

Do You Know the Holy Spirit?

Lesson Eight: How Long Were Miraculous Gifts of the Spirit to Last?

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Introduction: What is the Holy Spirit's Will Today Concerning Miraculous Spiritual Gifts? *"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills."* – 1 Corinthians 12:11, NASB

A. We are not questioning the miracles that the Holy Spirit performed in biblical times (**Acts 2:4; 10:38, 44-46; 19:6; Rom. 15:18-19; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; etc.**).

1. God is all powerful (**Jer. 32:17**) and He does not change (**Mal. 3:6**), thus we are not questioning whether or not the Spirit performed miracles!

B. What we want to know is: What is the Holy Spirit's will **today**?

1. Is it **the will** of the Holy Spirit that we would be given miraculous spiritual gifts today?

2. Many religious groups believe it is, yet what do the Scriptures say?

Eph 5:17 *"So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."*

I. How People in the First Century Received Miraculous Gifts: A Review.

A. The apostles and Cornelius' household received the gift of speaking in tongues **directly** from the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:4; 10:44-47**).

1. Jesus promised *the apostles* that the Father would send the Holy Spirit after His departure to help them (**John 14:16-20**).

2. The purposes for which the apostles and the household of Cornelius were baptized with the Holy Spirit were the same: **Inspiration** (**Acts 2:4ff; 10:46b**) and **confirmation** that it was from God (**Act 2:33; 10:47; 11:17**).

3. The Holy Spirit baptism of Cornelius was a special event to show that God approves of *Gentiles* receiving the gospel for salvation (**Acts 11:18**).

B. The apostles performed miracles by the power of the Spirit (**Rom. 15:18-19**).

1. Only *genuine* apostles could perform signs, wonders, and miracles (**2 Cor. 12:12**).

C. **Through** the laying on of the hands of the apostles.

1. The apostles had the ability to bestow *miraculous* gifts of the Holy Spirit to others through the "laying on of their hands" (**Acts 6:5-8; 8:14-17; 19:6; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6**), according to God's will (**Heb. 2:4**).

2. Miraculous powers were not promised to all who believe and are baptized (**Mark 16:16-20; e.g., Acts 8:14-17**) (See lesson 7, pages 5-6).

3. **Only** the apostles had the ability to bestow miraculous gifts to others making it necessary for them to make trips to churches where gifts were needed (**Rom 1:10-11; cf. 1 Cor 1:7**).

4. Their power originated from their *apostleship* (**Lk 6:13ff; 2 Cor 12:12**).

II. Are There Apostles Today Who Can Impart Miraculous Gifts of the Spirit?

A. Some religious groups teach that there are **still** apostles of Christ today.

1. Catholicism:

The Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, and Episcopal Church believe: "The Apostolic Succession of the Bishops of Rome, who are the Primates of the one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church by virtue of their Succession from Peter and who bear the title of Pope... Peter consecrated the first Bishop of Rome." – The Book of Common Prayer

a. Catholics insist that modern day bishops are not modern day apostles but bishops “*servicing as successors to the apostles, not servicing as apostles.*”

“Though modern bishops succeed the apostles as the highest shepherds of the Church, and though they belong to unbroken lines of ordination going back to the hands of the apostles themselves, the office of bishop is not identical to the office of apostle... There are differences between the offices of bishop and apostle: 1) The Gifts of Miracles. Each apostle was endowed with the gift of miracles to enable him to perform signs validating his ministry as an apostle (2 Cor. 12:12). These manifestations provided motives of credibility showing the divine authority of the apostles and, by extension, those they appointed as successors. **Bishops do not typically receive the gift of miracles.**” – www.catholic.com/thisrock/2001/0107bt.asp

2. Mormonism:

a. Mormons believe that Joseph Smith and his scribe became apostles when the apostles Peter, James, and John appeared and conferred the *Melchizedek Priesthood* on them, restoring the same apostolic authority given to the original apostles of Christ.

b. Afterwards, Smith appointed apostles by the laying on of hands and organized and restored the church as it was in the first century, or so he claimed (D&C 13; 27:12).

c. Mormon “apostles” trace their authority to Christ by the ordinations that took place over the years beginning with Smith.

d. Their belief that miraculous gifts are given today (Articles of Faith No. 7) stems from this history (cf. History of Joseph Smith).

3. Many other religious groups today, such as Charismatics and Pentecostals, also believe that there are apostles in modern times who can impart miraculous gifts through the laying on of hands.

B. The apostles of the first century are **set apart** from all others!

1. The original apostles were **chosen** by the Lord Himself.

a. They were “hand-picked” by Jesus after spending the whole night in prayer to God (**Luke 6:12-16**).

b. Even when Judas Iscariot was replaced by Matthias, the Lord decreed it so (**Acts 1:21-26; cf. Prov. 16:33**).

c. The apostle Paul was also chosen by the Lord (**Acts 9:15; 26:16; cf. 2 Cor. 11:5**).

