

ARE THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT FOR TODAY? : PART 1

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God's Greatness, Murmuring In The Wilderness, Serpent Of Brass, Elisha And Shunammite Woman, Naaman The Syrian And Elisha, Healing And Signs And Wonders, Immediate Healing

From the first page of the Old Testament, to the last page of the New Testament, we find many miraculous events, signs and wonders which testify of the awesome Might and Power of the Spirit of El Shaddai, the Almighty God. Most of us are familiar with some of the major stories and events of the Old Testament such as the Creation, Noah's Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Plagues in Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, Mount Sinai, the miracles in the wilderness, the crossing of the Jordan River, Joshua's victory at Jericho, Samson and Delilah, Gideon's victory over the Midianites, David and Goliath, Isaiah, King Hezekiah, the sundial of Ahaz and the defeat of Sennacherib, and the visions of Daniel and Ezekiel. The New Testament is just as impressive with the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ, the miracle of the water turned to wine, Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee, the raising from the dead of Lazarus and others, the story of the fishes and the loaves, the Resurrection of Christ, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the Book of Revelation, etc. In short, as King David said many times, the Holy Scriptures are a clear record of the Omnipotency of our God:

"I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD: That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works."
Psalms 26:6-7, KJV

"O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works."
Psalms 71:17, KJV

"Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works."
Psalms 105:2, KJV

"I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works."
Psalms 145:5, KJV

In Psalm one hundred and seven, we find David proclaiming four times, "Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" In the Book of Revelation, we also find the great multitude proclaiming in a thunderous voice before the Throne of God:

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and

as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

Revelation 19:6, KJV

While I have mentioned some of the major and better known miraculous events of the Bible, there are many more stories sandwiched in between these of which some people are not aware. It isn't that these stories are less important or that they lack the greatness of the others; after all, they all proceed from His Divine Hand; but rather it is due in part to the fact that most cinematographic efforts concentrate on the more popular themes of the Bible. One example of these other miracles concerns the Lord's Power to heal His children of their afflictions. The first example which comes to my mind revolves around the story of Moses and the Children of Israel in the wilderness. Despite the Lord's miraculous deliverance from Egyptian bondage by many signs and great wonders, once the Children of Israel entered the hot desert expanse of the Sinai, some of them began to complain and longed for a return to the land of their captivity. Consider this first example:

"And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me."

Exodus 17:1-4, KJV

Later, after Joshua, Caleb and the other tribal Elders had returned from spying on the inhabitants of the land of Canaan for forty days; when the Children of Israel heard their reports concerning the Anakim, the giants which dwelt in the land, they again complained and regretted having ever left Egypt:

"And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt."

Numbers 14:1-4, KJV

As I have explained before, it was because of their constant murmuring and their lack of faith, that the Lord finally grew weary of their complaining, and cursed them to wander in the wilderness for forty years, each day for a year, until the older unbelieving generation had died off:

"And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die."

Numbers 14:26-35, KJV

Only seven chapters later, we find the story of the serpent of brass. Once again, the Children of Israel angered the Lord by their lack of faith and their constant complaining. They had gone so far astray in their walk with the Lord that they even had the audacity to complain about the Manna which the Lord provided for them during the full forty years that they wandered in the wilderness. On this occasion, the Lord chastised them by sending poisonous vipers into the camp so that many died:

"And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died."

Numbers 21:5-6, KJV

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."

Numbers 21:8-9, KJV

While the Lord used the brass serpent to heal the Children of Israel, it wasn't before long that they began to idolize it just like the many other molten images of the pagan gods they had borrowed from the heathen nations around them. Hundred of years later, good King Hezekiah grew so sick and tired of their idol worship, that not only did he destroy the many altars dedicated to the pagan gods, but he also destroyed the serpent of brass made by Moses. We find the story in the Second Book of the Kings:

"He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan."
2 Kings 18:4, KJV

Another story of Divine Healing is found thirteen chapters before the previous incident in the fifth chapter of the Second Book of the Kings. It involves the Shunammite woman and the Prophet Elisha. In fact, rather than just involving a miracle of Divine Healing, this incident culminated in the actual resurrection from the dead of the woman's son. In the first part of the story, as a kindness to the woman for treating him well, Elisha causes her to become pregnant, even though she is barren, and her husband is old:

"And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old. And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door. And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid. And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life."
2 Kings 4:14-17, KJV

Later, after the child has grown, it appears that he either suffers an accident while working in the fields, or else he is possibly the victim of a brain tumor, or of a brain clot:

"And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out."
2 Kings 4:18-21, KJV

