The background of the book cover is a close-up photograph of blue flames, rendered in a semi-transparent, ethereal style. The flames are bright and dynamic, with various shades of blue and white at their tips. The overall effect is one of intense energy and light.

The
Skeptic's Guide
to

TONGUES AND PROPHECY

THEOLOGICAL ANSWERS TO THE TOUGHEST
QUESTIONS OF CURIOUS CHRISTIANS

PETER HAAS

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(Rough Draft #2) Introduction

So, what's the real truth about all this "unknown tongues" business? Or what about these people who claim to still be receiving prophecies from God? Don't get me wrong: I never wanted to be a doubting Thomas; but, really, the last thing the world needs is another religious nut. And I'm certainly not an eager volunteer to become the next one.

But, *what if God always intended unknown tongues and prophecy to be a normal part of Christianity?* What if there was more to Christianity than I was currently experiencing? After all, it's rather arrogant to think that any of us are remotely close to resembling "true Christianity".

In fact, here's a disturbing thought: Did you know that Jesus promised that his *true followers would do even greater miracles than he did?* (Read John 14:11-14). *I know...*It sounds rather sensational. In fact, when I first read that verse, it disturbed me for months. I mean, how could I claim to be a follower of Jesus without "greater miracles" to show (Mk. 16:17ff)? There *had* to be more to Biblical Christianity than Bible study and church services.

Equally disturbing is the disclaimer from the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost who proclaimed: "*These men are not drunk, as you suppose*" (Acts 2:15). If God gave me a "gift" that undermined my basic credibility in the community, I'd think twice before receiving it, wouldn't you? Previously, I always thought that God should have hired a public relations consultant before releasing this "gift" to the world. Talk about creating an instant crisis for his church right off the bat. What in the world was God thinking?

It's almost as if God was purposely trying to make it impossible for the Apostles to create a dignified and credible movement. That God would even put his disciples in this precarious position was disturbing to me. Thus, it is quite arguable that Biblical Christianity, at its roots, is both unavoidably supernatural as well as scandalous.

Yet, despite these themes in scripture, I wasn't about to open up my front door and start shouting in tongues anytime soon. I mean, *so what* if there's a few people who claim to be able to speak in tongues and prophesy; because, ...well, there's *also* a good number of people who think that they were abducted by aliens. In other words: Yes, I'm really hungry for more of God. Sign me up. *BUT*, I really want it to be Biblical truth. I've never been all that interested in creating my own cult. So, as a young believer, when it came to the "miraculous manifestations" of Christianity, I was quite content to take it at a slow pace – if only God would have allowed this.

During the summer of 1993 I found myself doing missionary evangelism in Ghana, Africa. I was ministering with a group of people who believed in both tongues and prophetic gifts of the Spirit. And, not surprisingly, they also believed in divine healing. Thus, at one of our events, one of our team mates taught that God wanted to heal the sick among them. I consciously remember thinking: *Wow, talk about a bold message. I don't think I'd be comfortable praying for people like that.* Next thing I knew, I had a blind woman in her late 30's begging for me to restore her sight. Her sister apparently led her to the nearest "white guy" standing close to the speaker. At first I thought, "*You may want to get someone else for that.*" But she had no where else to turn. I mean, this was a really rough place to have a disability like that.

Naturally, the opportunity sparked my curiosity. I mean, it couldn't hurt to throw up a hail-mary type of prayer. I mean, if nothing was to happen, oh well... I'd never see her again. And, I can't blame her for trying. So we laid hands on her forehead and began to pray a simple and sincere prayer.

Suddenly, she began to scream... putting her hands before her eyes and waving them. She began running in place and started spinning around. After realizing that I wasn't hallucinating, I came to terms with the fact that this woman had really been healed, (and I still wasn't sure that God even did such things.)

Looking back, I'm sure God was laughing at me. He knew that this experience would force me to sort out my large pile of theological baggage. Quite naturally, the moment I got home, I began reading every book on miraculous Christianity that I could find.

What I hated about all the books I found was that they were 90% experiential and 10% Biblical. I mean, the stories were great but, I had some pretty tough questions. It seemed like none of the books would really deal with the deeper issues that were floating around in my skeptical brain. I mean, I can understand why many people denounce tongues and spiritual gifts as un-Biblical. Good systematic teachings are hard to find. However, the same accusation could be made against the "anti-tongues and anti-miraculous" arguments.

To be thorough, I read a good number of books claiming that speaking in tongues and the prophetic were of the devil. Often times, these books were even harder to read because their authors were so convinced they were right that they forgot to give decent arguments. Their attempts to properly interpret 1 Corinthians 14 were almost laughable at times (if they even tried). In my heart I kept thinking: *where is the literature that really digests the scriptures?*

So, between 1995-'96 I set out to discover what we can solidly derive from scriptures regarding the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in "unknown tongues", as well as the supernatural "gifts of the spirit". I began to create argument outlines to help me make a confident decision about their doctrinal legitimacy. So, after thousands of hours, I finally managed to assemble my musings into this quirky little manual that you're now reading.

So, here you are: I'm presuming that, like me, you want to scratch a deeper theological itch. I'm glad you're here. But, before you continue, I feel compelled to give you a few disclaimers:

First of all, I don't presumptively claim to be the "Bible-truth answer-man". Although I tried to write this manual as systematically as possible, please realize that I'm still sorting out my theology. I'm merely hoping that my thoughts might aid you on your quest. Please remember to use your own discernment.

Secondly, I'm writing this with no intension of publishing it. If you're looking for typical Peter-Haas storytelling and humor, you won't find much here. I'm only writing this to help a few of my friends here at Substance. And after discovering my ninth spelling error, you'll quickly realize that I haven't had anyone proof-read this yet.

Lastly, much of this theology falls into the realm of "secondary doctrine": I.e., doctrines derived from *implicit teachings* of scripture. I will try to avoid making Biblically gray issues more black and white than they really are. I also realize that these doctrines can become quite a lightning rod in certain circles. But, there's no reason to burn your Aunt Bessie's Bible study group for believing or not believing anything in this book. I don't want to provide ammunition for the local Pharisee club in your church. Besides, we have a great commission to fulfill. And in an age of theological hyper-critique, we would do well to get a bit more humility and hesitancy when approaching any theologically complex issue.

So, my real goal is simple: to provide insights that might help you know this amazing God better. I hope that this manual helps you do just that.

- Peter R. Haas - 2005

"Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything; hold onto the good"
(1 Thess. 5:19-21)

"Therefore my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues"
(1 Cor. 14:39)

Chapter One:

What is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the Spiritual Gifts?

In Acts chapter 19 we see the story of Paul running into other disciples in Ephesus. The very first thing he asked them was, “*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*” I mean, of all things Paul could have asked, *why did he start with this question?* Even more, what does this aggressive curiosity say about Paul’s theological priorities?

For quite some time I struggled with this passage. I kept thinking, “*weren’t there more important issues to be discussing?*” I mean, with all of the profound theological issues that the New Testament church was processing, why would Paul make this a *primary discussion* amidst disciples the very moment he meets them? The text seems to imply that this was such an important issue to Paul that it was the main question out of his mouth whenever he met new disciples.

Even more, Paul wasn’t the only New Testament figure to apparently make a big deal out of this experience. It seems that the whole thesis of the book of Acts hinges upon this ongoing “reception of the Holy Spirit” (see Acts 1:8).

In Acts chapter 8, Luke writes about the Samaritan revival. He explicitly states that,

“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts. 8:14-16)

“So important was this experience that they sent Peter and John to go pray for them.”

In other words, we have a bunch of newly converted and baptized believers. And when the Apostles in Jerusalem heard about this, they felt compelled to make sure that they had “received the Holy Spirit”. After all, they had “*merely been baptized.*”

It seems that Luke makes “water baptism” out to be a lame opening band. I mean, this

“reception experience” seemed so important that the Apostles had to send the big-wigs to go pray for them!¹ Even more, the text seems to imply that even the heavy hitters, such as Peter and John, couldn’t simply “perform the ritual” and call it a done-deal. All they could do was merely “pray” that this experience would come. In other words, the actions of the apostles don’t make much sense unless we view this experience as critical to New Testament Christianity.

So naturally, I began to ask, *if this issue is so important to Luke, Paul, Peter, John and the rest of the Apostles, then what exactly is it? And secondarily, why should I NOT leave “my Jerusalem” without it?*

A Movement of Theological Rebirth?

In recent decades the doctrines surrounding the baptism of the Holy Spirit have become rather popular in the United States due to the vast charismatic renewal of the 1970's and the huge independent charismatic church movement of the 1980's. Even more so, it has become a rather large issue due to the fact that charismatics and their doctrines have been one of the fastest growing theological movements of Christians within the last century... and perhaps all of Christian history.

Some studies have found that over 88.6% of all global conversion growth is happening in charismatic-oriented churches. Also termed “core apostolics”, these miracle believing Christians are dramatically altering the very foundations of Global Christianity. Author, James Rutz remarked that if the current trend continues “...*the current core apostolic growth rate would produce a world entirely composed of core apostolic Christians by 2032. Of course, straight line projections are a fool’s game because life never goes in a straight line... Still, at the rate we’re growing now, to be comically precise, there would be more Christians than people by the autumn of 2032, about 8.2 billion.*”²

The once anti-pentecostal professor C. Peter Wagner did a study on the growth of charismatics throughout the world. From 1975 to 1985 alone, Charismatics grew from 96 million to 247 million (a 157% growth rate per decade). Dr. Wagner, who was not charismatic at that time, concluded that “*No other non-political, non-militaristic human movement in history has grown as rapidly as the Pentecostal/charismatic movement has over the past 40 years.*”³

¹ Historically, the Samaritans were a rather despised group by the common Jew. Therefore many conclude that Peter and John were merely sent as an official delegation to formally signal “Samaritan acceptance” into the true church. Perhaps this was so. But it’s rather striking for Luke to go out of his way to make the dramatic statement, “they had merely been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus”. Thus, I feel that it’s rather odd for us to interpret Luke to be emphasizing racial reconciliation more than the theological importance of “receiving the Holy Spirit”.

² Taken from the book *Mega Shift* by James Rutz. His book aims to document the vast change of active Christianity and how we can get in sync with these changes.

³ This quotation is from C.Peter Wagner’s wonderful book *How to have a Healing Ministry in Any Church* written to catalogue many of the distinct developments in how the global church embraces miraculous Christianity. His thesis aims to show how traditionally anti-supernatural evangelicals can begin to embrace these Biblical gifts without changing their “style” (Ventura, CA: Regal Publishing), p.69.

But the question remains, *why has it grown so fast? What is the Baptism in the Holy Spirit? What is its significance to the New Testament? And how does it practically matter to me on a daily basis?*

So, before we begin to interpret the primary proof texts surrounding this experience, let's contextualize this experience within the greater New Testament teachings. I realize that this information may get a bit boring; however, the broader context forms some of the most exciting and urgent truths of the New Testament. So, in order to understand this baptism, allow me to spend a little time explaining the Biblical teachings on the "kingdom of Heaven".

The "Kingdom of Heaven" and Receiving the Holy Spirit

Now a days, it seems that every preacher is focusing on a slightly different doctrinal emphasis. Some say that we should focus on social justice while others say we should focus our messages exclusively on "the cross". Obviously, there are many key doctrines we could emphasize. But what were the most common theological emphases of *Jesus' teachings*?

A while back I attempted to categorize the most common themes of all of Jesus' sermons. I kept coming upon the incessant phrase: "*The kingdom of heaven is near.*"

Now, if you're like me, these abstract concepts tend to go in one ear and out the other. I mean, at first, it sounded like a flowery and poetic way of saying: "*Get ready to be blessed.*" But when I noticed how often the disciples preached this, I began to realize that this teaching was more than just an abstract saying. In fact, almost every important New Testament figure mentioned in the New Testament narratives emphasized the same message.

All throughout the Gospels we can find Jesus repeating the same message: "*The kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (4:17). We also heard it from John the Baptist who taught, "*the kingdom of heaven is near!*" (Mt. 3:2). Then we heard it from the Apostles who were sent out with the mandate to preach, "*The kingdom of heaven is near*" (10:7). Then right before the ascension of Jesus he again teaches on the "*kingdom of God*" (see Acts 1:3-7). Even Paul thought this theological issue to be important enough to regularly make it the focus of his preaching: "*Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Acts 28:31)(emphasis mine). In fact, "the kingdom" is referenced more than fifty-two times in the book of Matthew alone.

Dr. George Ladd asserts that "*Modern scholarship is quite unanimous in the opinion that the kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus.*"⁴ I.e., this wasn't some neat topical message that Jesus threw into his teaching rotation; rather, this was *his central teaching*. Scholars Gordon Fee and Douglass Stuart noted in their book on hermeneutics, "*One dare not think he or she can properly interpret the Gospels without a clear understanding of the concept of the kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus.*"⁵ So, now that I've hyped this theology into the stratosphere, allow me to explain what it is. Here is an abbreviated summary of kingdom theology

⁴ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B.Erdmans Pub. Co., 1974), p.57.

⁵ Gordon D. Fee & Douglass Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth - second edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub., 1993), p.131. This is a wonderful introduction to hermeneutics.

as taken from Dr. C. Peter Wagner's book *How to Have a Healing Ministry*.⁶

Kingdom theology essentially delineates the following truths: Satan is called, "*the god of this age*" (2 Cor. 4:4). This is because, to a certain degree, Satan still has the ability to negatively affect God's creation. We remember during Jesus' temptation in the desert when the devil said, "*All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me*" (Mt. 4:9). In this text, Jesus never questioned the devil's authority to give away "these things". This seems to imply that, at least for a temporary time, the Lord has allowed the devil to have a certain degree of authority on earth. Or as the devil said in Luke 4:6, "*This [creation] has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.*" The Apostle John expounded on this truth when he wrote that, to a large degree, "*The whole world is under the control of the of the evil one*" (1 Jn.5:19).

But, as C. Peter Wagner reminds, "*While all this is true, it is also true that Satan is not the ultimate owner of this world. 'The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein' (Psm. 24:1). .. Satan is a usurper. He has taken what is not his own.*"⁷

And thus, we have a "clash of kingdoms" which is still occurring: The devil's perishing kingdom vs. God's invading kingdom; or, *the present age verses the age to come*. And we are in the middle of this war.

For example, the present fading kingdom says that we need to simply live with sickness and disease; but, God's kingdom says that if the Holy Spirit lives within us, God will "*bring life to our mortal bodies*" (Ro. 8:8). The present fading kingdom is full of striving, death, sorrow, and pain. But the coming kingdom will have *no death, no sorrow, no crying, no pain* (Rev.21:4). Thus, when John the Baptist was in prison, he wanted to know if Jesus was the one who would usher in this kingdom John had been preaching about:

"Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" ⁴ Jesus replied, "*Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor*" (Mt. 11:2-5).

Notice how Jesus responded by simply declaring the results of the kingdom that he was preaching. I.e., Jesus was saying, the fruit speaks for itself. The "*kingdom of heaven is literally at hand*". Thus, "I am clearly the One."

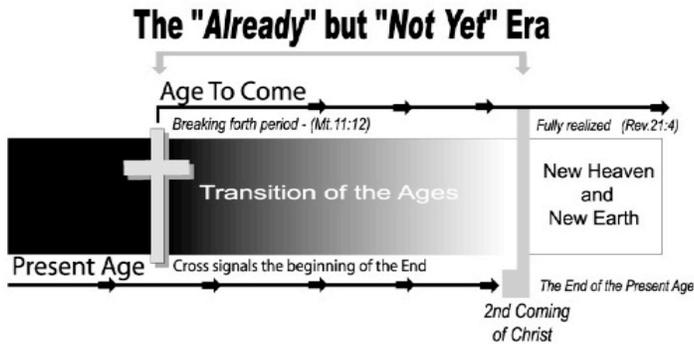
Therefore, not only are we in-between this clash of the ages, but we are actually God's warriors helping to usher in this new kingdom (Mt. 11:11-12). We are those who have begun to live by the "new rules" of Heaven (a.k.a., the "age to come.") And those "new rules" are the promises of the "Good News".

In some ways kingdom theology is similar to the movie *The Matrix*. Characters could ignore certain laws of physics, laws of aging, etc. within the matrix as they continually acknowledged another reality. In similar ways, through God's power, *we too* can begin to transcend the rules of the present fallen world because we realize that we are citizens of another reality.

"We are those who have begun to live by the 'new rules' of the age to come."

⁶ C. Peter Wagner, *How to have a Healing Ministry in Any Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Publishing), p.69.

⁷ Ibid. P.95.



The “Already but Not Yet” Principle

However, scholars have noted two themes about the kingdom throughout scripture. There are many scriptures which seem to indicate that the kingdom has *already* arrived. Yet, another group of verses seem to indicate that the kingdom has *not yet* fully arrived; but, when Jesus returns

again, the kingdom will arrive in its fullness. So, it would seem that we live during a transitional time in spiritual history. God’s kingdom has arrived; yet, it is not here in fullness.