2. The original apostles were **witnesses** of the resurrection of Christ; an absolute requirement to be an apostle (**Acts 1:21-22**).

a. The apostle Paul was a witness of His resurrection (**1 Cor. 15:8**).

3. Only the *original* apostles are part of the **foundation** to the church (**Eph. 2:19-22**), for their teaching was given by inspiration of the Spirit (**3:3-5**).

4. Only the *original* apostles could perform signs, wonders, miracles (**2 Cor. 12:12**), cast out demons, speak in tongues, etc. (**Mark 16:17-20**).

a. Unlike modern claims, the miracles the apostles performed were observable, instantaneous, and undeniable (e.g., **Acts 3:15-16**).

5. The Holy Spirit inspired word tells us to beware of false apostles!

6. All modern day claims by anyone to be an apostle are false, for no one can meet the above criteria to be an apostle today! (**2 Cor. 11:13-15**).

Note: In the New Testament, the word **apostle** (APOSTOLOS - “a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders”- Thayer) is only *occasionally* used in a different sense than as described above: Christ the Apostle who was sent by God to be our Savior (**Heb. 3:1**) and Christians sent on a mission *by the church* (not by Christ directly) (**Acts 11:22; 14:14; 2 Cor. 8:23**).

C. The ability to impart miraculous gifts of the Spirit **ceased** at the death of the original apostles of Christ.

1. All the apostles died as martyrs for Christ, save the apostle John who was banished to the island of Patmos (cf. Foxe’s Book of Martyrs).
2. There is no record in Scripture of apostolic succession or any indication that the ability to bestow miraculous gifts was passed on to others.

III. Miraculous Spiritual Gifts of the Spirit Were Temporary Until “The Perfect.”

A. In the beginning, miraculous gifts were especially needed by the church.

1. To teach and edify the saints (**1 Cor. 14:26**).
2. To confirm revelation (**Heb. 2:3-4**) and provide a sign for unbelievers (**1 Cor 14:22**).
3. Yet, miraculous gifts were to *come to an end* (**1 Cor. 13:8-10**).

B. “*The more excellent way*” (**1 Cor. 12:31-13:8**)

1. Love is more excellent than even miraculous spiritual gifts!
2. True love endures and surpasses all miraculous gifts (**1 Cor. 13:8**).
 - a. “*Love never fails*” but miraculous gifts will!

C. When “the perfect” comes, miraculous spiritual gifts will be “done away” (**1 Cor. 13:8-10**).

1. Prophecy and knowledge will be done away and the ability to speak in tongues will cease (cf. **1 Cor. 12:8-10**).
2. Knowledge and prophecy was only “in part” or incomplete and were to be replaced by “the perfect.”
3. Speaking in tongues would cease altogether having served God’s purpose and would not need to be replaced.
4. By identifying what “the perfect” is, we can know with certainty that these gifts represent **all** miraculous gifts that will come to an end.

IV. What is “The Perfect” That Will Bring to an End Miraculous Gifts?

A. Revelation “in part” (MERIOS) (**1 Cor. 13:9, 10**):

“A part due or assigned to one Rev 22:19 2. **One of the constituent parts of a whole**

a. universally: in a context where the whole and its parts are distinguished, Luke 11:36

b. any particular, 1 Peter 4:16” - **Thayer's Greek Lexicon**

1. To understand what “the perfect” is, we must first identify “the part.”
2. *Revelation* (knowledge and prophecy) was given “in part” (**1 Cor. 13:9**)
3. In the first century, God revealed His will in parts or gradually; the apostles received revelation in a “piecemeal fashion.”
 - a. The early Christians did not have a copy of the New Testament like we do today!
 - b. Churches in the first century commonly shared inspired epistles with one another (**Col. 4:16; 1 Thes. 5:27**).
4. Whatever “the perfect” is shall complete “the part” (God’s revelation) and bring to an end miraculous spiritual gifts.

B. Word study of “Perfect” (TELEION) (1 Cor. 13:10):

“Properly, brought to its end, finished; lacking nothing necessary to completeness; perfect”
-Thayer’s Greek Lexicon

“Complete, perfect; (1) with its chief component as totality, as opposed to partial or limited; (a) of things *in full measure, undivided, complete, entire* (RO 12.2); substantively *the finish, completeness* (1C 13.10); comparative *more complete* or *perfect* (HE 9.11); (b) of persons *complete, perfect* (MT 5.48; 19.21); (2) with its chief component being full development as opposed to immaturity; (a) of persons *full grown, mature* (1C 14.20); substantively *adults, mature persons*; used of spiritually mature persons (1C 2.6); (b) of things *fully developed, complete* (JA 1.4; 1J 4.18); (3) with its chief component being full preparation or readiness *complete, perfect* (CO 1.28; JA 3.2); **in all its meanings carries the component of a purpose that has been achieved.**” - Friberg Lexicon

1. Therefore, “the perfect” must stand for the perfecting of something yet to be finished, a goal that is yet to be completed.