In desperation, the woman seeks out Elisha who, after sending ahead his servant Gehazi to check on the boy, returns with the woman to her house, where he then raises the boy back to life:

"And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son."
2 Kings 4:32-36, KJV

It is interesting to note that some of the miracles which were performed by the Prophet Elisha, were some of the very

same miracles performed by Jesus hundreds of years later, except that the Lord performed them in larger numbers and to a greater degree. Another example of an Old Testament story of Divine Healing concerns Naaman, the captain of the host, or army, of the Syrian king. This story occurs in the very next chapter following the raising from the dead of the Shunammite's son. The story opens by informing us that despite his greatness in the Syrian army, Naaman suffers from leprosy:

"Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper."
2 Kings 5:1, KJV

We are next told that a young Jewish girl, who was brought as a captive to Syria, and who now serves as a slave to Naaman and his wife, informs Naaman's wife that the Prophet Elisha is in Samaria, and that he could very easily heal Naaman of his affliction:

"And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."
2 Kings 5:2-3, KJV

With the blessing of the Syrian king, and a handsome reward for Elisha the Prophet, Naaman sets out for Israel. Upon hearing Naaman's request, the king of Israel suspects that it is a trap in order to give the Syrian king a good reason to once again wage war against Israel:

"And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy. And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me."
2 Kings 5:5-7, KJV

Eventually, Elisha the Prophet receives word of Naaman's request and sends a messenger to the Syrian captain of war with the following unusual instructions:

"And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."
2 Kings 5:10, KJV

Upon hearing Elisha's message, Naaman is both disappointed and angry, as he had expected Elisha to come in person and perform a great miracle for him. He is also upset because Elisha tells him to wash in the Jordan River, instead of in

the cleaner rivers of Syria:

"But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage."
2 Kings 5:11-12, KJV

After receiving some wise counsel from his servants, Naaman finally humbles himself and follows Elisha's instructions by dipping himself seven times in the Jordan River. Upon coming up out of the water the seventh time, he is completely healed of his leprosy:

"And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."
2 Kings 5:13-14, KJV

From these three examples, it is clear to see then that, in addition to many other marvellous signs and wonders, the Lord was actively healing people in the Old Testament via His servants the Prophets. In the New Testament, we also know that healing was a major part of the Lord's Earthly ministry as well; and that He passed on this wonderful Gift, and other Gifts of the Spirit, to His Disciples. Here are some examples for your consideration:

"But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;"
Matthew 12:15, KJV

"And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all."
Luke 6:19, KJV

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."
Matthew 10:5-8, KJV

"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them."
Acts 5:14-15, KJV

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the

miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed."
Acts 8:5-7, KJV

At this point, I think it is important that I remind you that we must all be on our guard against Satan's lies and deceptions through his human agents; that is, through the many false prophets, healers, psychics and messiahs who have already begun to manifest themselves in our current time. I discuss this topic more in-depth in such articles as "Lying Wonders Of The Endtime". We all must really try, or test, the spirits to see if they are truly of God:

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

1 John 4:1, KJV

While this may shock some of you, I don't doubt that Satan can give his agents the power to heal others, just like the servants of God are able to do. Furthermore, I don't doubt that Satan can purposely afflict people with some disease or malady, and then send one of his deceptive agents to perform a bona fide healing; all for the purpose of capturing the ignorant in his web of deceit through physical signs; so that he can then lead them astray through false doctrine. Remember, Satan's signs and wonders are going to be so powerfully deceptive, that if it were possible, he would deceive the very Elect! That means even me and you! You will also recall that the Apostle Paul tells us that the Jewish Antichrist will in fact show that he is "God" by such things. He will appear as an "angel of light":

"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

Matthew 24:24, KJV

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, KJV

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

2 Corinthians 11:13-15, KJV

A close reading of the Scriptures will quickly reveal that the miracles of healing performed by Jesus and the Early Disciples were immediate and on the spot. Likewise today, they should be instantaneous, within the hour or even sooner. The Lord does not need hours, or days, or weeks, or months, or several years to heal someone. Nowhere in the Bible, either in the Old Testament or in the New Testament,

do we find such "prolonged" processes of healing where a person is told to go home and wait for a few days or a week for their healing to occur. Such an event would totally negate the Power of God; because the unbelievers could then attribute it to the medicine a certain person is taking, or to the time factor, or to the body's natural healing process, etc. However, when God truly works through His children to heal others, it is on the spot deliverance from the affliction. In this way, absolutely no one except the most hard-hearted individuals can then deny the Power of God. It happens so quickly, that there is no other plausible reason, be it medical or otherwise, to explain it; and therefore, God must be given the glory. Consider the following examples from the New Testament, where the Lord revealed His Power by immediately healing these people in every single instance; and in some cases, they had been lifelong afflictions from birth:

"And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."
Matthew 8:3, KJV

"And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour."
Matthew 8:13, KJV

"So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him."
Matthew 20:34, KJV

"And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them."
Mark 1:31, KJV

"And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed."
Mark 1:42, KJV

"And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion."
Mark 2:12, KJV

"And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment."
Mark 5:42, KJV

"And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain."
Mark 7:35, KJV

"And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."
Mark 10:52, KJV

"Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd . . . And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately."
Luke 8:44, 47, KJV

"And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength."
Acts 3:7, KJV

"And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately."
Acts 9:34, KJV

"And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand."
Acts 13:11, KJV

The previous examples are clear confirmations of Jesus' own words when He said that the word and work of the true Disciples and Prophets would be confirmed by great signs which would follow, or accompany, them. This would be solid proof that they had been sent by God, and that they were not charlatans:

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."
Mark 16:15-20, KJV

Here are a few additional verses which confirm the many signs and wonders which accompanied the First Disciples as they carried out their ministry for the Lord:

"And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."
Luke 10:17-20, KJV

"And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles."
Acts 2:43, KJV

"And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and

wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch."
Acts 5:12, KJV

"And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people."
Acts 6:8, KJV

"Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."
Acts 8:13, KJV

"And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."
Acts 8:39, KJV

"Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."
Acts 14:3, KJV

"Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them."
Acts 15:12, KJV

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series.

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ARE THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT FOR TODAY? : PART 2

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Are Spiritual Gifts Not For Today?, Twisting The Scriptures, Balancing The Scriptures, The Perfection To Come, Gift Of Prophecy And Tongues, Pentecost And The Outpouring Of The Spirit, Foreign Languages, Gift Of Knowledge, The Dead And Blind, One Body But Different Members And Spiritual Gifts

Sadly, some religionists today claim that we no longer need all of these great signs and miraculous wonders. They argue that these things were for times past when the Lord had to encourage and strengthen His Early Church through these physical manifestations. These people insist that these miracles were done in order to establish God's Authority within the fledging Church; and to win the First Generation Disciples who would become the spiritual progenitors of the

born-again nation of the Children of God who would come after them. According to those who support this false view, once these things were accomplished, the Gifts of the Spirit ceased. One popular verse they use, or misuse, in order to try to add weight to their claim is the following:

"Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away."
1 Corinthians 13:8, KJV

Based on this one verse, some of the more conservative churches, such as some of the Baptists, do not even allow the Gifts of the Spirit to be manifested within their congregations. I have witnessed this firsthand. The Gifts of the Spirit are simply explained away or attributed to other more mundane things such as driving kids to Sunday school class, or being the church organist. While these things require skill, they are definitely not what Jesus or Paul or anyone else was referring to when speaking of the Gifts and the Manifestations of the Spirit. In my view, even using the above verse by itself is a Scriptural injustice. It is, as Peter called it, a wresting, or a twisting or a perverting, of the Scriptures:

"As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."
2 Peter 3:16, KJV

Notice that Peter tells us that the reason that these people try to change the true meaning of the Scriptures, is because they are spiritually unlearned or unstable. In other words, they don't have a leg to stand on; they are wobbly. Their doctrines are spiritually off-balance because they are not firmly founded upon the whole Word of God; and they know it. They don't carefully compare Scripture with Scripture as I have exhorted my readers to do on many occasions such as in the article entitled "Rightly Dividing The Word Of Truth". This is precisely what we are commanded to do in the Bible:

"Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:"
Isaiah 28:9-10, KJV

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
2 Timothy 2:15, KJV

This idea of dissecting the Scriptures is a very common practice within churches and organizations which yield themselves to the spirit of exclusivity which I thoroughly discuss in "Elijah: Where Are the True Prophets of God?". As I also point out in the article "A Biblical Cafeteria or the Whole Course?", some of these people pick and choose what they want to believe. If it is something which they can't accept or don't want to believe, then those bothersome

verses are simply ignored, are not included in the church's or the organization's instructional materials, or else they are explained in a way which is totally contrary to the Truth. If one were to continue reading what Paul says right after the previous verse from Corinthians, this is what he would find:

"For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

1 Corinthians 13:9-10, KJV

Notice when Paul says that some of these Gifts of the Spirit will cease; "when that which is perfect is come". In my mind, the only thing, or better said, the only One who is perfect is Jesus Christ. Has Jesus returned yet? Not that I am aware of; so "that which is perfect" has not come yet either; which implies that these Gifts of the Spirit are still in operation. Not only that, but as I have pointed out before, when the Lord returns, we will also be perfected, or made whole and complete; because we will at last receive our full Salvation in the form of our new Glorified Bodies. This idea seems to be supported by the very next verses, as well as by the fifteenth chapter of this same Epistle, part of which I quote below. In other words, Paul is telling us that some of these Gifts are only temporary, and that they will cease when "that which is perfect is come". He then proceeds only two chapters later to tell us what he means by this phrase. It is one continuous thought from chapter twelve, where he first begins discussing the Gifts of the Spirit, to chapter fifteen where he explains the perfection which is to come:

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

1 Corinthians 13:11-12, KJV

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

1 Corinthians 15:51-52, KJV

When Jesus returns, "that which is perfect" will have indeed come; and not only will we see Him face to face, and see Him as He is, but we ourselves will be transformed to be just like Him. Praise God!:

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

1 John 3:2, KJV

So again, I believe that what Paul is really saying is that once Jesus Christ returns to this Earth, once we see Him face to face, once we are changed and glorified, there will no longer be the need for some of these Gifts. Notice also

the specific Gifts which Paul says will cease. First he mentions the Gift of Prophecy and the Gift of Tongues. In my view, some people today do not fully understand the purpose for these two Gifts, particularly the Gift of Tongues. In the fourteenth chapter, Paul offers a partial explanation of what these Gifts are for:

"Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying . . . I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."
1 Corinthians 14:1-5, 18-19, KJV

The gist of Paul's discourse is that the Gifts of Prophecy and Tongues are to serve as a means of communication. They are a Divine Link between Heaven and Earth. We use them to communicate with the Lord, and to communicate the Lord's messages to the brethren for the edification of the whole Body. However, a closer examination of the previous verses, as well as a few others, reveals that there may actually be two different types of Tongues which, while being closely related, are not identical. The Gift of Tongues mentioned above appears to be referring to a personal communication between our spirit and the Lord. It is for our own personal edification and inspiration. This may also be what Paul is referring to in the following verses:

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."
Romans 8:26-27, KJV

"For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful."
1 Corinthians 14:14, KJV

These verses seem to be describing God's Holy Spirit within us making direct intercession to the Father for us by means of indecipherable Tongues, or groanings, which our carnal minds do not understand. At the same time, there is another form of Tongues, which in my opinion, is probably the primary form of speaking in Tongues being as it edifies more people, and is more likely to bring people to Christ if they don't already know Him. It is for this reason that Paul specifically tells us that this second type of Tongues is primarily for the unbelievers; because by witnessing this Gift, they are convinced of the Power of God, and may then come to accept the Lord:

"Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe."

1 Corinthians 14:22, KJV

Exactly what is this second kind of Tongues of which Paul is speaking? The following verses provide us with an interesting clue:

"Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret . . . If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret."

1 Corinthians 14:13, 27, KJV

The key word here is "interpret". As the following verses will clearly confirm without a shadow of a doubt, the second and most important kind of Unknown Tongues is simply foreign languages. If you are a Christian who is able to speak a foreign language, then you are capable of reaching twice as many people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as a person who does not speak any foreign languages. Now imagine if you will, a group of born-again Spirit-filled Christians in Jerusalem two thousand years ago who suddenly begin speaking in foreign languages which they have never studied or spoken before. The fact that some of the Apostles were unlearned men is clarified for us by the following verse from Luke's account in Acts:

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

Acts 4:13, KJV

I discuss this topic more fully in such articles as "The Only Credentials You Need!". So then, imagine if you will that this sudden speaking in foreign languages is done in the presence of thousands of visitors to Jerusalem. How would you describe such a scene? Luke was faced with the same situation, and here is what he had to say:

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?"