Thus, because of these conflicting references, scholars have begun to call this the “*already, but not yet*” principle. We *already* have forgiveness, peace, healing, deliverance; yet, on a whole, we have *not yet* experienced these promises in their fullness (*such as absolutely no sickness, death, demonic oppression, pain, etc.*)

Thus, the first arrival of Jesus on earth marked the “*beginning of the end*” for the devil’s kingdom and the present age. This is probably why the demon said in Mt. 8:29, “*Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?*” – that is to say, *before the present age completely passes away.*

The Biblical Foundation for the Holy Spirit Baptism

But what specifically does the Bible say about the primary purpose of the Infilling of the Holy Spirit?

Once again, I believe we can summarize the Bible’s teachings by saying that the *primary function of the Holy Spirit infilling is to continually receive supernatural power to be God’s witnesses regarding the coming kingdom of heaven.* To demonstrate this, let’s begin with what is perhaps the most important scripture in the Bible concerning the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, *Acts 1:8.*

Acts 1:8 rests right in the middle of a teaching on *the kingdom.* It reads:

1:4 “On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” 6 So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

So, here Jesus commands them to wait for the promised Holy Spirit. They obviously sensed that this would be a significant advance for the kingdom of God (thus the “kingdom” oriented question in vs.6).

However, there was still a bit of confusion amidst the disciples as to how this “finalized kingdom” would arrive. They didn’t fully understand the nature of the kingdom or the second coming (see vs. 10-11). And they also didn’t fully understand that the restoration of Israel to God

(or the political restoration) was *not* a part of God's immediate plan.

Yet, they fully understood that they were going to be endowed with some form of power that they didn't already possess. After seeing the power exerted in the resurrection, I'm sure that their minds were buzzing with curiosity and excitement. They understood that this new power was meant to testify of the fact that the "kingdom of God was at hand".

Of course in **Acts 2** we read about the fulfillment of Acts 1:8.

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them... Utterly amazed, [God-fearing Jews from diverse nations] asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?"⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?" (Acts 2:4;7-8)

It's interesting to note that the Apostles took this tongues experience as "*The*" sign of this Holy Spirit baptism. In my mind they could have simply interpreted this experience as a mere powerful moment of prayer. But there was something unique about this that *to them* resonated with what Jesus promised in Acts 1:8.

This implies that the "power" promised in Acts 1:8 was not some form of natural power such as the ability to love people more, or the ability to experience peace. It seems that the Apostles themselves interpreted "power" to mean *supernatural* power. It appears that the Apostles were only satisfied about receiving this baptism *when* they had received a clearly supernatural endowment.

Another verse that clarifies the purpose of the Holy Spirit Baptism is **Ephesians 1:13-14**. Paul writes:

"Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory."

The greek word for "deposit" essentially denotes a small sample of what is to come. Thus, the Holy Spirit enables us to experience a sample of eternal kingdom living. Remember, the signs of the age to come: no death, no sickness, no pain, no oppression, etc.? In other words, the Holy Spirit empowers us to *begin living* by the rules and reality of the *age to come* rather than the perishing *present age*.

Thus, the more we become filled with the Holy Spirit, living by the rules of the age to come, the more our lives will bear testimony of the supernatural realities of kingdom living. This is what Mark was likely referring to in chapter 16 of his Gospel:

"These signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well" (Mk. 16:16-18).

I.e., Believers will increasingly resist the "god of this world" and the perishing creation; and they will live according to the Kingdom of Heaven, the new creation.

The text in Mark 16:16-18 is also rather important for our study on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Although the words "Holy Spirit Baptism" may not be present in the actual text, these verses could quite easily be the parallel account of Acts chapter one. In other words, this very statement could in fact be Mark's rendition of Acts 1:8.⁸

Note the striking similarities between Acts 1:8 and Mk. 16:20: (1). Both promise

⁸ I realize that some debate the veracity of the Mark 16 text. Yet, almost every statement & expression is mirrored elsewhere in another Gospel; thus, it seems rather unnecessarily to attempt to denounce it. And, at least, it is certainly useful as a commentary and elaboration of the texts that it mirrors.

miraculous “power” for followers. (2). Both demonstrate that this power is meant to be primarily used for evangelistic purposes (See Mk.16:15; 20). (3). Both Acts 1 & 2 as well as Mark 16 reveal some of the exact same manifestations of this power (such as tongues, healing, etc.). (4). Both teachings seem to occur just before Christ ascends into heaven.

Then, Mark 16:20 states that:

“Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.”

Not surprisingly, the entire narrative of Acts becomes the demonstration of this scripture. Indeed Luke virtually repeats Mark’s very statement in Acts 14:3

“So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders” (ACTS 14:3).

Again, *the primary purpose of the Holy Spirit infilling is to continually receive supernatural power to be God’s witnesses regarding the coming kingdom of heaven.* This power “confirms God’s Word with signs that accompany it.”

However, supernatural power isn't the only purpose to the Holy Spirit Baptism. Other texts seem to argue that it also plays a role in *sanctification* (a fancy word describing the process in which God helps us overcome sin in our lives).

There are many Evangelicals who, in the Wesleyan holiness tradition, emphasize this purifying work of the Holy Spirit baptism. For example, Paul writes, *“Do not get drunk with wine... but be filled with the Holy Spirit”* (Eph. 5:18). Submission to the Holy Spirit leaves little room for ongoing sin (see also Gal. 5:22). When our lives are changed for the better, this further confirms that our message that the kingdom of God is real.⁹

Therefore, now that we've covered the theological basics surrounding the baptism of the Holy Spirit, in the next chapter we'll ask the question: Why are there so many Christians who don't believe in supernatural Christianity? And what are a few of the mental roadblocks that tend to obscure people from seeing this inspiring theme.

⁹ Note that there are many theological traditions that would not allow this interpretation of “ongoing sanctification”. For example, a *purely Lutheran* interpretation does not separate Justification and Sanctification in the order of salvation. Obviously, there are many semantic issues that become primary in these debates.

Chapter Two:

Why do some modern Christians deny supernatural Christianity?

Over the years I have heard many bizarre theories regarding the purpose of Holy Spirit Baptism. I am certain that there are many diverse purposes for this gift in the Lord's mind. But what is the *primary purpose*? And are there any implications in the book of Acts which clarify what the *Apostles themselves* viewed its purpose to be?

When we view all of these texts in light of the "kingdom theology" mentioned above, I believe it will be abundantly clear that *the primary purpose of the Holy Spirit infilling is to continually receive supernatural power to be God's witnesses regarding the coming kingdom of heaven*. (I realize that it's a long and complex sentence. But every part of it is essential.)

So, let me repeat this baptism's purpose in a different way. This infilling is ultimately supposed to give Christians supernatural powers (as the *Spirit wills*). When these powers accompany the preaching of the Word, they demonstrate *with clarity* that God is alive and we'd best pay attention to His Word.

Naturally, with "supernatural power" resting at the foundation of my premise, I'm likely to raise an eyebrow or two. There are many in the body of Christ who do not believe that miraculous Christianity is for today. These people are called *Cessationists* (*pronounced seh-say-shun-ists*).

Cessationists generally believe that all miracles and supernatural "gifts of the Spirit" *ceased* either after the death of the Apostles, the end of the early church, or after the New Testament was canonized¹⁰. This philosophy of non-miracles became especially popular in the Western church *after* secular modernist ideology and other forms of Enlightenment thinking became firmly rooted in the church roughly around the late sixteen - early seventeen hundreds.

So, as you would imagine, in the minds of Cessationist churches, the purpose and doctrines of the Holy Spirit infilling have become increasingly confusing. In most Cessationist churches, the doctrines of the Holy Spirit are either obsolete, or, they should simply be stripped of all of their "supernatural" applications. (E.g., the baptism of the Holy Spirit is purely theoretical in the sense that, you don't ever look for a visible manifestation, as was done in the Bible.) Of course, if supernatural Christianity is removed from the Christian experience, it makes a good number of New Testament texts virtually impossible to reasonably interpret (like 1 Cor. 14).

¹⁰ They often reason that since we have the authoritative Word of God, we have no additional need for illumination or inspiration; or, that Apostles needed a little extra power to launch the early church. However, now, they would argue, we simply don't need such power to evangelize.

For example, when Cessationists read scriptures like, “*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you*” (Acts 1:8), they simply reason that this power must be a more *rational* and *natural* power, such as the power to love people or experience powerful inward transformation. After all, they would argue that, ‘there are no such things as signs and wonders.’ However, as I will show throughout this manual, this approach towards scripture becomes increasingly difficult to sustain.

My Personal Experiences

Over the years I have witnessed literally dozens of amazing Bible-like miracles. I have personally seen legs grow out before my eyes. As I shared in the preface I witnessed a literally blind woman receive sight at the palm of my hand. And after witnessing these events, I have *also* become totally convinced that the Gospel message is *incredibly* more effective when “*confirmed by signs that accompany it*” (Mk. 16:20).

I’ll never forget the first time I saw someone delivered of a demon. To be honest, it scared me to death. Watching my friend convulse under demonic oppression obviously made a huge impression on me. One moment he seemed perfectly sane, and the next moment, he turned into a writhing animal. Of course, like everyone else in Christianity, I “believed” in the spiritual realm; but, when I saw that realm manifest itself in a visible way, *I wanted to hit the floor and start confessing my sins to heaven and earth.*

But, eventually, that fear gave way to a bizarre joy. (I mean, at that moment, it was good to realize that I was on the same team as the most powerful being in the universe.) After a manifestation like that, it’s amazing how open people are to the Gospel. Suddenly, when a true miracle is present, Christianity is not some philosophy that we can “accept or reject;” rather, you either accept it or you live in complete denial.

“When a true miracle is present... you either accept it or you live in complete denial.”

Suddenly, Paul’s word to the Corinthians made sense: “*My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power*” (1 Cor. 2:4-5).

So, not only do I know for a fact that miracles occur, but, I understand *firsthand* why a Gospel accompanied by signs and wonders is much more powerful than just a persuasive sermon with God’s Word.

Even more: if the presentation of God’s Word alone was good enough, then *why* did the Holy Spirit feel the need to “*confirm the message of [the Lords] grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders*”(Acts 14:3)? And why, when the disciples went out to preach everywhere, did the Lord feel the need to “*Confirm [his] word by the signs that accompanied it? (Mk 16:20)*” In other words, the Bible seems to imply that signs and wonders were always meant to accompany the Gospel. They are indeed a central ingredient to effectively fulfilling the Great Commission.¹¹

And truth be told, I believe that many cessationists are merely good Christian folks who

¹¹ After spending a good deal of time in the Middle East and Africa, it’s impossible to deny the presence of “signs and wonders” Christianity at the root of these continental movements.

have been hurt or turned off by charismatic abuses – a feeling I can empathize with. Yet bad hermeneutics is not a smart response to Pentecostal foolishness. And we *all* would do well to avoid the cessationist temptation to strip the baptism of all of its supernatural functions – resulting in a "purely theoretical" baptism experience.¹²

Supernatural Spiritual Gifts in Church History

Growing up in a cessationist church I was often taught that the presence of miraculous Christianity passed away with the death of the Apostles. At the time, I had no concept of church history. I had no idea just how many spiritual leaders throughout church history not merely endorsed miraculous Biblical manifestations but regularly experienced them.

Dr. Steve Durasoff writes, "Church historians have uncovered, admittedly in meager measure, miraculous events that occurred during the early centuries of Christianity - a clear indication that the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit never did cease. Bernard Bresson mentions more than twenty charismatic movements and sects between the late second century and the middle nineteenth"¹³. Don Baham noted that even "the Encyclopedia Britannica states that glossolalia (speaking in tongues) 'recurs in Christian revivals of every age, e.g., among the Jansenists and early Quakers, the converts of Wesley and Whitefield, the persecuted Protestants of the Covennes and the Irvingites.'"¹⁴

There have been many Early Church Fathers and other great men of God who supported tongues and/or spiritual gifts even until our current day. There was *never a time* when at least one group didn't support them. Although I would never bore you with an exhaustive list here, I wanted to list a few of the supporters (and their comments) below. Some may surprise you.

The prolific early Christian writer **Justine Martyr** who lived between 100-165 A.D. made numerous statements about the continuance of supernatural spiritual gifts: "The prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time" (1.240). "Now, it is possible to see among us women and men who possess gift of the Spirit of God" (1.249) "Daily some are becoming disciples in the name of Christ,...who are receiving gifts, each as he is worth... For one receives the spirit of...healing, another of foreknowledge" (160 A.D.)(1.214.)¹⁵

Irenaeus, the spiritual grandson of the Apostle John and disciple of Polycarp, lived from 130-200 A.D. He said, "Those who are truly His disciples, receiving grace from Him,...perform [works] in His name, in order to promote the welfare of others... Some truly and certainly cast out devils...others have foreknowledge of things to come. They see visions, and they utter prophetic expressions. Still others heal the sick by laying their hands upon them... What is more, as I have said, even the dead have been raised up and remained among us for many years. What more can I say?" (1.429).

Clement of Alexandria defended the current practice of prophesying around 195 A.D. (See 2.434). **Tertullian** also vehemently defended the continuance of the charismatic gifts of the Holy

¹² By "theoretical baptism experience" I am referring to an infilling that *never* has any explicitly supernatural manifestations *ever*. In other words, it never has any physical or manifestationary results. The evidence must always be explained in a philosophical sense (such as the ability to 'love people more' as opposed to qualitative empirical experience. But, as I'm about to argue, this defeats the primary purpose for this baptism / infilling given in scripture. I address this issue at length in chapter two of this manual.

¹³ Dr. Steve Durasoff, *Bright Wind of the Spirit: Pentecostalism Today* (Tulsa, OK.: RHEMA Bible Church, 1972), p.28. Here he has a fantastic chapter about the different movements that believed in spiritual gifts throughout the ages.

¹⁴ Don Basham, *A Handbook on Holy Spirit Baptism* (Pittsburgh, PA: Whitaker House, 1969), pg.15. Of the Encyclopedia Britannica, he is quoting Volume 27, pp.9-10, 11th Edition.

¹⁵ All of these initial quotations are from the classic "Ante-Nicene Fathers". The first number is the volume. The second number refers to the page number.

Spirit around that same time (see 3.91; 3.446). The controversial leader **Montanus** ignited a long lasting pentecostal / prophetic movement around 160 A.D.

Origen, known as the “*Father of Christian theology*” said in 248 A.D. that fewer people were operating in such gifts; yet, “*Traces of those signs and wonders are still preserved among those who regulate their lives by the teachings of the Gospel*” (4.397). “*They expel evil spirits, perform many cures, and foresee certain events...The name of Jesus can still... expel demons and also take away diseases*” (4.415; 4.427). We know that Origen advocated a form of speaking in tongues similar to those of **Augustine** and **Jerome**. Augustine (as well as John Chrysostom) not so surprisingly wrote that, after Christianity was made the official religion of Rome in the Fourth Century, the spiritual gifts seemed to become rather rare. Christianity seemed to become more of a geo-political pre-requisite than it did a sincere system of beliefs.

Yet still Augustine wrote, “*We still do what the apostles did when they laid hands on the Samaritans and called down the Holy Spirit on them by the laying on of hands. It is expected that converts should speak with new tongues.*”¹⁶

Steve Durasoff commented that, “*Although legendary layers have been added to some of the accounts of the medieval church, men such as **Anthony of Padua (1195-1231)**, the monk **Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419)**, **Francis Xavier (1506-1552)**, and others are mentioned as having the gift of tongues. They were enabled to utilize these languages, received instantaneously from God, in their missionary endeavors among foreign people*”¹⁷

The Encyclopedia Britannica has also noted that the **Mendicant Friars of the Thirteenth Century** were also noted to have experienced speaking in tongues.

Early on **Martin Luther** wrote that miracles were confined to the early church. But in his later writings Luther confirmed a belief in contemporary miracles. The great historian Sauer made the strong declaration that Luther, ‘*was a prophet, evangelist, speaker in tongues, interpreter, and in one person, endowed with all the gifts of the Spirit.*’¹⁸ Evidence of this from Luther’s *own writing*, however, is nowhere cited by Sauer.