C. What then is “the Perfect”!?!

1. Many interpretations have been given, but **only one** can be correct!
 - a. We may **misunderstand** the Bible differently, but we do not understand the Bible correctly in different ways!
 - b. God is not the author of confusion but of peace (1 Cor. 14:33); God said we **can** come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).
2. The most common interpretations of “perfect”:
 - a. Christ, who will come in judgment
 - b. Our eternal future in Heaven.
 - c. The perfected or matured church.
 - d. Love
 - e. The complete revelation of the word of God.
 - f. Which one is **most** probable, possible, or plausible?
 - g. The immediate context teaches us what “the perfect” is.**
3. “Perfect” is in contrast to “in part” – **one helps define the other** (1 Cor. 13:9-12).

a. “In part” is **revelation** (knowledge and prophecy), “one of the constituent parts of a whole” namely the complete will of God.

Illustration: If we are given a whole pie and do not know what kind it is, we can discover what kind of pie it is by identifying a **part** of the whole.

b. Thus the perfect is the complete revelation of God’s word!

4. “Perfect” is a verb, an action word. What is the object noun that it modifies? **The biblical text gives us the answer!**

1 Cor 13:9-10 (NASB) 9 For we **know** in part, and we **prophesy** in part; 10 but when the **perfect** comes, the partial will be done away.

a. The early Christian’s had knowledge of God’s will and prophecy (both divine revelation) only “in part.”

b. Once “the perfect” came, knowledge and prophecy would no longer be partial, but **complete or perfect**.

c. This is the only interpretation of “perfect” that fits making all miraculous spiritual gifts cease and unnecessary today.

5. “The perfect” makes spiritual maturity and a complete understanding of God’s will possible! (1 Cor. 13:11-12; cf. Eph. 4:11-16).

- a. During the age of miraculous gifts in the first century, the church went through a “childhood” stage of spiritual development (v. 11).
- b. Once “the perfect” arrived, the church would no longer need the “childish things” (i.e. miraculous gifts).
- c. At the coming of the perfect, knowledge would no longer be incomplete (“**in part**”), but complete (“**know fully**”).

(1) A *clear* understanding of God’s will would be given!

1 Cor 13:12 (NASB) For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I **know in part**, but then I shall **know fully** just as I also have been fully known.

D. “The Perfect” revelation of God!

1. The Scriptures are indeed *perfect* or complete, lacking nothing for our spiritual needs today (e.g., 2 Tim. 3:16-17; James 1:25).
- 2 All revelation of the gospel was originally and *completely* revealed during the age of the apostles (Gal. 1:6-9).
- 3 At the closing of the canon of the New Testament (i.e., book of Revelation), it was “*once for all delivered*” (Jude 3; cf. Heb. 9:28).
- 4 God’s revelation is complete and is perfect; we can expect no improvements to be made to it (e.g., later day revelations).

V. The End of Miracles.

A. Defining a “Miracle.”

1. The word miracle is commonly used by the religious and non-religious alike to refer to an *unexplained phenomenon*.
 - a. Yet, a miracle is **not just** an unexplained phenomenon.
2. In the Bible, miracles always involved a specific intervention of divine power into the realm of the natural; miracles were *sudden* events *transcending* the laws of nature.
3. “*Miracles*” (Acts 2:22) meaning power or mighty deed because of the divine power by which they were performed.

• “Miracle” is from the Greek word dunamis. It was “used of works of a supernatural origin and character such as could not be produced by natural agents and means” (Vine).

B. Miracles of the Bible were **undeniable**.

1. The Scriptures always describes miracles as being observable, demonstrable, and undeniable events (e.g. Acts 4:15-16; Jn 9:16; 11:47).
2. Example: Miracles of healing were always **instant**, not gradual, which demonstrates that there is no mistaking a true miracle (e.g. 2 Ki 5:14).

C. Miracles had special, specific purposes of God **which have been fulfilled**.

1. By performing miracles, God demonstrated divine power (Mat. 11:3-5).
2. A miracle produced faith in others (John 2:23) and Jesus gave us all the miracles we will *ever need* to believe in Him (John 20:30-31; Rom. 1:4).
3. Miracles confirmed or proved to others that what was preached by the apostles in the first century came from God (Heb. 2:1-4; Mark 16:20).

Conclusion: The Holy Spirit Inspired Word of God is all a Person Needs Today to Believe in the Lord and be Saved (Rm 1:16; 10:17; 2 Tim 3:16-17; e.g. Lk 16:27-31).