Acts 2:4-12, KJV

Of course, Satan's emissaries who were present, were not about to accept this obvious manifestation of the Spirit and Power of Almighty God, El Shaddai; so like some modern-day religionists who also try to dismiss the Gifts of the Spirit with their lukewarm explanations, the Jews weakly accused the Disciples of being drunk. Even their trick of bribing the Roman guards at Jesus' tomb was a little more ingenious than this, even though it also failed to smother the young flames of Christianity:

"Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine."
Acts 2:13, KJV

Were the Disciples really drunk? The answer is "no" and "yes". While they weren't drunk on wine made from grapes, the Apostles and Disciples were most definitely drunk on the wine of the Spirit of God! As King David and the Prophet Joel wrote, these vessels of the Lord, the First Disciples, were anointed by God's oil of the Spirit, and filled to overflowing:

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."
Psalms 23:5, KJV

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call."
Joel 2:28-32, KJV

Whether or not the above verses are really a prophecy of the Endtime as some Christians believe is a matter of personal speculation. Regardless, upon hearing the false accusation of the jealous Jewish leaders, Peter immediately launched into the following discourse in order to explain to those present what was really happening. He quoted from these very same prophecies of Joel and said that they were fulfilled that very day:

"But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs

in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."
Acts 2:14-21, KJV

Were the Disciples just babbling in loud confusion foaming at their mouths and rolling on the floor like we see in some so-called Spirit-filled churches today? Definitely not! We are clearly told that all of these visitors to Jerusalem "heard them speak in his own language". Then we see them ask "And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" Exactly why did God allow this to happen? In order to do exactly as Paul had said; to be a sign to the unbelievers of the wonderful Power of God! These visitors confirmed this themselves when they said "we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God". You see. Speaking in Unknown Tongues, that is, in a foreign language which you have never personally endeavored to learn, is primarily to serve as a witness to the unbelievers. This incident at Jerusalem makes this very clear.

In a way, there is a bit of irony involved in the day of Pentecost. The reason I say this is because in the Old Testament, the Lord used the confusion of tongues to stop Nimrod and his followers from building the city and tower of Babel. As I explain in the series "John Lennon's Imagine and Secular Humanism", under the inspiration of Satan, Babel was one of man's earliest attempts to achieve greatness without God. Turning the situation completely around, here in the Book of Acts we see the Lord using the ability to speak many foreign languages, as a means to bring people together so that they can all hear and understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Clearly, God is in charge of the show, and He can do things however it pleases Him!

Luke then very specifically tells us what nationalities were present to witness this marvellous manifestation of God's Holy Spirit: Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Jews, Cappadocians, Egyptians, Cyreneans, Romans Cretians, Arabians, and people from Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia. If you translate all of these names to their modern-day counterparts, you will quickly discover that the Lord did this mighty miracle in order to send out a message of Salvation to people native to an area extending from Italy, to Greece, to Turkey, to Syria, to Iraq, to Iran, and all the way down to the countries of North Africa and the islands of the Mediterranean Sea! This was one massive witnessing campaign! It was like a worldwide telecast of God's Spirit! In other words, representatives of the entire Mediterranean area were reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ in one single day! This manifestation of the Gift of Tongues, that is, unlearned foreign languages, served as a tool to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God. Isn't this what Jesus told His Disciples that they were to do?:

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."
John 15:16, KJV

After Peter and the rest of the Disciples had refuted the accusation of being drunk, and after they had delivered a powerful message to this huge crowd, do you know what happened next? We find the answer towards the very end of this same chapter of Acts:

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Acts 2:41-42, KJV

Thus we see that this powerful manifestation of God's Spirit bore immediate fruit. In case you are wondering what they did with so many new converts in one day, I invite you to read my series "Where Are the First Century Churches?". It is filled with many Scriptures explaining the pattern of the Early Church; the very same pattern which churches today are supposed to be following. I wouldn't be surprised if some of these converts in Jerusalem eventually returned to their homelands in order to share with their relatives and friends all of the wonderful things they had witnessed in Jerusalem. Perhaps the Lord allowed them to remain in Jerusalem for a time so they could obtain a firm foundation in the Word of God at the feet of the Apostles; however, in God's perfect time, quite possibly at the time of the great persecution which began with the martyrdom of Stephen in Acts chapter seven, many of them returned to their native lands carrying the Seed of Faith with them. This was clearly the Wisdom of God at work. Consider the following verses:

"And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him."

Acts 8:1-2, KJV

"Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."

Acts 11:19-21, KJV

Thus we see the far-reaching effects of speaking in foreign tongues in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. In the previous verses from his first Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul also said that the Gift of Knowledge will cease. Why is that? Again, the answer seems rather simple to me; because we will be in the presence of the Lord; and He is the very Living Word of God. We will no longer have to be guessing about all of these deep Endtime prophecies and other issues which continue to puzzle us. I don't doubt that the Lord will be happy to clear up our understanding regarding these things. Won't that be really wonderful? As I have said

before, I am sure we each have our little list of questions tucked away in the back of our minds. In fact, the Apostle John informs us that once Jesus returns, and we are changed and/or resurrected, the Mystery of God will be completed. In other words, everything will be made plain to us, just as Jesus made the Old Testament Scriptures clear to His First Disciples following His Resurrection:

"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"
Luke 24:27-32, KJV

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets."
Revelation 10:7, KJV

Notice however, that in the thirteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul does not mention any cessation of the other Gifts of the Spirit. One specific Gift he does not mention is the Gift of Healing. Again, the reason for this can be found in the Scriptures. Even though Jesus will have returned for His children, and even though we will be in our new Spiritual Bodies, in the future there are still going to be people living on the New Earth who are going to require healing, at least spiritual healing, just as they do now. Consider the Apostle John's words in the Book of Revelation:

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."
Revelation 22:2, KJV

The full significance of the previous verse may be much more profound than you realize. I will be sharing my personal thoughts on the possible symbolism of the Tree Of Life in a separate article. In regards to this current article however, the primary point I wish to make is that the Gift of Healing is one which will not cease, as will some of the others. Considering the volume of verses I have provided on this issue, I can only come to the conclusion that those who support the idea of the Gifts of the Spirit having ceased long ago, are clearly in the wrong. In my view, those who teach this false doctrine are denying the Power of the Spirit of God; and thus must not only be spiritually dead themselves, but spiritually blinded to the Truth of the Scriptures as well. Jesus had similar thoughts towards the staunch religionists of His day who denied God's Spirit working through Him:

". . . Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."
Luke 9:60b, KJV

"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."
Matthew 15:14, KJV

Similar to the rebellious unbelieving Jews of two thousand years ago, those who are spiritually dead today don't even realize it. They may still be going through all of the proper motions outwardly, but inwardly they are spiritually cold and dead. They are like a corpse which is still going through its final convulsions. Unfortunately, those who do not have any spiritual discernment, mistake these nervous twitches for real spiritual life, when it really isn't. Jesus just as much said the very same thing:

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."
Revelation 3:1, KJV

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."
Matthew 23:27, KJV

While I believe that the Gifts of the Spirit are still in operation today, allow me add a degree of balance to my previous statements by saying that not all Christians seem to manifest them; and of those that do, they are not necessarily the same with each person. The Apostle Paul emphasized this point in the twelfth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians when he wrote:

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will . . . And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."
1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28, KJV

Thus we see that while all of these Gifts originate with one and the selfsame Spirit, it is the Lord who determines which Gifts He bestows upon each individual. I would speculate that the Lord probably gives those Gifts which would be most beneficial to a person's particular calling and ministry; or as Paul says, "to every man to profit withal".

Please go to part three for the conclusion of this series.

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ARE THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT FOR TODAY? : PART 3

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One Body But Different Members And Spiritual Gifts, Seducing Spirits And Lying Wonders, Choosing The Right Church, No Spiritual Gifts Or A Lack Of Faith?, More Reading Resources

One thing which the Apostle Paul makes absolutely clear, is that whenever these Gifts are in operation within a certain Body of Believers, they will result in good fruit which will edify and uplift all. He sums up how the Spiritual Gifts should manifest themselves in the following verses:

"Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret . . . If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints . . . Let all things be done decently and in order."
1 Corinthians 14:13, 27-33, 40, KJV

This leads us to another important topic concerning the various Gifts of the Spirit which I touched on earlier. One dangerous pitfall into which some churches have fallen, such as some of the Roman Catholic charismatics, as well as the Pentecostals, is that of being taken over, or possessed, by a false spirit which attempts to imitate God's true Holy Spirit. Don't ever forget that Satan is a copycat; he is an imitator; and he is a usurper who unrightfully tries to take that which is not his. This deceptive spirit tries to convince its deluded victims that it is the true Light of God; and that its manifestations are of a Divine Nature, when in fact they are not. Remember again the Apostle Paul's admonition:

"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

2 Corinthians 11:14, KJV

As we saw previously, Satan, via the Son of Perdition, and the many other false prophets of the Endtime, may soon reveal his full power by using all kinds of seemingly "celestial signs" and "miraculous wonders", including miracles of healing, visions, false prophecies, etc., in order to trick the unwary. Maybe some people are being "slain" by the spirit in their churches, but it certainly isn't the Holy Spirit with which I am familiar! It is a deceptive demonic spirit of which we are warned to beware! It is what Paul also referred to as a "seducing spirit". If you have any doubts whatsoever about these people who foam at the mouth and fall all over the place, and writhe in what they call "spiritual ecstasy", then I seriously advise you to consider the following verses:

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;"
1 Timothy 4:1, KJV

"And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not."
Mark 9:18, KJV

"And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him."
Luke 9:39, KJV

Of course, Satan doesn't always manifest himself in such graphic forms. Sometimes he can be very subtle such as through his "healings". In addition to this, on the opposite end from the "holy rollers", we find a number of Roman Catholic "prophets" and "visionaries" who have made all kinds of false predictions which have never come to pass; and they continue making them to this very day. One in particular whom I am very familiar with, because I have read many of his prophecies, is John Leary. Most of these false prophets are rather harmless and usually end up hanging themselves sooner or later; particularly when they make a specific time prophecy which doesn't come to pass. Again, you will find this topic discussed in "Lying Wonders Of The Endtime", "Elijah: Where Are The True Prophets Of God?", "The Office Of A Prophet", etc. As I stated in those articles, the Lord, through Moses, gave us some very clear advice as to how to react to such false prophets:

"But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."
Deuteronomy 18:20-22, KJV

Another set of verses I have shared a number of times before is the following where Jesus provides us with the ultimate test for determining the status of a prophet:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
Matthew 7:15-20, KJV

The above verses can not only be applied to so-called prophets of our modern day, but they can also be applied to any situation you encounter in any church or organization you happen to join or visit. Exactly what kind of a spirit reigns over the place? Is it a spirit of peace, or is it a spirit of confusion? When you first walk in the doors on Saturday, Sunday or Wednesday night, what is your first impression? Is there a lot of confusion of tongues and many people "prophesying" at once? If so, I seriously doubt that this is the Lord's Spirit. Remember again the previous admonitions I shared from the Apostle Paul. The spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. God is not the author of confusion. Let all things be done decently and in order. Just because there is a lot of music, and people singing and jumping up and down, and folks "prophesying" and "speaking in tongues", and foaming at the mouth, does not mean that God's Spirit is present; in fact, it isn't. Getting all excited, and hot and sweaty is a work of the flesh, and not of God's Spirit.

Let me again remind you of a story from the First Book of the Kings. When King Jehoshaphat of Judah, and King Ahab of Israel, decided to war against the king of Syria, the true Prophet of God, Micaiah, was outnumbered by four hundred false prophets who also had the gift of prophecy from their father the devil! In the end, the Prophet of God was vindicated, while Ahab was destroyed because he listened to the advice of his false prophets. There is also the example in the First Book of Kings of the lone true Prophet Elijah who slew the four hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal who were powerless before El Shaddai, the Almighty God of Israel. The point is, don't be deceived by numbers when you are looking for true manifestations of God's Spirit. The following verse from the Book of Proverbs holds a lot of truth if you can accept it:

"It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house."
Proverbs 21:9, KJV

In addition to looking for the actual fruits of the Gifts of the Spirit in a particular church or organization, such as changed lives, new people coming to the Lord, unity of the Spirit, etc., another primary requisite to consider is exactly how much time is devoted to the actual Word of God. I am not referring to Sunday school catechisms or other printed materials which are full of the dry words and

spiritless wisdom of the founder(s) of that particular church or organization, such as their so-called "church fathers", "apostles", "saints" or their self-appointed "prophets", but rather to actual verses of Scripture straight from the Bible; and in my particular case, that means the tried and proven 1611 Authorized King James Bible. If you spend an hour in fellowship, and only five or ten minutes is devoted to the actual Word of God; and if this happens week after week, I would say that you are in the wrong place. How many of you can eat a ten minute meal and survive all week without eating another meal? Doesn't that sound ridiculous? Well, that is exactly what you are doing if you stay in such churches or organizations.

If all you are getting is a lot of loud music, singing, dancing, "prophesying" and "tongues", but no real soul food, again, you are definitely in the wrong place. You can go to a rock concert and feel the same way. You will come out of there just as hyped up in the flesh, but your spirit will be starving to death. You are better off staying home and reading your Bible on your own and asking the Lord to enlighten you by His Spirit; and He will if you ask Him to in sincerity:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:"
Matthew 7:7, KJV

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"
Luke 11:13, KJV

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."
James 1:5, KJV

Even if you are in a church or organization which quotes the Word of God, unless they are actually living it, what good is it doing anyone? There are a lot of great preachers out there who get paid big money to preach up a storm; but unless they have the Anointing of God's Spirit, it won't move a soul. It won't bring a single person to Christ. It won't convict a single person to change their ways. Those people will come back the very next week to hear the same spiritless platitudes all over again. This is precisely what happened with the four hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal. They were yelling and cutting themselves with knives, but still ole Baal didn't wake up and send fire down from the sky to devour their offering. The Prophet Elijah found the whole situation to be quite hilarious:

"And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded."