Other groups and individuals include: the **Jansenists**; the **Camisards** of sixteenth century France; the French Protestants, the **Huguenots** had a large use of the spiritual gifts, particularly unknown tongues. **George Fox, the leader of the Quakers**, largely “*recognized prophecies and tongues in Quaker prayer sessions, which were known as waiting meetings.*”¹⁹

John Wesley, Methodism’s founder, supported tongues and recorded “*revival*” services in his Journal which were quite similar to our contemporary examples of “*sign & wonder*” revivals. Wesley suggested that “*the supernatural gifts diminished because of the decline of love and the subsequent dead formalism of a frigid Church that rejected all such manifestations.*”²⁰

The intellectually keen & persecuted **Edward Irving** (early Eighteen hundreds) vehemently argued in favor of the gifts after his congregation was reignited with the manifesting

¹⁶ John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Spire: a Fleming H. Revell Company), p.17. John Sherrill was a non-Christian investigative journalist who did extended research on the tongues phenomenon. (Yes, he eventually converted :)

¹⁷ Dr. Steve Durasoff, *Bright Wind of the Spirit: Pentecostalism Today* (Tulsa, OK.: RHEMA Bible Church, 1972) p.31

¹⁸ Sauer, *History of the Christian Church*, III, 406, quoted in Gordon F. Atter, *The Third Force* (Peterborough, Ontario: The College Press, 1962), p.12

¹⁹ Dr. Steve Durasoff, *Bright Wind of the Spirit: Pentecostalism Today* (Tulsa, OK.: RHEMA Bible Church, 1972) p.32

²⁰ Ibid p.29

gifts. Durasoff again noted that, “they believed that all the gifts of the Holy Spirit were the permanent possession of the Christian Church, withheld only because of human unfaithfulness on the part of unconcerned Christians.”²¹

Revivalist theologian **Jonathan Edwards** commonly had moves of the Spirit so strong that even “unbelievers” were affected (much like the apostle Paul and the slave girl in Acts 16:18). Evangelist **Peter Cartwright** had a great “*manifestationary*” baptism of the Holy Spirit; **Dwight L. Moody** and **Charles Finney** both “‘*described personal physical manifestations*’ which R.A. Torrey quoted was the Holy Spirit’s ‘*baptismal experience*’. Although we are uncertain about which specific manifestations Moody personally experienced, we know for certain that he at least conducted meetings at which there was “*speaking in tongues, and prophesying*.”²²

When Moody had visited Sunderland, England, Robert Boyd remarked, “When I got to the rooms of the YMCA...I found the meeting on fire. The young men were speaking in tongues and prophesying.”²³

A.B. Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in New York, at least supported certain spiritual gifts, though remaining uncertain specifically regarding tongues; **John Alexander Dowie**; **Charles Parham**; and the rest of tongues’ supporters make up modern church history.

In just about every major denomination there are movements who support the spiritual gifts and tongues. In fact, just about every mainline denomination has an annual national conference devoted to the spread of these forms of supernatural Christianity.

Thus, anyone concerned that glossolalia (unknown tongues) is not normative to Christianity is opposed to a great many Christian leaders and ‘Fathers’ throughout history. Besides, almost all of the largest churches in the world (those with over 35,000 members) are lead by people who believe in miraculous Christianity.

Will miracles occur beyond the Apostolic Age?

As we investigate the Biblical foundation for this experience, it seems to increasingly contradict the basic claims of cessationism. In other words, if miracles do not occur anymore, then the purpose of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the testimony about the Kingdom of Heaven seem to be significantly undermined. Yet, despite this, Christian authors feel continually more comfortable reinterpreting Christianity from a non-miraculous standpoint. It’s no wonder there are so many Christians who now deny a literal resurrection of Christ. If we’re going to strip Christianity of its miracles, why don’t we also strip it of its greatest miracle.

So, in the following section, we are going to critique the Biblical Cessationism. While doing so, we will specifically answer the question: *“Do miracles indicate that miraculous Christianity would soon pass? And were miracles common to the Apostles?”* Fortunately for us, there are many verses that reveal that miracles are commonplace throughout the ages.

“Anyone who has faith in me will do [the miracles] I have been doing.”

- Jesus

²¹ Ibid p.35

²² Ibid p.42

²³ John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Spire: a Fleming H. Revell Comp), p.77.

Everywhere Jesus and the apostles went, they performed miraculous signs and wonders. It's hard to find a ministry event in the New Testament that wasn't accompanied by miracles.

Some authors have even taken it a step further than cessationists in claiming that no miracles actually occurred in scripture at all. In other words, they assert that there were common literary genres which falsely ascribed miracles to their leaders and that the New Testament is largely mythological accounts mixed with true Christian teachings.

However, such an approach is rather silly when noting how central miracles were to the basic Christian message. Healing ministry and demonic deliverance comprised more than half of early church ministry. Biblical directives to do the same were common. For example:

"As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give." Matthew 10:7-8

Once again, teaching on the kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus; and, as we can see in the above scripture, this message was inseparable from the miracles that accompanied it.

Repeatedly we are taught to emulate this ministry and lifestyle of Jesus and the Apostles (1 Cor. 11:1; Php 3:16). More specifically, Jesus claimed that "anyone who has faith in me" **will do** even greater miracles than Jesus himself did. In the context, Jesus asks his disciples to trust that his words are true *based upon* the miracles they have seen him perform. Even more boldly he tells them that *they too* can bear witness to the truth through the miraculous.

*"Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. 12 I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me **will do** what I have been doing. He **will do** even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" John 14:11-12 (EMPHASIS MINE).*

But I have heard many object: "*But miracles were an Apostolic privilege that weren't extended to the rest of us.*"

But where does the Bible teach this? In fact, the scriptures seem to teach the exact opposite. The privilege for miracles seems to be for "*anyone who has faith in [Christ]*" (Jn. 14:12).

To take this a step further, Mark 16 *also* seems to indicate that miracles are for everyone:

"And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." Mark 16:15-20

Note how the verse says, "*these signs will accompany those who believe*", and not "*these signs will accompany a select group of people*." In First Corinthians chapter fourteen, as Paul instructs them on many miraculous gifts, he made no indication that God had limited this power to Apostles, nor that God was going to steal his power away. Even more, the entire teaching on the "kingdom of heaven is near" seems to be undermined if Christianity was supposed to become increasingly impotent.

To argue that miraculous Christianity was limited to Apostles becomes increasingly difficult in scripture. First of all, on the day of Pentecost, it wasn't just the apostles who received tongues. Secondly, Stephen "*who did great wonders & miraculous signs among the people*" (Acts 6:8), wasn't necessarily considered an apostle by his peers. Third, Philip, who performed "miraculous signs" (Acts 8:6-7) wasn't necessarily considered an Apostle either. Again, the Corinthians, who manifested many 'miraculous signs', were also certainly not apostles.

So, over the years, I've also heard many people respond: "*Well, the Bible teaches in 1 Cor.*

13:8 that miracles would pass away once we have the scriptures.” But, does it really? Let's take a closer look at this text:

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears” (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

I've had numerous cessationist friends argue: "Soon, tongues will no longer exist in the church along with prophecy because, 'now that we have the 'full revelation of God in scripture' we simply have no need for prophecy and other apostolic miracles.'"

However, scholars Fee and Stuart had an interesting critique about this interpretation: In their textbook on hermeneutics, they write about a basic interpretation rule,

"a text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or his or her readers . . . For example, the most frequent justification for disregarding the imperatives about seeking spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 14 is a particular interpretation of 1 Cor. 13:10, which states that "when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away" (RSV). We are told that the perfect *has* come, in the form of the New Testament, and therefore the imperfect (prophecy and tongues) have ceased to function in the church. But this is one thing the text cannot mean because good exegesis totally disallows it. There is no possible way Paul could have meant that - after all, his readers did not know there was going to be a New Testament, and the Holy Spirit would not have allowed Paul to write something totally incomprehensible to them" (*How to Read the Bible for All it's Worth* p.65).

Besides, using this same scripture and argumentation, it is doubtful that cessationists would also argue that all forms of "knowledge *has passed away*" (which is the second part of the same verse). Moreover, in this particular verse, *most* Bible scholars admit Paul is most likely referring to Christ's return. At least this interpretation would be more congruent to the basic rules of fair interpretation.

But do we really need Prophecy when we have Scripture?

Many argue, "God doesn't need to reveal any more about his purposes through prophetic means now that we have scripture". But for the most part, this misses the whole point of the prophetic gifts anyway. Besides, almost all charismatic churches have long believed that prophetic revelations are not intended to be authoritative (in the same sense as the Bible); rather, prophetic gifts are merely a confirmation and application of scripture.

For example: in most churches that allow spiritual gifts, prophecies are merely scriptures that stand out to them at any given moment. In other words, when someone has a particular verse impressed upon their heart for someone else, they share it with that person as God leads them to. In fact, many traditional evangelical churches do this already, but they merely don't call it prophecy perhaps due to their preconceived notions of the term "prophecy".

As for the overall *greater purposes* of the gifts: If I found myself in a car accident seriously wounded and desperately needing help, I'd want a "working of miracles" or a "gift of healing" *not* a Bible. If I was desperately lost somewhere in a city or wilderness, I'd want a supernaturally imparted "word of wisdom" or supernatural "message of knowledge" to give me direction, not a Bible (as Phillip received in Acts 8:29 and Paul received in Acts 16:7) . Paul

"If I found myself in a car accident... I'd want a miracle...not a Bible!"

needed a "working of miracles" to survive his snake bite (Acts 28:5) not a Bible. And when demonic oppression was hurting people and his ministry, he needed a "discerning of spirits"(Acts 13:9; 16:16). So, in this light, we can see that there still is an important role for

the spiritual gifts. It almost seems a bit arrogant to think we are good enough to minister without the Holy Spirit.

Once, while I was speaking at a pastors conference in Egypt, I lost an expensive battery for my video camera. After looking everywhere for three days I finally asked God for help. In desperation, I closed my eyes and bowed my head in prayer. Suddenly, I had this image appear in my head of a bizarre location about three blocks from my current location. At first, I thought to myself: *“No way...there’s no way that it could be there!”* After all, I didn’t even remember doing anything there. Yet, the image kept appearing in my mind every time I prayed. So, I figured, *“well, it doesn’t hurt to just start walking there.”* The entire time I thought to myself, *“This is crazy. You’re gonna get there and find nothing.”* I actually had to climb up a roof-top ladder to get to the spot. Finally, when I got there, I looked down & there it was! I couldn’t believe it! I honestly didn’t even remember being there. And yet God supernaturally revealed it to me.

Once, my wife woke up & told me that she had a really unique dream about a leadership couple in our church. She dreamt that they sold their business and their new dream house and were moving to a specific city in Oklahoma to help plant a church. She also sensed that it was not your typical bizarre dream; rather, she felt that God was prophetically revealing to her that this move was indeed God’s will.

Of course, me being the natural skeptic, said, *“Well, of all people, I could never imagine that particular couple uprooting everything in their lives to do that. ...So, ...I don’t know what to tell you. Why don’t we just see what happens.”* Later that day my wife saw a member of that family and shared her dream with them. As it turned out, *that very day*, they were making their decision about doing just that. They had prayed for supernatural confirmation to help them in their decision. So, judge for yourself. What are the odds of a random dream about a random couple, moving to a random city, in a random state, to do a random thing like *work with a church plant*?

Now, if these were isolated incidents, then I would simply call these stories bizarre coincidences; however, my wife and I hardly go more than 6 months without experiencing another story. Can you imagine these wonderful advantages in your life? Can you see how such advantages testify towards the truths we believe in?

The way in which Jesus and the apostles used the spiritual gifts was to have a *supernatural advantage* in ministering to people. God went as far as giving street addresses and road directions for the purpose of reaching people (Acts 8:26;29; 9:11)! Has God’s fervency stopped? Has the need for these supernatural means decreased? Certainly not for those who believe.

Then why is it that people either denounce or avoid prophecy? Probably because they want to avoid the many hurtful cultic behaviors which can accompany such practices. However, our Gospel is not benefitted by throwing out the baby with the bath water.

Prophecy, miracles, and other spiritual gifts are meant to be a *complement to God’s Word*. They are meant to be judged and safe-guarded by God’s Word... not a substitute for it. This is why we teach safeguards to the spiritual gifts (see chapter three). In fact, Paul himself had this balanced approach in mind when he exhorted the Thessalonians: *“Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not*

“Spiritual gifts are meant to be a complement to God’s Word...not a substitute for it.”

treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold onto the good" (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22). Many traditionalists disobey the former commands and many Charismatics the latter. Our quest is to do both. And with this balanced approach in mind, our Gospel takes on a new potency.

Thus Luke wrote (in Acts 14:3) and Mark echoed in his Gospel, "*Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed His word by the signs that accompanied it*" (Mark 16:20). They co-exist; they confirm one another.

Do I need tongues to be saved?

After demonstrating how critical this continual infilling of the Holy Spirit is to the central message of Jesus, people naturally begin to ask: "*If I'm not manifesting any miracles, does this mean I'm not saved or 'sealed' by the Holy Spirit?*" The answer to this question is a resounding "No."

There are certain Pentecostal groups that specifically believe that one must experience tongues to be saved. This strong claim is only found in a very small minority of Pentecostal churches.

They commonly quote **Romans 8:9** which reads:

"And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ".

And, like many Pentecostals, they believe that unknown tongues are the primary and most probable evidence of the Holy Spirit baptism. Thus, they further reason: *If you don't speak in tongues, you're not saved.*

However, as we show in the next chapter, there is no truly conclusive evidence which clearly demonstrates that the Holy Spirit Baptism doesn't automatically occur for every believer at salvation. The fact that people haven't yet experienced unknown tongues (or any other manifestation) could simply mean that they already have the baptism; and, they simply need to receive better teaching about receiving and "letting the manifestations out."

Secondarily, there are dozens of scriptures which denote how to receive salvation without any discussion about the Holy Spirit Baptism. I think it's rather dogmatic and bold to confidently declare that tongues are the only tell-tale manifestation that signals the *true evidence* of Holy Spirit baptism (as we will sufficiently show in the next chapter). Certainly, there is a high possibility of experiencing tongues (according to scriptural precedence); yet, there is no verse that explicitly teaches "You do not have the Holy Spirit unless you have tongues". So to take this *implication* in scripture and make it the foundation of one's salvation theology is all-together disturbing.

Can one get just as close to God without the Spiritual Gifts?

How close can one get to God without the Holy Spirit? This, of course, is a subjective question. As we mentioned above, the most foundational teaching of the New Testament is the preaching of the Kingdom of God (which is essentially teaching people to live by the rules of the "Age to Come," i.e., no more pain, sorrow, sickness, oppression, etc.). Ultimately, it's rather hard to preach this Gospel and then deny the supernatural power which is intended to affirm its truth.

Thus, in my opinion, to preach the kingdom of God while denying the spiritual gifts is like being a vacuum cleaner salesman selling a device that no one's ever seen or used. I suppose a

really good salesman could sell a good number without ever demonstrating its power. But, imagine our effectiveness when we allow God to “confirm his message of grace” with “supernatural power” (Acts 14:3).

As to our intimacy with God, it’s a bit different because the point of the spiritual gifts are primarily to be used for ministry purposes. There are many great men and women of God who have *not* noted any “distinct infillings.” There are men and women who likely know God much more than me who have not yet had any distinct infillings.

Not knowing elements of God is an issue for every believer. For example, many believers don’t know God as their Friend, their Father, their Healer, their Provider, their Comforter, but perhaps only as their Savior.

I never force people to experience the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. It makes no sense for me to debate with people about something they don’t want to believe in. As I mentioned above, I’ve experienced the miraculous gifts of the Spirit many times. These experiences, affirmed by many scriptural examples, are undeniable to me.

This is an awesome element of God that I would “not leave my Jerusalem” until I’ve understood (Acts 1:8). I don’t encourage any minister to join the good fight of faith without the best weapons available. The ongoing infilling of the Holy Spirit accompanied by power is not *the only* weapon or way to live out the faith. However, in my opinion, it’s one of the *better weapons* next to the Word of God our sword. Thus, Paul emphasized, “*Eagerly desire the spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy*” (1 Cor.14:1).

Therefore are people without this experience farther from God? Not necessarily. We all have elements of God’s character to grow and trust in.

Chapter Four:

Receiving the Holy Spirit

In the last chapter we demonstrated that the *primary function of the Holy Spirit infilling is to continually receive supernatural power to be God's witnesses regarding the coming kingdom of heaven*. Not only does it confirm with power to unbelievers that we are citizens of a wonderful coming reality, but the infilling helps us to begin to live by the rules of that reality.

To receive this infilling means that we can receive both the *fruits* of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22) (such as joy, peace, and self-control) as well as the *gifts* of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7-10) (such as miracles, healings, and supernatural impartations of wisdom and knowledge).

However, the question that is debated in many Evangelical circles is: *How do you know if you've received Him?* Or more specifically: *Is the Holy Spirit Baptism included in salvation, or do we need to seek a secondary experience? Are there any specific manifestations that the Bible tells us to look for?* Thus, in the following chapter, we will attempt to answer all of these questions. But, we will begin by asking the question: *Is the Holy Spirit Baptism included in Salvation?*

Is the Holy Spirit Baptism included in Salvation?

