of speaking a language from other Christians, so some were able to **miraculously understand the language** and **expound the meaning** to others in a native tongue of the audience even though they had no formal training in the language.

Along with the gift of ‘speaking in tongues’, another spiritual gift mentioned in the list found in **1 Corinthians 12:10** is the gift of ‘interpreting tongues’. The gift of interpreting tongues is the ability to **translate a foreign language** into the language of the hearers.

The gift of interpreting tongues is always alongside the gift of speaking in tongues. It is a separate gift, but it is always used in conjunction with the gift of speaking in tongues. A person with the gift of **interpreting tongues** could understand what a tongues-speaker was saying even though he **didn’t know** the language that was being spoken.

This is what distinguishes the spiritual gift from the natural gift of being able to understand and speak a variety of languages. The tongues interpreter would then communicate the message of the tongues speaker to everyone else, so all could understand and benefit from the truth being spoken.

The tongues were known languages, not ‘ecstatic utterances’. According to the apostle Paul, and in agreement with the tongues described in **Acts**, speaking in tongues is valuable to the one hearing God’s message in his or her own language, but it is useless to everyone else unless it is interpreted, translated. Paul’s concern is edification of the church. **1 Corinthians 14:5+12**.

Paul’s conclusion regarding tongues that weren’t interpreted is powerful, ‘**But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue**’, **1 Corinthians 14:19**. There is no benefit to others in hearing something they cannot understand.

More importantly, there is no benefit, and much harm, done in churches where the speaking and interpreting of a tongue brings forth that which doesn’t line up with Scripture or which cannot be verified in Scripture.

Paul was also concerned about ‘order’ in worship. His concern was that everything is done for edification of the church. He goes on to say that there should only be **two or three** speaking in a tongue and **one** should interpret. If there is **no interpreter** present, then one should be **quiet**, **1 Corinthians 14:26-28**.

The temporal nature of the gift of tongues assumes that the gift of interpretation of tongues was also of a temporal nature. If the gift of speaking in tongues were active in the church today, it would be performed in agreement with Scripture.

It would be a real and intelligible language, **1 Corinthians 14:10**. It would be for the purpose of communicating God’s Word to a person of another language, **Acts 2:6-12**, and it would also be in accordance with **1 Corinthians 14:33**, ‘**For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.**’