1 Kings 18:27-29, KJV

As we know, after this display of phony spirituality by the false prophets of Baal, the true God of Israel harkened to Elijah and sent down fire to totally devour his water-soaked offering to the Lord; once again showing the true Might and Power of El Shaddai; and vindicating His true Prophet:

"And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there."

1 Kings 18:36-40, KJV

The point of all of this is to show that if a church, organization or individual has the true Spirit of God, the Gifts of the Spirit will be manifested in their lives in some way; and it will bear positive fruit for the glory of God. Before concluding this article, let's consider the facts one more time: Throughout the Old Testament we find many clear examples of great signs and wonders, including different manifestations of the Spirit. Likewise, in the New Testament, Jesus' ministry was filled with manifestations of the Spirit. The ministries of His Apostles and the First Disciples which followed after them were also filled with the manifestations of the Gifts of the Spirit. Finally, towards the end of the First Century, when the final Book of Revelation was given, John was still manifesting the Gifts of the Spirit, particularly the Gift of Prophecy. In other words, clear up to the very end of the Holy Bible, we encounter different manifestations of the Gifts of the Spirit. Nowhere is there any sign of them having ever ceased.

So the question then is this: If the Gifts of the Spirit didn't end by the last verse on the last page of the last chapter of the last book of the Bible, then where did they end? What solid Scriptural foundation are these people using to make such a claim? At what point in the history of the true Christian Church did God say, "Okay, it's all over. I am withdrawing the Gifts of the Spirit now. You don't need them anymore."? Could it be that this is just an invention of the compromising Roman Catholic Church and her spiritless daughters? If we are not currently witnessing many true miracles and great signs and wonders within the so-called Christian world, then I suspect that it is not because the Lord has withdrawn His Spirit, but rather because those who claim to be His Prophets and Emissaries do not really have His Spirit, or else they do not possess the faith that they should have in order to manifest the Gifts of the Spirit.

Remember again what Jesus said in Luke chapter eighteen:

" . . . Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

Luke 18:8b, KJV

It seems really odd to me that from one end of the Bible to the other, we find all of these examples of the Lord manifesting His great Power through His chosen vessels; yet today, in what many view as the Endtime, when we would expect the greatest manifestations of His Spirit to be present in order to combat the greatest manifestations of evil, there is basically nothing. Could it be then that those who claim that the Gifts of the Spirit are no longer in operation today are simply trying to cover their own tracks, and their own inability to take the Lord at His Word and have the faith to expect miracles? This is a very sobering thought as it points to every single one of us who claims to be a Christian. It is definitely an idea worth pondering. The only other possibility that I can see is that in these Last Days, the Lord has indeed chosen to withdraw His Spirit except for a very small portion, because He is sick and tired of a rebellious unbelieving world. In other words, maybe we don't deserve any signs, just as Jesus told the unbelieving Jews of His day:

"But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:"

Matthew 12:39, KJV

Perhaps this is in preparation for the arrival of the Beast and the False Prophet. I discuss this topic in such articles as "Who is Hindering the Antichrist?", "Age of Deception, Age of Delusion", etc. Personally, I don't believe that the Lord is going to pour out His Spirit if He knows that it is just going to be wasted, or else used inappropriately. As we have already seen, when the Lord does permit such wonderful manifestations of the Spirit, it is usually for the specific purpose of bearing fruit for the Kingdom of God. Perhaps because of our pride and our self-righteous attitudes, the Lord knows that He can no longer trust most men with such precious Gifts, because they would abuse them, and allow them to inflate their pride beyond measure. This is clearly brought out in "Elijah: Where Are the True Prophets of God?". None of us can deny that possessing such a Gift as healing would be truly wonderful. Just imagine if we could not only heal people's spirits by bringing them to Jesus Christ, but we could also heal their sick and broken bodies as well. Sadly, for most of us, myself included, it would inflate our pride like a hot-air balloon!

With these remarks, I am going to bring this series to a close. I believe I have given all of us some serious things to think and pray about. I trust that this series has been instructive, and a blessing in your life. If you have enjoyed it, please consider sharing its URL with your online friends. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter or Google+, I would also appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of resources below which were also mentioned in this article, and which are likewise located on the Endtime Prophecy Net web server:

Lying Wonders of the Endtime
Elijah - Where Are the True Prophets of God?
The Office of a Prophet
Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
A Biblical Cafeteria or the Whole Course?
The Only Credentials You Need
John Lennon's Imagine and Secular Humanism
Where Are the First Century Churches?
Who is Hindering the Antichrist?
Age of Deception, Age of Delusion

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