There is a great deal of debate and diversity surrounding this question. In fact, in the last several decades there have emerged several different theological approaches to this issue. So, before we search the scriptures, it will serve us well to categorize the three primary groups who embrace this infilling: *Pentecostals, Charismatics, and Third Wave*.

These three groups have far more similarities than they do differences and therefore many people use these terms interchangeably. However, historically, they tend to have slightly different approaches to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. And these differences tend to emerge more distinctly when asking the question: *Is the Holy Spirit included in salvation?*

Pentecostal

Pentecostal is perhaps the oldest designation. Of course we could argue that there were always Pentecostal groups throughout history (as we did in the last chapter); however, the more distinctive cultural heritage of Pentecostals has evolved since 1901. Many trace the modern Pentecostal movement back to Charles Parham's Bible School in 1901 when the student body had a historic tongues experience. Others trace the origins back to the famous Los Angeles Azusa Street revival led by William J. Seymour. The significant doctrine that evolved out of these movements was that, according to Pentecostals, there is *a subsequent work of grace to salvation called the Baptism of the Holy Spirit*. They advocate that after being born-again, one should seek

the Baptizer (who is Jesus) (Mt. 3:11; Lk 3:16; etc.). This event can occur simultaneous to salvation; but, it is not synonymous with salvation (see Acts 8:9-21; 19:1-6). They also advocate that unknown tongues are the primary result of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in scripture and thus should be the primary manifestation we should still look for. But generally speaking, they advocate that virtually all of the miraculous manifestations of the New Testament are available for today, particularly the nine “Gifts of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:8-10).²⁴

Theologically, Pentecostals borrow a lot from John Wesley and Methodism. However, culturally, in America, much of Pentecostalism has been decidedly rooted in southern church culture. Generally Pentecostals come from a holiness tradition similar to fundamentalist Protestants. Thus, it is common for Pentecostals to have stricter stances on alcoholic beverages, smoking, dancing, card playing, movies, and, in some cases, jewelry and make-up. Certain pentecostal groups also tend to emphasize “prosperity doctrines”²⁵ more than others, especially popular in *Word of Faith* circles.

Pentecostal circles also have a firm emphasis on learning scripture. And despite their image of being “doctrinally challenged” they often demonstrate a rather commanding knowledge

²⁴ Most Pentecostals define the “gifts of the Holy Spirit” of 1 Cor. 12 in the “super-natural” sense & not a “natural” sense. Thus, a word of wisdom is not merely a “wise word of encouragement”; rather, a “spiritually imparted gift of insight” that was not at all native to the recipient. Thus, here are some of the common “miracle definitions” as taught in many Pentecostal & Charismatic circles.

A “**Word of Knowledge**” is a supernaturally received piece of information about something or someone. (Eg) Jesus & woman at the well (Jn.4); Ananias and Paul’s address in Damascus (Acts 9); or Mt. 2:6-8 where “Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking...”

A “**Word of Wisdom**” is similar to a ‘word of knowledge’; but, it is not mere information; rather, it is *directive* information. (Eg.) Paul and His companions deciding to go to Macedonia (Acts 16:7); Or the spirit spoke to Philip to “*go over to that chariot*” (8:29)

A “**Discerning of Spirits**” is a supernatural ability to know whether something is Godly, human, or demonic in origin. (Ex.) Paul and the slave girl (Ac.16:16ff); Jesus’ baptism & dove (Jn.1:32); (Acts 5:1-9).

A “**Gift of Faith**” is the supernaturally given ability to discern with extraordinary confidence the will and purposes of God. (Eg.) Jesus speaks to sea (Mk 4:39-41); The Healing of Jairus’ daughter: “She is not dead but asleep.” (Mk. 5:39-42)

A “**Gifts of Healing**” is a supernatural relieving of the body of disease or dysfunction: often gradual. It differs from a “working of miracles” in the sense that miracles are “perceptive to the senses” like a lengthening leg as opposed to a healed heart problem. (Eg.) Paul’s snakebite (Acts 28:5) also Acts 28:8 Heal’s chief’s father.

A “**Working of Miracles**” is the supernatural ability to perform powerful acts that defy the ordinary course of nature. (Eg) Water to wine (Jn. 6:2-11); 5 loaves 2 fishes (Jn. 6:8-14).

A “**Prophecy**” is a generic category of “Revelation Gifts” including a word of knowledge, wisdom, or discernment of spirits; however, it is often taught as a distinct gift as well. In the “specific gift” sense, it is a supernatural impartation of “*strengthening, encouragement and comfort*” (1 Cor. 14:3). Thus any random “impression” that serves this purpose and agrees with scripture is often called a “prophecy”.

We will cover tongues and interpretation later on in this manual.

²⁵ By prosperity doctrines, I am referring to the “Health and Wealth” Gospel. I.e., a special emphasis on the spiritual, emotional, and financial prosperity of God’s people. A classic prosperity text would be 2 Cor. 9:10, “*You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion...*” Although this is taught in scripture, many Evangelicals feel there is a total over-emphasis on financial prosperity teaching to the exclusion of other important Bible doctrines. Or, many feel that these teachings are emphasized to a self-centered goal rather than a kingdom minded goal. I.e., the ultimate purpose of “God making us rich” is so that “*we can be generous on every occasion... resulting in many giving thanks to God*”. And this evangelistic purpose is often times completely omitted in many such teachings. And, although this emphasis is totally separate from truly Pentecostal doctrines, the cult-like obsession that certain Pentecostals have often had to this issue has done a great damage to the acceptance of miraculous Christianity amidst non-Pentecostal groups.

of scripture compared to most evangelicals.²⁶

Some common denominations and movements are the *Assemblies of God* (who have grown to become one of the largest protestant denominations in the world in only a single century). *Foursquare Churches* and independent *Word of Faith Churches* have also become well known affiliations throughout the world.

Charismatic

Charismatics are very similar to Pentecostals in many respects. They too believe that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, (aka., “2nd Infilling”) is an experience that is separate from salvation (but can occur simultaneous with salvation.) They also commonly teach the nine “Gifts of the Holy Spirit” as essential to modern day ministry (noted in footnote above). However, they come from a much more diverse denominational and cultural background than do Pentecostals.

Charismatics resulted from a movement in the 1970's called the charismatic renewal. This renewal emphasized modern worship and a renewal of miraculous Christianity within the mainstream church. It hit just about every American denomination in a significant way. There are currently charismatic churches ranging from Lutherans, to Methodists, to Catholics, to Baptists, and so on.

The charismatic renewal occurred right on the coat tails of a national youth revival in the 1960's often called the Jesus movement. As a result, the charismatic renewal of the 1970's was decidedly young and non-denominational. Naturally, many mainline churches became rather resistant to this modern-hippy-like worship mixed with experiential undertones. And conversely this zealous independent group became rather impatient with the slowly changing traditions found within their diverse denominations. Thus, in the late 1970's and early 80's there was a huge independent church movement of charismatics leaving their mainline traditions.

Naturally, this exodus of contemporary worship movement mixed with Pentecostalism created quite a stir within mainline denominations. Then add into the mix an army of colorful, uneducated, and unorthodox celebrity preachers seeding the movement, and no wonder there was animosity. In mainline groups, the terms *charismatic* and *pentecostal* became somewhat synonymous with division and emotionalism. But now that the dust has settled a bit, both sides seem to be softening their edges in order to learn from each other.

The exodus produced many positive results as well. Obviously, the contemporary worship movement would not be anywhere near as strong today without the charismatic renewal. Also, the independent government structure that is common in many charismatic churches has resulted in a huge amount of innovation especially in evangelistic forms and methodologies.

One last common attribute of charismatics is the “evidence” of Holy Spirit Baptism. As mentioned above, Pentecostals look almost exclusively for unknown tongues. Charismatics tend to be a bit looser about which manifestations to look for. They also tend to be a bit more relaxed

²⁶ In fact, I had to chuckle when, in the late 1990s, Barna research group (www.barna.org) found that, on a whole, Pentecostals knew their Bibles *more* than conservative evangelicals (who often pride themselves on their doctrinal superiority). And, Yes: knowing your Bible doesn't mean you have a well integrated systematic theology. But, it's still interesting to note.

about experiencing immediate results to infilling prayers.

Third Wave

Third Wave is perhaps the most recent grouping. (Pentecostalism and Charismatic being the first “two waves”). Third Wave is primarily comprised of Conservative Evangelicals who are finally assimilating aspects of “the first two waves.”²⁷ Theologically, they disagree that Holy Spirit Baptism is a separate experience from salvation. They believe that, by necessity, salvation and Holy Spirit Baptism must occur together. However, they often assert that, everyone should seek a secondary and ongoing infilling of the Holy Spirit.

So, Third wavers generally believe that every Christian is “*already filled*.” Thus, they merely need to fuel the flame with subsequent in-fillings and be taught how to receive supernatural manifestations. For many mainline evangelicals who have stood back from charismatic doctrines, this change supposedly resolves many of their theological tensions.

Proponents of the Third Wave prefer to call the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” an *Infilling of the Holy Spirit*. They tend to emphasize that there is not just a singular infilling; rather, there is a life full of continual infillings.

Third Wave doctrine has been popularized by people like C.Peter Wager (formerly of Fuller Seminary) and John Wimber (founder of the Vineyard church movement).

Again, all three groups are *more similar* than they are different. However, the primary differences seems to be over whether the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a distinct experience from salvation.

So in the following section, we will evaluate scriptures to see what, if any, distinction exists. This question is important because it answers the question: *Should we seek another experience with the Holy Spirit?*

Biblical Foundation for a Separate Experience?

Acts 8:14-16 records the revival in Samaria. The text reads,

*“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. 15 When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; **they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus**” (emphasis mine).*

In this text, there is clearly a secondary infilling distinct from salvation. However, as Third Wave proponents would say, the text doesn’t explicitly say that this was the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit”; rather, it talks of “receiving the Holy Spirit”. Meaning, the Samaritans could have received the Baptism at salvation; but, they simply had not yet experienced an “infilling” resulting in a manifestation of some sort.

Acts 9:5-6 is the story of Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus. Charismatic theologians argue that Paul’s conversion occurred on the road before his Holy Spirit Baptism (Acts 9:5-6). They argue this because, certainly Paul was converted immediately after his vision and

²⁷ Reformed theologian Wayne Grudem does a great job detailing Third Wave beliefs in his Systematic Theology. Another great source is C. Peter Wagner’s How to Have a Healing Ministry in any Church (cited in an above foot note).

consequent blindness. Even more, Ananias was *not* sent to convert Paul but so that Paul would “*see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit*” (9:17-18). However, much like the last text, a Third Wave response would again be that the text doesn’t *explicitly say* that this was the “*Baptism of the Holy Spirit*”; rather, it talks of “*receiving the Holy Spirit*”. *I.e.*, Paul could have received the Baptism at salvation; but had not yet experienced a deeper infilling.

However, the important point we can glean from both of these texts is this: *No matter what you call it, there is definitely a deeper experience with the Holy Spirit.* I mean, if we assume that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit came with salvation, then we *must also assume* that “subsequent infillings” were still a major emphasis within the early church.

Yet, perhaps the most convincing verse towards the charismatic persuasion can be found in Acts chapter 19:

In **Acts 19:1-6** Paul runs into disciples at Ephesus.

“While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples 2 and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” 3 So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?” “John’s baptism,” they replied. 4 Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” 5 On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.”

Notice in the text that Paul asked, “*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*” In response, we might ask: *Why would Paul even ask this question if it was assumed that conversion automatically brought an infilling?* Perhaps there was an initial filling at salvation and this merely shows how important an ongoing infilling was to the Early Church? Perhaps Paul was simply testing them to see if they understood the importance of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? We could probably ask endless questions about this scripture as well. But, once again, no matter how you look at this verse, it clearly demonstrates a passion for a “subsequent” Holy Spirit experience.

There is one final verse that many Third Wave proponents use to demonstrate that every believer is automatically “Baptized” in the Holy Spirit at conversion. The text that is most often used is **1 Cor. 13:13**

“For we were all baptized in one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

The problem with this verse is that we don’t really know whether it refers to “Holy Spirit Baptism” or “water baptism” which is empowered by the Holy Spirit.²⁸ Yet, if you’re like me, by now you may be asking: *Why does all this matter?*

The Big Picture & Congruency with your Systematic Theology

In my humble opinion, this issue only matters based on

“There is a clear experience that goes beyond salvation that we should be seeking.”

²⁸ Theologians such as Wayne Grudem have given lengthy discussions to this verse. The debate essentially comes down to the Greek phrase: “*en henī pneumatī . . . ebaptisthēmen*” (*in one Spirit . . . we were baptized*). See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994) p. 781

your particular theology of *sanctification* and *the order of salvation*. If you're a Methodist, chances are you side with the Charismatic opinion. If you're a "pure" Lutheran, chances are you side with the Third Wave. If you *don't know* and perhaps *don't care*, the whole issue is just semantics.

What *does* matter, however, is that **there is a clear experience that goes beyond salvation that we should be seeking**. This issue is *important enough* and *distinct enough* that the Apostle Paul would randomly ask disciples if they "*received the Holy Spirit*". The issue is important enough that Peter and John would travel to Samaria to "*pray that they might receive the Holy Spirit*". The issue is important enough that God would send people like Ananias to pray for Saul to "*see again and receive the Holy Spirit*". Thus, we would do well to observe the importance of this infilling.

Even more, we would do well to see this experience as an *ongoing pursuit*. Many charismatics and pentecostals have tended to view this as a one-time experience when the Bible seems to teach otherwise.

Theologian Wayne Grudem pointed out an important fact found in the Greek. Paul tells the Ephesians, "*Do not get drunk with wine... but be filled with the Holy Spirit*" (Eph. 5:18). Grudem writes, "[Paul] uses a present tense imperative verb that could more explicitly be translated, 'Be continually being filled with the Holy Spirit.' thus implying that this is something that should repeatedly be happening to Christians." ²⁹ Thus, rather than seeking singular experiences, we should seek the Holy Spirit infilling every day of our lives.

How do I know that I've Received the Holy Spirit

Now that we've established that we should all be seeking endless subsequent infillings of the Holy Spirit, *what* should we look for as evidence of this experience? I.e., *Are there any specific manifestations that the Bible gives us to make sure we're receiving Him?*

In the past two centuries, the influences of Modernism and Cessationism have completely obscured this critical doctrine. Either we are forced to believe in some sort of "theoretical Holy Spirit infilling" (i.e., an infilling with no visible or supernatural manifestations ever); or, we are forced to believe that the doctrines of Holy Spirit infilling are now obsolete in an age where miracles no longer occur. And, as we found in chapter one, neither of these two options intellectually square with the greater teachings of the New Testament.

Because the primary purpose of the Holy Spirit infilling is to receive supernatural power to be God's witnesses regarding the coming kingdom of heaven, then, it shouldn't surprise us that the primary results of this infilling would be supernatural manifestations.

But, more specifically, what were the *Biblical results* of the Infilling of the Holy Spirit? What were the results that the *Apostles interpreted* as clear evidence of this experience? And finally, what manifestations should *we interpret* to be substantial evidence that we are experiencing the *true* Biblical infilling of the Holy Spirit? So, to answer this question, we will turn to five primary texts in the Book of Acts.

²⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994) p. 781

The Biblical Evidence of the Holy Spirit Infilling

Most scholars agree that there are five primary examples of Holy Spirit baptism/infilling in the New Testament (that occurred *after* the Day of Pentecost).³⁰ At Pentecost (Acts 2:4); In Samaria (Acts 8:9-21); Paul's conversion (Acts 9:17); At the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-46, 11:15); and finally, at Ephesus (Acts 19:6). Our goal in this section is to analyze these texts to see what, *if any*, results may occur when praying to receive this experience.

Acts 2 The Day of Pentecost: the obvious results were unknown tongues.

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them...Utterly amazed, [God-fearing Jews from diverse nations] asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?" (Acts 2:4;7-8)

Acts 8:9-21 In Samaria, we are not certain of the exact immediate results of this in-filling; however, we *do* know that there was some sort of visible manifestation that accompanied the in-filling. Verses 18 and 19 say:

*"When Simon **saw** that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money ¹⁹ and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."*

Acts 9:17 Paul was converted and filled with the Holy Spirit.

"Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength" (Acts 9:17-19).

In this verse we are not given any specific manifestations that immediately resulted from the prayer except for Paul's restored sight. Some have commented, however, that Paul experienced many, if not all, of the immediate results commonly associated with in-fillings such as tongues and prophecy. 1 Cor. 14:18 *"I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you."* Or, Paul prophesying over his shipmates that, despite the killer storm they were in, *"not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed"* (Acts 27:22). In other words, we're not certain about what specific manifestations initially accompanied Paul's baptism *if any*; however, even if there were none, Paul eventually experienced almost *all* of the supernatural "gifts of the Holy Spirit".

Acts 10:44-47 Here Cornelius and his family received the Holy Spirit. The primary results noted here were tongues and praising God:

44 "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. 45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, 47 "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.'"

³⁰ Some will argue that there are more examples in the New Testament that we could use. For example, Luke 1:41 shows Elizabeth being "filled with the Spirit" and prophesying over Mary. Luke 1:67 also shows Zechariah being "filled with the Spirit" which also resulted in prophesying. I do not consider these to be suitable examples because they occurred before Pentecost. Jesus himself said that he could not send the Holy Spirit until he had gone (Jn. 16:7). And this dispensation from heaven had not yet occurred in its fullness (even according to the prophet Joel) until the Day of Pentecost. Or, why else would Jesus have them wait for it (Acts 1:4). Even if we admitted these examples, neither of them will take much away from the over-arching argument, which is this: Biblical in-fillings almost always resulted in visible manifestations of some "Gift of the Spirit".

Peter’s comments are very interesting to me: Vs. 47, “They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have” (Emphasis Mine). Of course, tongues and praising God were the primary manifestations noted in Acts 2. A chapter later, Peter again recounted the Cornelius experience when he said, “the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning” (Acts 11:15). And of course “When they [the other Jerusalem believers] heard this, they had no further objections and praised God...” In other words, the primary evidence the apostles took as confirmation *were unknown tongues and praising God*. This does not necessarily mean that it was the *only* evidence they took to be confirmative. However, tongues were, at least, a critical accompaniment to the Apostle’s personal experience.

The final text which many scholar’s consider to be primary is in Acts 19.

Acts 19:1-6 “While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples 2 and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” 3 So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?” “John’s baptism,” they replied. 4 Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” 5 On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.”

So the direct result of this Baptism in the Holy Spirit were *tongues and prophecy*.

Thus, in light of all of the above examples, here is a summarized list of immediate gifts that resulted from this infilling (according to Biblical precedence).

- 4 & potentially 5 of 5..chance of having a visible manifestation when receiving H.S. infilling
- 3 of 5 chance of receiving unknown tongues
- 1 of 5 chance of manifesting prophecy or praises when baptized

Even if we were to use *pre-Acts chapter 2* “infilling texts” (such as Lk 1:41; 67), we could still say that, according to Bible precedent, it is extremely unlikely to *not* experience any kind of manifestation when praying to receive the Holy Spirit.

Which Manifestations Should We Look For?

Does this mean that all infillings *must* be accompanied by tongues, prophecy, praising God, or some sort of visual manifestation? Not necessarily. There are many practices and examples in the book of Acts that we are uncertain about emulating.³¹ For example: just because the Apostles cast lots for the appointment of leaders doesn’t necessarily imply that we should do the same (Acts 1:26). Thus, we would be wise to be hesitant about what experiences we “should be looking for.”

But, after understanding the Biblical purpose for this infilling (in the last chapter), it would be rather odd to not see *any* manifestations over time. After all, the primary purpose of

³¹ Perhaps the largest hermeneutical problem in interpreting the book of Acts is the question of “historical precedence”. Did Luke record every detail of their lives so that we could emulate every last detail as “the Biblical way of doing things”? I.e., Is traveling by ship the only “Biblical way” of traversing water? Of course, water transportation is not a very hotly contested issue amidst modern evangelicals; yet, this same questionable logic exists behind most debates on subjects such as church government, water baptism, etc. Obviously, there are a great many cultural and historical considerations in dealing with each specific text. So, we would be wise to avoid the classic mistake of thinking we’ve “rediscovered” the ultimate balanced approach.

the infillings is to receive “*power to be God’s witnesses*” (Acts 1:8). It’s the experience that results in “*signs that accompany God’s word*” (Mk. 16:17, 20). Or, as Paul said, when used properly, they will cause unbelievers to be “*convinced they are sinners*” and even exclaim, “*God is really among you!*” (1 Cor. 14:24-25). To put this another way, if we believe that infillings should *never* have *any* manifestations *ever*, then this undermines the primary Biblical purpose for infillings in the first place (again, see Chapter One).

More specifically, the three groups we mentioned above tend to take slightly different approaches to this issue as well. The groups who call themselves *Pentecostals* generally believe that *unknown tongues* are the primary result we should look for as confirmation of the Holy Spirit Baptism. Alternately groups who call themselves *Charismatics* or *Third Wave* tend to be a bit looser about what to expect. These groups believe that any number of manifestations can occur (such as tongues, prophecy, the ability to perform physical healings, etc.) *Charismatics* and *Pentecostals* tend to be a bit more dogmatic about needing an *immediate manifestation* as confirmation than do *Third Wavers*. In fact, in many Third Wave circles, it is taught that every believer *already has* the Holy Spirit Baptism; but, they merely need to be taught on how to experience each distinct gift. From my experience any one of these approaches is reasonable based on Bible precedence.

In light of this, why are there so many people who avoid belief in *any* manifestations? There could be numerous reasons why people are resistant; but, usually it boils down to the following two reasons: (1) They’ve had a bad experience with tongues or prophecy and are uncertain about what the Bible exactly teaches. (2). They were uncertain if *any* Bible miracles still occurred because they were raised in cessationist churches where “supernatural” Christianity was not taught nor encouraged.

Because there are so many Evangelicals who fall into those two categories, it is common to hear theologically unsustainable excuses as to why they supposedly cannot experience supernatural manifestations. This leads us to the question: *Is every person meant to experience unknown tongues as well as the other gifts of the Holy Spirit?*

Is every person meant to experience tongues, as well as other Gifts?

Many people have said, “*I must not have ‘the gift of tongues’ or prophecy, and the Bible validates this.*” Generally, when I ask “*where does the Bible validate this?*”, I am invariably pointed to a classic text in 1 Cor. 12:27-31. It reads:

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But eagerly desire the greater gifts.”

The obvious implication of each of Paul’s questions is *no*. However, to use this verse as evidence that there are people who will *never ever* have any experiences with tongues or prophecy simply doesn’t logically follow. Allow me to explain this.

Every person has a certain basic measure of every ‘gift’. For example, every person is capable of encouraging another person; however, to say every person is an “Encourager” is another thing. Some people are distinctly adept or ‘set-apart’ in the area of encouraging others.

It is in *this* context that Paul is discussing the various ministries or “distinctive attributes” in the body of Christ.

The overarching context is that the assembled church is having problems functioning in unity and order. Members are not using their distinct roles correctly in relationship to others. In verse 28 Paul begins to rank the ministries of the body in order of importance. He is establishing ranks of authority merely to instigate order in the church.

For example, when Paul implies that “not all are teachers”, it doesn’t mean that some people are *entirely incapable of teaching anyone anything*. Rather, it merely means that they don’t show any *distinguished skill* in the area of teaching. But *distinguished skill* is completely different than Paul saying that some people are *holistically and eternally incompetent from ever manifesting any ability to teach whatsoever*. I mean, *everyone* has a basic ability to teach. For example: even a learning-disabled person could teach a little kid to count to three even though they may not teach a college course on nuclear physics.

In this same way, just because someone doesn’t have a distinguished gift or ‘ministry’ of unknown tongues, does not mean that they can’t have a basic ability to pray in tongues in order to “speak to God” and “edify themselves” (1 Cor. 14:2-4). If one is to use this passage to argue that tongues aren’t for everyone, one must follow their argument to its logical conclusions: that many people are also *wholly and entirely unable* to “help” or “teach” anyone *anything* unless they “have the gift”. However, clearly, this is an unrealistic assertion.

Thus, some believe that the term “distinguished skill” may be interchanged with the term “ministry”. In other words, Paul is talking about ministries, not lay-level versions of the same gift. I.e., There are people who significantly excel in certain gifts. Not everyone who plays the piano is a musician. But that doesn’t mean everyone else is holistically incapable of achieving a minimal level of skill.

Even more, many scriptures seem to implicate that these experiences are *all inclusive*. In **1 Cor. 14:1** Paul teaches:

“Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.”

This was a very broadly aimed statement. There’s not much hint of, “*but only those of you who are gifted in prophecy*”.

In all the other texts where supernatural manifestations are recorded, we never see any “selectivity” with the gifts. We never read Luke say, “All who had the gift began to speak in tongues”. Rather we see inclusive language like, “*all of [the 120] had been given the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:4a). Or, in **1 Cor. 14:26** Paul says, “*When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation.*” Or in Acts 8:16 and Acts 10:44, there’s no indication that anyone was excluded from speaking in tongues. In fact, “*the Holy Spirit came on all who heard [Peter’s] message*” and the circumcised believers “*were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues*” (Acts 10:44-46).

Now, I’m not trying to force these texts to say: “Everyone must absolutely experience every manifestation absolutely”; however, at least these texts don’t imply that the gifts are for the elite few. Even more, when we deal with our fears and when we lay a sound Biblical foundation for the gifts, I don’t think many Christians will be making the argument, “*I don’t have the gift!*”

The more I allow Bible truths to settle in my heart, the more silly these excuses become.

To say, “*I won’t ever speak in tongues because I don’t have the gift*” is like arguing, “*I don’t have the gift of self-control*”. Or, “*I don’t have the gift of joy, thus it’s perfectly fine for me to stay depressed!*” Instead, God has a supernatural allotment of grace to meet your every need. In the greater scheme of things, you may not become known as a prophet or teacher like many characters in the New Testament (Acts 21:10; 13:1; Eph. 4:11); however, you will, at least, have a “common amount.”

Ultimately, the best remedy for those who seem to abstain from the spiritual gifts is to really meditate on the ways in which the spiritual gifts were actually used in the Bible. It also helps to de-mystify the gifts and provide a few safeguards for the use of these gifts.

So, in the following chapter, we will do just that. We will answer in detail: *What do tongues and prophecy actually feel like? And, what are the safeguards to prevent us from getting cultic?*

Chapter Four:

The Veracity of Unknown Tongues and Prophecy

Many modern Pentecostal and Charismatic churches believe in unknown tongues; *but, how do we know if these modern beliefs are truly in sync with scripture?* What *exactly* can we conclude from scripture about the function of this strange tongues experience? What does scripture imply about *how this gift “feels” when we receive it?* Will our tongues randomly start thrashing around as if overtaken by some alien force? What are the Biblical safeguards that prevent us from becoming cultic with such an experience?

In this next chapter, we will attempt to answer a few of these questions. But before we dive into the scriptural implications, let’s begin with some rather safe deductions about the nature of the tongues phenomenon.

Many people will denounce the doctrines of unknown tongues merely on the pretext that it seems weird or foreign to their personal church experience. However, this is not adequate grounds for denouncing scripture. Here are a few basic observations. If your view of tongues is Biblical, then the following four premises will be true:

1. When speaking in tongues, you will not know what you are saying.

1 Corinthians 14:2 teaches: *“For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit.”*

In this verse we find that a Biblical tongue will not be understood because in this case it is *for God*. Many people attempt to argue that a Biblical tongue is always understood (as it was by a few people in Acts chapter Two). However, in this verse, it’s quite apparent that Paul is referring to an operation of tongues that *“no one understands.”* In this verse, the phrase *“no one”* seems to include the speaker. Indeed, it is truly a *“mystery;”* or, as the Greek word implies: it is a *secret*, a *hidden thing* from man. Then Paul adds to this fact later on in chapter 14:

1 Corinthians 14:14 teaches: *“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.”*

“Unfruitful” means that the mind does not produce the results that a mind should (namely comprehension and critique). In fact, the mind *cannot do so* because, as Paul argues, the event is *not* an intellectual event but rather a spiritual one. (I.e., an act that necessitates faith, not logic and reason). And Paul continues in verses 18-19, *“But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.”*

What makes this statement striking is that Paul contrasts *“intelligible words”* with tongues. This implies that Biblical tongues are *not* necessarily words that are somehow

“intelligible” or, able to be understood. For further example, it makes no sense for Paul to encourage a person to “*pray for the interpretation*” if tongues were necessarily understood by others (v.13).

At this point, most modern readers are thoroughly confused about the role and function of tongues. This is because, after detailed exegesis, the student will find several divergent functions of tongues (which we will discuss later on in this chapter).

But for now, it suffices to say that, good Biblical exegesis *firmly endorses* a type of tongue that cannot be understood by the hearers (or even the actual doer) because it is *for God* not *man* (14:2).

With this in mind, let’s move on to the next premise defining the nature of a Biblical tongue:

2. You may likely feel or look like you’re “out of your mind” or “drunk.”

As Paul chided the Corinthians, he acted as though his wisdom was common sense.

In **1 Corinthians 14:23** he teaches, “*So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?*” In other words, it should be rather obvious that, in front of uninformed people, a Biblical tongue *will make you look crazy!*

Luke remarked on the day of Pentecost in **Acts 2:13** that “*Some, however, made fun of them and said, ‘they have had too much wine.’*” In other words, there were many who felt that these tongue talkers were simply drunk and babbling.

Many Christians would have us believe that the day of Pentecost was some “virtually irrefutable” miracle to all who were present. But, to many people, this very “gift” cost the Apostles their credibility.

*“...to many people,
this very “gift” cost
the Apostles their
credibility.”*

However, to other people, it was the very sign of God drawing them closer to God’s plan. It was controversial then, yet fruitful; therefore, it shouldn’t surprise us that it might be controversial yet fruitful today.

Thus, it is well within Bible parameters to argue that a Biblical tongue will cause you to *appear* to be drunk or out of your mind. Unfortunately, to both our dignity and egos, to appear otherwise could imply that you are standing on

unscriptural grounds.

I’m reminded of the story of Harald Bredesen, a Lutheran minister who became a well known advocate of tongues. This story took place in the lobby of a New York hotel.

“Bredesen was attending a breakfast meeting, and had left his hat on a chair outside the dining room. When time came to leave, he found the chair occupied not by his hat, but by a pretty lady. At the time, Bredesen was a bachelor and his male instincts prompted him to extend the conversation beyond a formal excuse-me-have-you-seen-my-hat? The girl noted the clerical collar and in a few minutes they were deep in a conversation on religion. After a while the young lady volunteered the information that her own religious life somehow left her dissatisfied. And soon Bredesen was telling her that he too had felt this lack, but that he had found a new dimension in his devotional life through speaking in tongues.

‘Through what?’ asked the girl.

‘Speaking in a language that God gives you,’ Bredesen said, and went on to tell her a little about his experience. In

the girl's eyes he read disbelief and also something like apprehension.

'Can you speak in these tongues any time you want to?' she said, and he thought she edged almost imperceptibly to the far side of her chair.

'They're given us for prayer.'

'Well can you pray in tongues whenever you want to?'

'Yes. Would you like me to pray this way now?'

The girl looked around the lobby, outright alarm in her eyes this time.

'I won't embarrass you,' said Bredesen, and with that he bowed his head slightly and after a short silent prayer began speaking words that to him were unintelligible. The sounds were clipped and full of 'p's' and 'k's' When he finished, he opened his eyes and saw that the girl's face was ashen.

'Why...why...I understood you. You were praising God. You were speaking a very old form of Arabic.'

'How do you know?' asked Bredesen.

Then he learned that the girl was the daughter of an Egyptologist, that she herself spoke several modern Arabic languages and had studied archaic Arabic.

'You pronounced the words perfectly,' she said. 'Where on earth did you learn old Arabic?'

Harald Bredesen shook his head. 'I didn't', he said. 'I didn't know there was such a language.'³²

You see, ultimately, I do not see much "normalcy" in such an experience. Let's face it. This is a strange thing. Yet, as long as it is Biblical, our only means of further discretion is: does this bear good fruit? (Mt. 7:16). And, this experience bore great fruit on the day of Pentecost; and, when used correctly, it is still bearing good fruit today.

With this in mind, let's move on to the next premise defining the nature of a Biblical tongue:

3. You will always be in full control of your tongue!

As you read through texts regarding tongues, you will never find a single passage in which the *Holy Spirit* was the One "doing the speaking". Both man and his tongue are *willful* vessels of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:4 THEY [THE DISCIPLES] SPOKE, "AS THE SPIRIT GAVE THEM UTTERANCE". ACTS 19:6 "AND WHEN PAUL HAD LAID HIS HANDS UPON THEM . . . THEY SPOKE WITH TONGUES, AND PROPHESIED". 1 CO. 14:2 FOR HE THAT SPEAKS IN AN UNKNOWN TONGUE SPEAKS NOT TO MEN BUT TO GOD: . . . IN THE SPIRIT HE SPEAKS MYSTERIES". VS.5 "HE THAT SPEAKS IN AN UNKNOWN TONGUE EDIFIES HIMSELF . . ." VS.4. "I WOULD THAT YOU ALL SPOKE WITH TONGUES . . ." VS.14 "FOR IF I PRAY IN AN UNKNOWN TONGUE, MY SPIRIT PRAYS . . ." VS.15 "WHAT IS IT THEN? I WILL PRAY WITH THE SPIRIT . . ." VS.18 "I THANK MY GOD, I SPEAK WITH TONGUES MORE THAN ALL OF YOU"). VS.27-28 "IF ANY MAN SPEAKS IN AN UNKNOWN TONGUE . . .".

I realize that I am pointing out a rather obvious set of pronouns; yet, it is amazing how many people falsely believe that miracles always bypass the will and faith of man. Therefore, if you are expecting to "lose control" of your tongue or your body, you will likely be disappointed. The Biblical term for *that* experience is more likely called demonization (see Mt. 9:32).

I Co. 14:29-32 says, "The spirits of prophets are subject *to the control of prophets*." In other words, prophecy, a supernatural gift from the Holy Spirit, is very much submitted to the will of mankind. A gift of prophecy doesn't "possess" an individual like some scene out of an Exorcist movie. This demonstrates that the "supernatural" can flow within the "will" and "physical control" of the participant. You won't lose control of your body when God impresses a prophetic scripture on your heart, *nor* will you lose control with any of the spiritual gifts,

³² John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Spire: a Fleming H. Revell Company), p.19-20.

especially tongues. Paul likely said this statement to the Corinthians to pre-empt the hyper-spiritual claim: “*I couldn’t help but to randomly shout out what God put on my heart*” (which is something I’ve *actually heard* from many hyper-spiritual pentecostals over the years). Paul understood the value of creating order, and creating safe atmospheres for “unbelieving” or “non-understanding” people to attend gatherings.

Now, there *may be* such a tongue that is *so overwhelming* that it “feels” like your tongue was possessed by an alien and forced to utter oracles. From time to time it may feel like a “fire shut up in your bones” (Jer.20:9). However, based on Bible implications, it could *also mean* that you are standing on unscriptural grounds.

This naturally leads us to our fourth premise:

4. Unknown Tongues will always require faith to do it:

Tongues is like prayer & prophecy in that *it requires faith to work*. Indeed many “spiritual events” require faith to operate.

Romans 12:6 says, “*If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.*” This verse demonstrates that *faith is required* when sharing a prophetic word with anyone. There is no participation in any type of prophetic event that holistically bypasses the need for faith. We cannot know 100% if a certain scripture God ‘puts on our heart’ for someone is truly a specific message from God to them (rather than just another random thought in our head). It takes an element of faith to give the message to someone (of course, judging the message according to scriptures).

“There is no...prophetic event that holistically bypasses the need for faith.”

To illustrate this principle, I will pose the common question: *How does one know for sure that they are saved?* Well, if you believe in the Bible, you would answer, “*by faith in God’s word which says etc. etc. etc.*” In other words: *by faith in God’s Word* this miracle of rebirth and justification has occurred. We need to take this same attitude of faith in God’s word into *all* of His spiritual gifts and promises (including tongues and other prophetic spiritual gifts!)

Any great prophetic minister who has lists and lists of miraculous “words” from God (that were perfectly fit to the situation) will admit that they weren’t certain about many of them. They were simply faithful to share what they thought, while they & the recipient was responsible to judge it. The “miracle” is often in the remarkably appropriate fit to the given situation. The spiritual gifts are not like witchcraft: gifts we can control requiring no faith - only will. We are hopelessly dependant upon God. “Without faith it’s impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6).

On one particular occasion I was passing by an individual in my church. As I looked at them I felt this distinct scripture verse from James chapter 4 come to mind. Every time I saw them, the same verse came to mind and I had no rationale or prior knowledge about this person to understand why. Finally I decided to take the step of faith and approach the person with it. I passively said, “*Every time I see you I get this scriptural impression that I feel could be from the Lord. If it’s totally random and doesn’t seem to apply, then just toss it aside.*” After sharing it they began to cry. They poured out, “*I was just praying that God would give me a specific answer as to what I should do in this particular situation. ...you have no idea how crazy it is that*

you're sharing that verse with me right now!"

In retrospect, that particular verse was a brilliant and poignant piece of Biblical advice. But to me, it didn't "feel" supernatural; yet, the results were nothing short of a miraculous sign for this person. It required faith, as do all the promises and spiritual activities of God. And with all of this being said, let's address some of the deeper questions people have about tongues.

The Exegetical Confusion of Different Texts

When I'm reading my Bible and a particular verse doesn't make sense, I begin to go crazy until I can understand it within its greater context. This is partly why I've been so entirely dissatisfied with many interpretations of 1 Corinthians 14. No one seems to really deal with the problem of dissecting Paul's concept. Let's face it: 1 Cor.14 is confusing!

*"Let's face it:
1 Corinthians chapter 14
is confusing!"*

Earlier on we proved that when you speak in tongues that you will not understand what you are saying.

Indeed one utters "*mysteries.*" 1 Corinthians 14:2 teaches,

*"For anyone who speaks in a tongue **does not speak to men but to God.** Indeed, **no one** understands him; he utters **mysteries** with his spirit" (Emphasis mine) (See also, vs. 8; 14, 16, etc.)*

Yet, the careful reader of this chapter will then ask: If tongues is "speaking to God not men" (vs.2), then why, later on in the chapter, does Paul begin talking about "*interpreted tongues*" for the assembly. In other words, why suddenly is Paul talking about a type of tongues that seems to be for men and *not* for God. For example, 1 Cor. 14:22 teaches,

"Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers" (Emphasis Mine).

Even further, no one had to "interpret" in Acts Chapter Two. People automatically understood on the Day of Pentecost. Yet, as if it is common sense, Paul says, "*Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries...*" (1 Cor. 14:2).

At first glance, the purpose, function, and miracle of tongues within these contrasting verses don't seem to reconcile with each other. This is because there are different functions & purposes that Paul is describing. Upon closer observation, there seems to be a dualistic role with all of the spiritual gifts. So, to explain this, let's begin by describing this dualism using prophecy and scripture.

The Specific, Prophetic, Public Edifying Function

In many charismatic circles, when a person is "prophesying", they are primarily just quoting specific scriptures that "*stick out to them*" or feel "*particularly relevant*" to a person or situation. We cannot choose when to have one of these experiences. We can "listen" more, and try to be more sensitive to these impressions; but, we cannot generate these on our own. They come from God when he wills them.

Like the example I shared above, every time I saw that person, I kept sensing the same scripture verse from James chapter four. It didn't even make any logical sense to me why the Holy Spirit would be speaking that very verse to them; but, by faith I shared it anyway.

Personally, the vast majority of prophetic ideas that the Lord gives to me come in the form of scripture verses that I've memorized. It's almost as if scripture has become the vocabulary that enables me to communicate anything prophetically. In fact, many "prophets" purposefully limit all of their "words" to actual scriptures. This helps to safeguard the many pitfalls that people can fall into when participating in the prophetic. Prophecy exists in conservative evangelical circles too (even those who "don't believe" such things occur). Rather than call it prophecy, conservative evangelicals simply call it an "impression". But, no matter what you call this experience, in this application, scripture is used in a "*Specific, Prophetic, and Publicly Edifying sense*". Allow me to explain this further.

These adjectives are important because they describe *one* of the two functions of every spiritual gift. In this case, I proclaimed a "*Specific*" verse from God's word. It wasn't just *any* verse, but it was a specific verse out of James chapter Four. Even more, it wasn't just a random "word of God" in the sense that every verse in the Bible is a "word from God". Rather, this was a unique impression rolling around in my heart. It could have just been a thought in my head. But, either way, it carried a "prophetic" sense about it. I mean, it felt like this verse would somehow be special to the circumstance even though I did not know how. And lastly, this "word" was used in a "*Publicly Edifying*" situation. I.e., I sensed that this specific prophetic word was to be shared with another person for their edification. Thus, we call this the "*Specific, Prophetic, Public*" function of scripture.

The "Common, Generic, Privately Edifying" Sense

However, there is another use of scripture that is much more common. 1 Timothy 3:16 teaches that, "*All Scripture is God-breathed*". In other words, every word of scripture is "prophetic" to a certain degree. In Peter's letter, he writes, "*you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation*" (1 Peter 1:20). Thus, every time we read our Bibles, there is a sense in which we could say that we are "prophesying" to ourselves. Why? Because, what is prophecy in its most generic sense? It's God's word to mankind. Yet, we are "prophesying" to ourselves in a very "Generic" non-specific way.

But, just because we call this a "Generic" experience doesn't mean that this isn't a miraculous experience. Every time we read scripture a miracle is occurring because "*God's word is living and active*" (Heb. 4:12).

Yet, the difference from the "Specific, Prophetic, Public" function is that we can "*choose*" when to experience this miracle. Every time we want to be edified with heavenly insight we simply need to pick up our scriptures. In this application, scripture is used in a "Common, Generic, Privately Edifying" sense.

So why are these two functions important? They are important because they are the hermeneutical key to understanding Paul's seemingly contradictory statements about the purpose of tongues. Many significant questions about tongues can be answered by understanding this distinction (*such as: Must all tongues be interpreted? Can I choose when to speak in tongues?*

etc.)

The Two Functions of Tongues

These two divergent functions occur with tongues as well. There are the “Common, Generic, Personally Edifying” tongues that Paul refers to in 1 Cor. 14:2;4. We can “choose” when to do this much like we can “choose” when to read scripture. It may not “feel” miraculous; but, by faith in God’s word, we are in fact edifying ourselves. These tongues are not for the public assembly; or, as Paul put it, “*They are not for men but for God*”. I.e., they are for personal edification in our private prayer and worship lives. This generic function is probably the one Paul had in mind when he said in 1 Cor. 14:26,

*“What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, **everyone** has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation” (Emphasis mine).*

I.e., this is a common generic experience that everyone has; but, the question Paul is asking: “is it *particularly* for the edification of others?” I.e., Are these tongues “specific” for the purpose of being a “sign for unbelievers” (14:22) as it was in Acts chapter two? This leads us to the alternate function.

There is also the “*Specific, Prophetic, Publically Edifying*” use of tongues (which occurs in Acts 2; 1 Cor. 14:5;13 etc.) This is a very specific phrase or set of phrases that are impressed upon the heart of the believer. They may be “distinct in feel” from “*Common, Generic, Personally*” edifying tongues; yet, according to 1 Cor. 14, they will still be unknown to the speaker. Just like God drops a “specific prophetic scripture verse” in our hearts from time to time to share with another, God may also drop a very “specific prophetic feeling tongue” as well. These are the types of tongues that need interpretation (if they are not *already* completely understood by the listener). We cannot “choose” when to have these experiences; yet, we can choose to become more sensitive & full of faith to speak when the Lord leads us.

Without this framework, most passages on unknown tongues will not make much hermeneutical sense. For years I read commentary & exegesis on these passages that never dealt with the subtle statements of 1 Cor. 14. Therefore, the Biblical purpose of tongues has always been shrouded with confusion. To make matters worse, the doctrine of tongues has been way too politically charged; therefore, most scholars have simply chosen to ignore the issue all together. Yet, the Bible still calls us to “*eagerly desire the spiritual gifts*” (1 Cor. 14:1). *Therefore, in light of our quest, how does this framework help us?*

Answering the Difficult Questions:

In the following section, we will answer numerous specific questions that require an understanding of this dualistic function:

Must Every Tongue be Interpreted?

Must every tongue be interpreted? It depends. If such tongues are the “*Specific, Prophetic, Publically Edifying*” type, *and* they are not already automatically understood by the

hearers, then they *should* be interpreted. But even if they're not the "Specific Prophetic" type, and they're heard by "those who are ignorant or do not understand" then they should "keep quiet" (1 Cor. 14:23; 28).

It's amazing how many charismatic churches disobey the basic common sense Paul is trying to communicate here. Paul is essentially saying: "Wake up church! Tongues make you sound like you're out of your minds! Use some common sense about when you utilize these gifts!" Paul was essentially saying, *use extra discernment in mixed company*. There are people who are "Ignorant" and there are people who simply don't "understand".

Of course this is not an argument to hide all signs of this gift in your church; however, common sense should dictate how visibly you demonstrate this gift. As one friend put it: "You don't change a car's oil on the dealership's showroom floor." Likewise, everything with this gift "should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Cor. 14:40). Many charismatic churches claim to be a "restoration of the book of Acts", when in reality they are the "resurgence of the Corinthian error".

I've been in many well-meaning charismatic churches that are flat out weird. They've taken doctrines like these and made them into bizarre self-centered worship experiences. I can't imagine that very many outsiders would feel comfortable attending such services or worship experiences. Yet, ironically, the very purpose of the Infilling of the Holy Spirit (and its consequential signs) is to serve unbelievers by bearing witness to the coming kingdom of God. It seems like the most powerful tool God gives us for evangelism is too often turned into the primary tool we use to scare away seekers. Thus, we would do well to avoid the ingrown experientialism that loses track of God's evangelistic passion (Lk 15:1-7). Besides, the consequential lack of fruit will certainly be judged by the Lord (as it was by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians).

*"the most powerful tool
God gives us for
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tool we use to scare away
seekers."*

Can you choose when to speak in tongues?

Can you choose when to speak in tongues? Again, this depends upon what function of tongues you are referring to. The *Common Generic Personally Edifying* form can be initiated any time anywhere much like reading the Bible (i.e., prophesying to yourself in a generic way). Many people object to this either because they don't understand the "Generic Function" or they simply have false expectations about what the supernatural should "feel like".

Remember, the supernatural part of these gifts are not necessarily "how they feel" but the fruit they produce in the people that they are intended to edify. I pray in tongues because I feel empowered and stronger (as I do after I've read scripture). I give prophecies to others because they are often profound and encouraging to the people I give them to. They are often a striking fit to that persons' situation (most often when I don't even know their "situations"). Like the gift of salvation, spiritual gifts don't necessarily require a "feeling" in order to be true or "supernatural".

To explain this further in the following section we will explore: What does the supernatural “feel” like. I.e., what kind of Biblical expectations can we bring into these experiences.

What do tongues and prophecy ‘feel like’?

Now as we delve deeper into the scriptures, let’s elaborate on the subject of “*What do tongues and the spiritual gifts ‘feel like’?*”

The reason why this discussion is important is because many Christians approach this Biblical experience with unbiblical expectations. Also, until we firmly answer this question, it will be difficult to discern whether or not a particular experience is in fact a Biblical experience as opposed to a cultic one.

Most beginners in the spiritual gifts are frightened about whether or not they are simply “making up” a prophetic word from the Lord or merely pretending to speak in an unknown tongues like a child producing gibberish. “*How can this be supernatural?*” some ask. Others, who may even speak in tongues ask, “*How can I know that I really have the baptism or infilling of the Holy Spirit?*”

My response is always the same: “*What is it that you’re looking for? What do you think the gifts of the spirit are? What would indicate to you that you have truly received the Holy Spirit baptism? Is it a feeling? Is it a physical jolt? What is it?*” The answer to this question will often reveal the false anti-faith expectation in the individual. We cannot get beyond the need for faith in this Biblical experience.

Allow me to be redundant by again asking the common question: “*How do you know you’ve received salvation? How do you know you’re not just pretending to be ‘saved’?*” The obvious answer is: “by faith in God’s Word.”

So is there a feeling which accompanies the Holy Spirit's infilling? Sometimes. But our feelings *aren't necessary* for it to be true. When I received Christ, I actually felt a tangible buzz. I felt joy coming forth from the core of my being for several weeks following my conversion. Others feel nothing; they feel only a new conscious commitment to start seeking Christ. *However, in our salvation or our spiritual gifts, we cannot go by our feelings, but only by faith in God's word.* In other words, Scripture is our safeguard or anchor to the truth. Many feelings about God may be correct and may feel wonderful; however, many feelings about God are *not* Biblical and therefore must be judged according to scripture.

There’s a great story of a skeptical tongue talker who, despite his doubts about his own tongues, decided to keep using them for prayer. It’s a living demonstration of faith. Roy H. Wead of South Bend Indiana wrote about his friend Mr. L. B. Richardson (today of Jacksonville, FL.) “*...Brother Richardson, at the time, was going through a great testing, with considerable doubts relative to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. He had doubts even about his own experience, when he received the Holy Spirit as a child some years earlier.*

He began to seek the Lord in his room in school and continued there praying most of the day. My room being across the hall, I could hear him pray as I went to classes. In the afternoon, after some hours of prayer, it was evident that he had gone through to a wonderful victory and was rejoicing in the Lord, praising and worshipping the Lord in unknown tongues as moved by the Spirit.

Still later, as I came down the hall to my room, I noted a young Chinese man, Samuel Ko, who was

attending the school, standing there in the hall next to Brother Richardson's room, listening to him speak in unknown tongues. Brother Ko, very elated, began to tell me that Brother Richardson was speaking in Chinese and that he, Brother Ko, could understand what he was saying. He further stated that Brother Richardson was speaking about things in China which Brother Ko was familiar with. Brother Richardson had been speaking in Chinese for some minutes: at least half an hour, or considerably longer.”³³

Thus, despite our “feelings” about this experience, as long as it conforms to Bible parameters, we can be sure that we are accessing true spiritual power.

On one occasion, I was taking a shower before some friends came over to my house. While in the shower, I felt a distinct impression from the Lord that my friends were soon going to be “pummeled with trials”, yet they shouldn't fear for God will uphold them. Five minutes later, I hesitantly shared my impression. It could've merely been a silly thought in my head. But, I decided to submit it to them anyway. The very next day they had a crazy day... their son broke his arm, a huge crisis occurred at work, alongside a host of other tough things, etc. The news of all this almost seemed eerie after the word I had spoken the day earlier; yet, all the while their hearts were at peace knowing that God was in control. Looking back, the accuracy of this impression was impeccable. Yet, at the time, it came with no fanfare and required faith on my part to even bother sharing it.

Make no mistake. Unknown tongues and the spiritual gifts are very much a subjective experience. However, how we judge these experiences is very objective. Everyone experiences a different feeling with each experience. However scriptures never change. And judging our feelings with scriptures would be an objective response (to safeguard our emotional well being). The spiritual gifts are much the same way. *Then why do people make such a big fuss about unknown tongues and the spiritual gifts?*

The Safe-guards To Subjective Experiences

Along our path to define the true nature of unknown tongues, let us pause for a moment to discuss the dangers of such experiences. I believe that there are many reasons why Christians fear tongues as well as other spiritual gifts.

Perhaps many fear their lack of knowledge and the consequent difficulty of shifting their theology to include true “demonstrations of the Spirit's power” (I Cor. 2:4-5). This fear of being wrong is especially understandable for those Christians who, for most of their lives, have learned to live and minister the word *without the “signs that accompany it”* Mk 16:20. Indeed, I've heard countless inferior arguments as to why we should minister without “manifestationary” power. But, as with any theological adjustment, it takes humility to admit what you *don't know*.

However many Bible teachers have “eliminated” the use of many gifts due to their widespread abuse in churches across America. What honest Christian disciples could sanction such subjective cultish activity? Many of these same people do not know that there are objective tests to these subjective experiences. I.e., there are strong boundaries and guidelines which safeguard the cultish tendencies of such revelation gifts.

Paul himself said, “*Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold onto the good*” (1 Thess. 5:19-20). Many conservative evangelicals

³³ Ibid p.101-102.

disobey the former commands and many charismatics the latter. Our quest: How can we do both? What are these tests? And how does one know when they receive a spiritual gift?

How Does One Know if they've received a Spiritual Gift?

When we receive a prophesy, as well as an interpreted tongue, it comes with a greater or lesser certainty about its "origin": that is, *does it come from our "natural" minds or the Holy Spirit?* Often times we ask ourselves, "*Was that just an ambient voice, a silly thought within my head, the devil, or was that the Lord 'impressing something upon my heart'?*" This is why Paul writes in Romans 12:6, "*If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it **in proportion to his faith.***": In other words, we don't always know if the "impression on our heart" is truly from God. There's no clear cut, 100% knowing.

Anyone fluent in the use of spiritual gifts understands that some gifts have a greater clarity of 'divine origin' than others (i.e., comes from the H.S.). I often describe this by means of my "Divine Origin Continuum"(See Figure A below). On the one side is my carnal over-creative mind; on the other side of this continuum is my "spiritual man" (reborn in Christ). Prophecy #1 represented by an "X" depicts a prophecy that "felt" a lot like a random thought in my head. However, Prophecy #2 felt like a very clear loving rebuke from the Lord that seemed very disjointed from my own carnal mind's train of thought.

(Figure A)



Paul teaches us to "judge prophesy". This is the safe-guard for "inspired things". We judge such oracles by their conformity to Bible perspectives. The very fact that Paul required a safeguard as necessary indicates the subjective nature of these phenomena. Mankind has an ever-present potential for error. In other words, God, (the supernatural), is cooperating **with** man, (the natural). This is part of the profundity & paradox of God saying, "*I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh*" (Acts 2:17). Strong's Lexicon defines "flesh" or (*sarx*) as: *the flesh, denotes mere human nature, the earthly nature of man apart from divine influence, and therefore prone to sin and opposed to God.* Knowing the safeguards to man's fallibility is important. In fact, it will actually increase confidence amidst believers to use the spiritual gifts. Only in the absence of proper safe-guards will abuses take place. These abuses are what scare people away from what are intended to be God's blessings.

There are indeed many more objective tests for judging oracles (as opposed to subjective tests). When any prophecy is given, one may apply these tests to safeguard against any errors made in discerning "the message of God".

Seven Tests to Judging Prophecy

- 1. Prophecy should agree and conform to the “letter” and the “spirit” of scripture.** We must be like the Bereans who “received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” **Acts 17:11**. Also note in 1 Cor. 14 Paul’s instructions for others to judge oracles that are shared.
- 2. Prophecy (in the New Testament) should always “build up”, “admonish” or “encourage”** rather than confuse, condemn, or discourage. (1 Cor.14:3)
- 3. Prophecy should always emphasize and center around Jesus, as opposed to human personalities, institutions, special doctrines, or ordinances.** *“At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” Revelation 19:10.* (See also, Jn.16:13-14)
Therefore any prophecy which rallies people to give unusual allegiance to a leader or program other than Jesus (His Gospel and Great Commission) is likely an unbiblical prophecy. For example, I’ve actually heard people manipulate prophecy to pressure involvement in building programs. When being taught the art of capital campaigns, I must have missed the lesson on *how to spiritually manipulate through prophecy*.
- 4. If prophecy contains predictions, they must come true** (Deut 18:20-22). However, even if they do come true, they may still be from the devil. (See also point 5 and 6 regarding predictions)
- 5. Reliable prophecy must always come from committed believers** (1 Cor. 14:22). This does not mean that immature believers can’t receive a “word from God”. We are simply saying that those who have not been born again have no means by which they could receive a word from God. Why? Because outside of Christ’s rebirth, we are spiritually dead. This is not to say that non-Christians can’t prophesy.
Non-Christians can prophesy; however, it will not be a result of the Spirit of the Lord. In Acts 16:16ff we see a demonically possessed slave girl prophesied truth about Paul and Silas. Naturally, such a person could never be trusted to speak truth consistently (thus Paul’s “troubled” countenance.)
Yet, to restate an important principle: Even when prophecy comes from “committed believers” it still must be judged.

“In the New Testament, Directive prophecy seems to be used as a ‘confirmation’ more than an ‘obligation’.”

There are also two more tests which have an increasingly subjective nature:

- 6. Prophecy liberates** (or confirms ideas, directives, etc. already received in other ways), **rather than obligates people to “unalterable directives” or other forms of bondage.**

I think we’ve all heard wild stories of people doing stupid things under the guise of “*God told me.*” We could expect this behavior from delusional people. However, many smart healthy

people have talked themselves and others into foolish behavior.

Perhaps the most common example I've heard is: "*God told me we are supposed to get married!*" I've heard people use this subtle manipulation in just about every possible format (resulting in a lot of disasters.) Or, "*God told me you are supposed to move to this city and go to this school!*" And thus, many people become confused by false prophetic directives, and fear otherwise disobeying God.

According to the precedent given in the New Testament, directive prophecy seems to be used as a "confirmation" more than an "obligation". In other words, after getting a general sense of direction from natural wisdom (sound Biblical advice, Conversations with spiritual mentors, etc.), *then*, prophecy can play its role. Or as many others have put it: *The role of prophecy is to help discern between two Biblically acceptable options. In other words: Between two good ideas, what is the God idea.* As an example of this, let's look at Acts 20:16.

"Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost."

Now, we do not know *why* Paul decided to go to Jerusalem; However, we can safely assume that Paul was not immoral for doing so. In fact he said that he was "*compelled by the Spirit*". He probably had some great ministry idea in mind that he wanted to accomplish. However, along the way, Paul kept getting "prophetic guidance" about his journey.

"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. 23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me." Acts 20:22-23

Perhaps these warnings came through the advice of loving friends who had previously seen his ability to stir up the wrath of the Jews.

Then in **Acts 21:4-5** Luke adds, "*Finding the disciples there, we stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. 5 But when our time was up, we left and continued on our way.*"

And finally in Caesarea, Agabus the prophet bound Paul's hands and feet saying, "*The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles'*" (Acts 21:11).³⁴

So, for whatever reasons, it seems that Paul was convinced he was being led to Jerusalem by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:22). Yet, the Holy Spirit was continually preparing him for what difficulties lie ahead.

Once again, we know the function of New Testament prophecy is for "*strengthening, encouragement, and comfort*" (1 Cor. 14:3). So, somehow, these prophecies were a continual affirmation of what Paul was *already* gleaning from other sources.

As a personal example, at one time I was praying about resigning my pastorate in Wisconsin to plant a church in a northern suburb of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Through natural wisdom I could see God cutting me out for a different mission field. I could see my personal gift-mix serving the kingdom better in such a place. After considering many other places, the Lord strongly impressed upon me that he was calling me there.

However, I didn't want to simply act on my instinct. Thus, we prayed very specifically:

³⁴ Note that Agabus was not an Apostle: denouncing the tenuous theory that such miracles were only intended for the ministry of the N.T. Apostle.

“Lord, reveal this to the prophetic people with in this congregation. Supernaturally give them dreams and visions of this calling to confirm this.” My wife and I had determined that we wouldn’t budge until it God made it obvious. There was simply way too much at stake to be haphazard about this decision. We also committed that we wouldn’t say a word to anyone locally about our idea. We wanted to make sure that any “supernatural confirmations” given through local church members were truly discerned through supernatural means.

Literally, within days, we had a flood of people sharing all sorts of “bizarre impressions” with us after church. *“I had a dream of you ministering from a different platform and the Lord told me you would have a big calling on a unique platform.”* **Then another person said,** *“I had a dream that you were moving to plant a church in Minneapolis Minnesota...specifically in this Northern suburb...!”* In fact, at first, the lady dismissed it was from the Lord because it seemed way too unrealistic. I mean, my wife and I were in an ideal dynamic church...so why would we relocate and start from scratch? These people had no idea what God was confirming through them. Thus, after about a half dozen undeniable, random, and improbable confirmations, (and after pulling our jaws off of the floor), my wife and I felt confident that this was the Lord; thus, we took the risk. In my opinion, this is a proper way of applying directive prophecy. Cultic behavior often begins without this safeguard.

Over the years I’ve met hundreds of “well-meaning” spiritually manipulative Christians. There is a fine line between influencing people to make positive choices and manipulating them. There is also a blurry line between our personal opinions for people and God’s prophetic opinions for people. Thus, we should all be careful about giving and receiving directive prophecies.

“Supernatural wisdom is never to be a substitute for ‘natural’ wisdom.”

But, perhaps the most important safe-guard: *Supernatural wisdom is never to be a substitute for “natural” wisdom.* I.e., Every decision should first be made by asking the questions: *Is this morally or Biblically Correct?* And secondarily, *What is best in light of the circumstances (according to my most spiritual friends and mentors)?* Remember, your God-ordained spiritual authorities are some of the greatest forms of protection around.³⁵ They are also two of the greatest ways that God

speaks. Prophecy was never meant to be a substitute for mentors and Bible study.

Once you have wrestled through these first two questions, only then are you truly free to

³⁵ *I have watched many Christians isolate themselves from their spiritual friends during critical decisions. This is **always** a sign of dysfunction. When people feel manipulated or over-shepherded they tend to withdraw. This is understandable, especially when there are people with control problems; but, it is still no excuse. If, in fact, you are feeling bullied or pressured in a decision, you should be getting outside counsel from objective mature spiritual people. However, to isolate yourself from counsel all together is a fantastic recipe for disaster. And remember, allowing your interpretation of God’s Will to be scrutinized is always uncomfortable, yet beneficial. Besides, discerning God’s will along with others is a wonderful experience when done correctly. Setting aside the obvious benefits of extra wisdom, you will also have a group of encouragers to help you live out your calling once you’ve committed.*

listen for the Holy Spirit. And the last safeguard...

7. Prophecy is more trustworthy coming from a person who also exudes the fruits of the Spirit (Gal.5:22-23; Mt. 7:15-20): this is similar to safe-guard number Five; however, it requires a more subjective evaluation of holistic fruitfulness. After all, if the individual can't cooperate with the H.S. enough to receive the fruits of the H.S., there's less likelihood of the individual receiving other things from the H.S.

From my experience, the more the above safe-guards are embedded in the hearts of a Christian community, the more free they are to safely share their impressions. As you can see in our specific case of moving to Minneapolis, these confirmations were a powerful and delightful experience that resulted in much joy and confidence about the move. The safeguards were also a healthy emotional boundary to prevent us or others from getting hurt if prophecy is used incorrectly.

But what about judging unknown tongues? These safeguards work great for intelligible statements; but, what about "unintelligible" (a.k.a. unknown) tongues? According to scripture, we cannot so much judge the content itself (unless it's interpreted); rather, we can judge the context and manner with which it is used. For example, if it's a publically declared tongue without any interpretation or contextualization, it's wrong (1 Cor. 14). However, this still doesn't answer the personal crisis that many believers feel about tongues.

Can my tongues be of the devil?

Rather than employing safe-guards for the prophetic like those listed above, many churches have resorted to one rule: All spiritual gifts are of the devil (hence ignoring Paul's exhortations in 1 Cor.14:1 and 1 Thess 5:19-20). Naturally, I have many mis-informed believers ask me the question: ***Can my tongues be of the Devil? How do I know?***

Thankfully, Jesus addressed this very issue in **Luke 11:11-13**
"What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Now, according to scriptural precedence, unknown tongues are one of the more probable signs of the Holy Spirit. In the Bible, there are five solid examples where people received the Infilling of the Holy Spirit. In at least three instances (& potentially all of them), unknown tongues resulted. Tongues were also the only *specifically noted* manifestation that the Apostles took as convincing evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit (see esp. Acts 11:15-18). Therefore, when applying Luke 11:11, I believe that it is foolish for people to concern themselves with such fears: If you "test everything" and trust God's promise, there is no reason for great concern. The greater concern we should have is the habit of ignoring hundreds of Bible passages on tongues and spiritual gifts simply because they don't fit within our narrow theological views.

Chapter Five:

Miscellaneous Questions about the Infilling and Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Lastly, there are many practical questions that people have about the infilling of the Holy Spirit and the “Spiritual Gifts”. So, the following section is a work in progress (which I will continue to add to in the coming months). After the questions, I’ve simply recorded many fun stories which will hopefully inspire your faith about unknown tongues.

How do you receive the Holy Spirit baptism?

There is no formula for Holy Spirit baptism, however, there are many helpful steps or ways to go about ushering people through this experience. In Acts 8:14-17, the Jerusalem church sent Peter and John to “[pray] for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit”. Keep in mind that men cannot baptize anyone in the Holy Spirit; rather, we can only pray that Jesus would baptize in the Holy Spirit (Jn.1:33; Mt. 3:11). Prayer is the only necessary element to this baptism; but, there are a few suggestions that will likely help people.

1. Review scriptures pertaining to the Infilling of the Holy Spirit: “Faith comes by hearing the

Word of God” (Rom.10:17) Doubt is a major hindrance to receiving the Holy Spirit. Most people either don’t have enough Biblical foundation to even begin to understand this experience; or, many people have actually been taught against such experiences and thus have an irrational fear of participating in a cultic experience.

“Doubt is a major hindrance to receiving the Holy Spirit.”

This is why I have people evaluate & fully digest all of the Bible evidence before I pray for them. More specifically, I make sure that they’ve fully digested the following truths: 1). That they understand what it means to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God (i.e. a person who can begin to live by the rules of a new reality. 2). That they understand that this is an ongoing delightful experience through which they receive increasing power to live within that new reality. 3). That miracles are for today as a testimony to that reality (i.e., we don’t just believe in this reality in theory). 4). That they understand the various manifestations of the Holy Spirit (so that they can understand the new advantages and how they operate).

Obviously, the foolishness of tongues can be rather humbling for a bright and

to start “looking” for these gifts? As Don Basham wrote, “*We don’t think it strange to help people in receiving Christ as Savior by outlining for them several ‘steps to salvation’. . . This doesn’t mean that people earn salvation or that it is not a sovereign act of God’s grace. Neither does it mean that people cannot find salvation while reading the Word of God alone, with no human help.*”³⁶

Many people argue that we should specifically look for tongues when praying for the infilling (especially the first time). Why is this? The answer is two-fold. First of all, it is the most probable according to Biblical precedence. Secondly, if unknown tongues is a stumbling block, then, once again, odds are that there is a much greater problem lurking in the person’s mind that will ultimately restrict their ability to supernaturally minister.

Tongues requires that we “dethrone” our intellect and operate in faith. For as Paul says, “*if I pray in tongues, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful*” (1 Cor. 14:14). This is not to say that we “bypass our discernment” and ignore the Bible veracity of certain experiences. We are simply acknowledging that speaking in tongues is a Biblical experience that distinctly bypasses an attribute that 21st century modernist Christians hate to dethrone, namely: the intellect. Thus, as the notorious David du Plessis (Mr. Pentecost) once said: “*unknown tongues is the least of all the gifts, and that is why I suggest that everyone begin with this manifestation of the Spirit.*”³⁷

Let’s face it: Almost every step towards spiritual maturity necessitates a step of “faith” in God’s Word. And when talking about the “foolishness” in unknown tongues, faith is a necessity.

Many people have conditioned themselves to obey *only when* they fully understand the exact reasons why God would call them to do such a thing. Yet, that is not how God leads us. Once my daughter began running into the street between two parked cars. She couldn’t see the oncoming car. When I shouted “stop”, she obeyed immediately even though she couldn’t understand why I made such a request. Thank God she didn’t ignore or delay her obedience until she understood why!

Over the years I have met many arrogant Christians who disguised their pride under the guise of “discernment.” One person even confessed to me once, “*I can accept most of the other gifts of the Holy Spirit. But I cannot accept a gift that might require me to feel like I’m out of my mind.*” But frankly, this approach to the spiritual gifts simply won’t do.

On the day of Pentecost, the disciples were very conscious of the fact that **not everyone** was viewing this experience as miraculous. The fact that Peter had to actually say, “*These men are not drunk*” is almost disturbing. Imagine God calling you to minister in a way that required you to lay down your credibility! Unfortunately, this is the way of the New Testament and the way of the cross. More particularly, this is the way of tongues and spiritual gifts. Thus, it has seemed wise to “look for tongues” as this usually signifies an acceptance of the subjective nature of these experiences. However, don’t get dogmatic about doing this.

³⁶ Don Basham, *A Handbook on Holy Spirit Baptism* (Pittsburgh, PA: Whitaker House, 1969), pg.126.

³⁷ David J. du Plessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go*, rev. ed. (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1970), p.40

Lastly, if people are deeply struggling with this issue, remember to chill out. There is no sense in forcing someone to embrace this wonderful experience if they don't want it. How ridiculous it is when Christians divide over this issue! Ultimately, we are simply called to live out the "*kingdom of God is near*". When people see the supernatural advantages we have in living life, they will eventually seek what we have. Over the years I have had literally dozens of truly wild and miraculous stories of God's favor in my life and ministry. These experiences testify *all by themselves* of the power of God. Let this be the case for you as well.

Miracle Stories of Unknown Tongues in Action

When I initially began compiling these stories, I was literally exhausted typing out the sheer volume. I am hoping that someday I will find the motivation to record many of them. I have many great stories from my own church that I have not even recorded. However, for now, here are a few stories that will put some faith in your heart and a smile on your face.

"Harald Bredesen, a Lutheran minister often heard at Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International banquets in plush hotels across America, had just left a breakfast session when he chanced upon the Egyptian heiress, Marie Khayat, in the lobby. It didn't take long for Bredesen to strike up a conversation, hoping to share his faith in Christ with the sophisticated Moslem, but no opening presented itself. Before parting, he startled her by asking, "Have you ever heard this language?" And immediately he began to pray in tongues. She looked at him in amazement and said, "Where did you possibly learn archaic Egyptian?" She explained that there are certain tones that no one but a native can acquire; "Foreigners study it for years and we laugh at their accent. You sound just like a Bedouin saying his prayers." After he explained the biblical basis for the phenomenon of glossolalia (speaking in tongues), she remarked, "When I go back to Egypt, I'm going to gather my friends around the Bible and we're going to study it."³⁸

"Where did you possibly learn archaic Egyptian?"

Father Dennis Bennett, an Episcopalian minister in Seattle, WA. recounted a story about a young Japanese woman married to a young American man in Oregon: "*The Japanese girl had never accepted Christ but came to the altar of the church with her husband, he to worship God, she to pray to Buddah! Just recently, my friend tells me, as the couple knelt at the altar in his church, a woman next to them began to speak in tongues. The Japanese girl clutched her husband's arm: "Listen," she said. The woman next to them was speaking Japanese, and through her God said: 'You have tried Buddha and he has not helped you; why don't you try Jesus Christ?' God addressed this Japanese girl by her full name, known to no one in this country, and certainly not to the woman speaking, who had no idea how she was being used. Not only that, but the Japanese girl told my pastor friend: 'She was speaking high Japanese, the very formal language which we only use in our temples and*

"She was speaking high Japanese!"

³⁸ *Melodyland Messenger* (Anaheim, Calif., n.d.), special edition

places like that.”³⁹

Don Basham also recounted, “An Indian student in Washington D.C. shared with me this interesting story. A minister who opposed the work of Pentecostal missionaries in India wrote a pamphlet denouncing the experience of speaking in tongues and in it quoted a single phrase he had heard as “meaningless gibberish”. Disciples of the writer took copies of the pamphlet to distribute them in various villages where the Pentecostal missionaries were at work. Standing the center of a particular village, one pamphleteer began denouncing the Pentecostal experience. He read aloud the example of “gibberish” included in the pamphlet only to have a native push his way excitedly through the crowd and ask him to repeat the phrase. Examination proved the “gibberish” was actually a quote from Scripture, spoken in the peculiar dialect of this native who live many miles away. The phrase being shouted in derision was, “You have been purchased,” a reference to 1 Cor. 6:20....Episcopalian minister Dennis Bennett has a man in his church in Seattle, Washington, whose prayer language has been identified as Mandarin Chinese.”⁴⁰

Harald Bredesen recounted the first time he had spoken in tongues. “He headed for the Allegheny Mountains, ensconced himself in a mountain cabin and there began to pray around the clock. He made up his mind to stay in that cabin until he reached a new level of communication with God. Day after day he kept up his prayer vigil. At last one morning while he was standing outside the cabin praying aloud, a stillness seemed to settle over the hills. Every fiber of Bredesen’s body tensed, as if his whole being were entering into a new plane of awareness. He stopped speaking for a moment. And when he began again, out of his mouth came, and here are his words as I [John Sherrill] wrote them down that day: ‘...the most beautiful outpouring of vowels and consonants and also some strange, guttural syllables. I could not recognize any of it. It was as though I was listening to a foreign language, except that it was coming out of my own mouth.’ Amazed, curious, and a bit frightened, Bredesen ran down the mountain, still talking aloud in this tongue. He came to the edge of a small community. On the stoop of a cabin sat an old man. Bredesen continued to speak in the tongue which was coming so easily and naturally from his lips. The man answered, talking rapidly in a language which Bredesen did not know. When it became obvious that they were not communicating, the old man spoke in English, ‘How can you speak Polish but not understand it’ the man asked? ‘I was speaking in Polish?’ The man laughed, thinking that Bredesen was joking. ‘Of course it was Polish,’ he said. But Bredesen wasn’t joking. As far as he could recall he had never before heard the language.”⁴¹

“‘How can you speak Polish but not understand it’ the man asked?”

“Bredesen told me of a second experience, this one in a lobby of a New York hotel. Bredesen was attending a breakfast meeting, and had left his hat on a chair outside the dining room. When time came to leave, he found the chair occupied not by his hat, but by a pretty lady. At the time, Bredesen was a bachelor and his male instincts prompted him to extend the conversation beyond a formal excuse-me-have-you-seen-my-hat? The girl noted the clerical collar and in a few minutes they were deep in a conversation on religion. After a while the young lady volunteered the information that her own religious life somehow left her dissatisfied. And soon Bredesen was telling her that he too had felt this lack, but that he had found a new dimension in his devotional life through speaking in tongues. ‘Through what?’ asked the girl. ‘Speaking in a language that God give you,’ Bredesen said, and went on to tell her a little about his experience. In the girl’s eyes he read disbelief and also something like apprehension.

³⁹ Don Basham, *A Handbook on Holy Spirit Baptism* (Pittsburgh, PA: Whitaker House, 1969), pg.103.

⁴⁰ Ibid p.102

⁴¹ John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Spire: a Fleming H. Revell Company), p.19.

'Can you speak in these tongues any time you want to?' she said, and he thought she edged almost imperceptibly to the far side of her chair.

'They're given us for prayer.'

'Well can you pray in tongues whenever you want to?'

'Yes. Would you like me to pray this way now?'

The girl looked around the lobby, outright alarm in her eyes this time.

'I won't embarrass you,' said Bredesen, and with that he bowed his head slightly and after a short silent prayer began speaking words that to him were unintelligible. The sounds were clipped and full of 'p's' and 'k's'

When he finished, he opened his eyes and saw that the girl's face was ashen.

'Why...why...I understood you. You were praising God. You were speaking a very old form of Arabic.'

'How do you know?' asked Bredesen.

Then he learned that the girl was the daughter of an Egyptologist, that she herself spoke several modern Arabic languages and had studied archaic Arabic.

'You pronounced the words perfectly,' she said. 'Where on earth did you learn old Arabic?'

Harald Bredesen shook his head. 'I didn't', he said. 'I didn't know there was such a language.'⁴²

John Sherrill, a skeptical investigative journalist was inquiring about tongues by corresponding with one of the few surviving members of the Azusa Street revival (known as a reawakening moment for modern pentecostalism). Mr. Harvey McAlister of Springfield, Missouri recounted this story to John Sherrill: *"My brother, Robert E. McAlister, now deceased, was in Los Angeles when the following incident took place and he reported it to me. The girl, who I knew intimately, and I heard the incident also from her parents, was Kathleen Scott. This...took place in what is known as Old Azusa Street Mission. People traveled from every part of the world to investigate what was happening there. There was large auditorium with an 'Upper Room,' upstairs. The place was open day and night for several years, with preaching services two or three times daily, and people in prayer in the Upper Room day and night. At the close of the preaching crowds would retire to the Upper Room to pray. When time came for preaching, someone would ring a bell and all would come downstairs for the services. Kathleen was in the Upper Room, teen-age, at this particular time. A man entered the building, the service now being in process, and hearing people pray, he ventured upstairs to the prayer room. The moment he entered, Kathleen, moved by the Spirit, arose and pointed to the man as he stood at the head of the stairway, and spoke in a language other than her own for several minutes. The ringing of the bell, calling the people to the preaching service, interrupted. All the people arose and made their way to the stairway. The man, as Kathleen approached the stairs, took her arm and directed her downstairs, to the speaker's desk and waited until order was restored in the auditorium. Then he spoke. 'I am a Jew, and I came to this city to investigate this speaking in tongues. No person in this city knows my first or my last name, as I am here under an assumed name. No one in this city knows my occupation, or anything about me. I go to hear preachers for the purpose of taking their sermons apart, and using them in lecturing against the Christian religion. 'This girl, as I entered the room, started speaking in the Hebrew language. She told me my first name and my last name, and she told me why I was in the city and what my occupation was in life, and then she called upon me to repent. She told me things about my life which it would be impossible for any person in this city to know.'* Then [Mr. McAlister's letter concludes], the man dropped to

"She told me why I was in the city and what my occupation was in life, and then she called upon me to repent."

⁴² John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Spire: a Fleming H. Revell Company), p.19-20.

his knees and cried and prayed as though his heart would break.”⁴³

Skeptical investigative journalist John Sherrill was meeting with a jovial Jew named Jacob Rabinowitz in a New York delicatessen. Jacob was a rabbi, the son of a rabbi, the grandson of a rabbi and so on back seventeen generations. “For hundreds of years the Rabinowitzes had been rabbis of their faith. When Jacob, some years earlier, had begun to be persuaded of the truth of Christianity, he felt like a traitor to this long heritage.

‘I was about to become a converted Jew,’ he told us. ‘How terrible that sounds, like someone who has turned his back on his Jewishness. But I was proud to be a Jew. And today I know there’s no conflict. I’m not a converted Jew, I’m a completed Jew, like Peter and like Paul.’ And then Jacob told us about the event which left him feeling that at last he had been completed.

Jacob had been, as he said, a Christian by conviction, but a guilty one - conscious of a deep split within himself. Then one sweltering summer night in July of 1960, he was invited by a friend to visit the First Assembly of God Church in Pasadena, Texas, where a revival was in progress. A little reluctantly, because he was leery of emotionalism, Jacob agreed to go. The service was typically Pentecostal. There were songs and testimonies and hand-clapping and at last a sermon. At the end of his address, the revivalist invited anyone present who had a personal problem to come forward to the altar rail and receive the prayers of the congregation. Suddenly Jacob was seized with a great longing to lay down the burdensome double life he had carried so long, to resolve once and for all the conflict within him. He went forward and knelt with some others at the railing. But when the preacher asked him what his special need was, Jacob remained silent. ‘That’s all right,’ the revival leader said. ‘God knows what your needs are better than you know yourself.’ And turning to the congregation he requested prayer ‘in the Spirit’ for Jacob.

Several men at once left their seats and came to stand around the kneeling rabbi. Some stood beside, some behind him; a few laid their hands on his head and shoulders, other simply bowed their heads. Then they began to pray, speaking simultaneously, some in English, others in tongues. Suddenly Jacob raised his head and turned to look behind him. His cheeks were flushed and tear-wet.

“That was beautiful,” he said. “Which one of you is Jewish?”

No one answered.

“Which one of you knows me? You’ll forgive me: I don’t recognize you....”

Still no answer.

Now the whole church became silent. “It came from right here, behind me,” said Jacob. “Just exactly where you’re standing,” he said to one of the men. “Are you Jewish?”

“Me?” The man smiled. “My name’s John Gruver. I’m Irish.”

“That’s the voice! That’s the voice!” said the rabbi, excited now. “But you . . . you do speak Hebrew?”

“Not a word of it,” said Gruver.

Jacob stood up. “That’s where you’re wrong,” he said. “Because you were speaking Hebrew just now”

“...in Hebrew he said it, perfect Hebrew!”

As Jacob told us the story, his voice filled with emotion. “Can you imagine that great big Irishman behind me speaking the most beautiful Hebrew I ever heard? Can you imagine an Irishman speaking Hebrew at all? ...and how did he know my father’s name? No one in Texas knew my family. But here’s what [the Irishman] said: ‘I have dreamed a dream’ - in Hebrew he said it, perfect Hebrew - populated places and there you will preach. The ones who have not heard will understand you because you, Jacob, son of Rabbi Ezekiel, come in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁴

⁴³ John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Spire: a Fleming H. Revell Company), p.42-43.

⁴⁴ John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Spire: a Fleming H. Revell Company), p.89-91.

This same skeptical investigative journalist recorded dozens and dozens of pentecostals speaking in tongues on tape. Then, he gathered together a group of seven non-pentecostal specialists at the Columbia University Faculty Club. Three of the linguists were on staff at Columbia, two were professors at Union Theological Seminary, and one at General Theological Seminary. There were two specialists in modern languages, three in ancient languages, and one expert in the study of language structure. They noted that there were more than 2800 known languages and dialects in the world - without taking into account the ones which are extinct. They acknowledge that, in light of this fact, *“Even if there were real language on those tapes, the odds against our recognizing it are enormous.”* Sherrill writes, *“I was interested in their reactions to our experiment. They were extremely attentive, dubious without being hostile. As I put on the first tape, each man leaned forward, straining to catch every syllable. Several took notes....”*

*However, the experiment became interesting when Sherrill inserted two instances of “pure made up gibberish, one by our son, Scott, and one by [my wife]. They had tried to sound as much as possible like the tongues on the rest of the tape, but the linguists spotted the deception immediately. ‘That’s not language,’ one man said. ‘That’s just noise.’”*⁴⁵

“Dr. T.J. McCrossan of Minneapolis MN, tells the story of nine U.S. Marines who, one Saturday night, entered a small Pentecostal church in Seattle, Washington, drawn by the music, and then listened in growing amazement as an American woman who they knew arose and gave a message in tongues. All nine of the Marine were Filipinos, all nine recognized and obscure Filipino dialect and agreed on the sense of what they’d heard. The woman, they knew, could not naturally speak Filipino at all, much less this strange dialect from a region rarely visited by Westerners.

*A somewhat similar experience took place on Easter Sunday, 1950, in a small Pentecostal church in Gary, Indiana. A member of the congregation, Paul Goodwin, stood up and delivered an exhortation in tongues. As he spoke there was an agitated stirring among a group of Italians in the congregation, and when he finished a young man named Leo Pella got up and said: ‘We know Paul Goodwin, and he does not speak our language. But he has just spoken in perfect Italian, as though he graduated from a college in Italy.’”*⁴⁶

⁴⁵ John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Spire: a Fleming H. Revell Company), p.101-102.

⁴⁶ Ibid p.96-97