

LESSON 6: THE HOLY SPIRIT

I. INTRODUCTION

Of the three members of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit is undoubtedly the least known and appreciated. Yet it is He who is most intimately and vitally involved in our conversion, new birth into the family of God, and maturation into Christlikeness. Thus, in this study, we will learn about the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

II. THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. Who is the Holy Spirit?

1. He is a person...
 - a. With intelligence (Isa. 11:2; 40:13)
 - b. With a will (1 Cor. 12:11)
 - c. With knowledge of God (1 Cor. 2:11)
 - d. Who loves (Rom. 15:30)
 - e. Who speaks (Acts 8:29), intercedes (Rom. 8:26), commands (Acts 13:9-12), teaches (1 Cor. 2:13), testifies (John 15:26), reproves (John 16:8), guides (Rom. 8:15), and prays (Rom. 8:26).
 - Knowing that the Holy Spirit is a person with a will, what is it that He wants to accomplish in us? (cf. 1 Thess. 4:3)
2. He is God
 - a. He is equated with the Father and the Son (Matt. 28:19)
 - b. He is described as "Holy" (Matt. 1:18; Matt. 28:19; Acts. 1:2)
 - c. He knows the depths of God (1 Cor. 2:11)
 - d. He is cross-identified with the LORD (Acts 28:25 and Isa. 6:8-9)

- e. He is eternal (Heb. 9:14)
 - f. He is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10)
 - g. He is omniscient (1 Cor. 2:10-11)
 - h. He is omnipotent (Luke 1:35).
- In light of all of these truths, what type of power does the Holy Spirit have?
 - To what extent can the Holy Spirit carry out His will?

III. PENTECOST

Pentecost was the second of the three great harvest festivals of Judaism, coming between Passover and Tabernacles. In the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor 16:8) it is referred to as “Pentecost,” which means *fiftieth* in Greek. In the Old Testament it is referred to as the Festival of Weeks or of the First Fruits, the first term referring to its coming a “week of weeks” (or 7 weeks) after Passover, the second to the fact that an offering of two loaves prepared from the wheat harvest was made on this day. Pentecost was reckoned as coming exactly fifty days after the first day of the Passover. It was a day of “solemn assembly” on which all work ceased. It was also one of the most popular pilgrim festivals, even more so than Passover, likely due to the improved weather conditions by the time of Pentecost.¹

Acts 2:1-4 *When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

IV. THE CURRENT MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

As the third person of the godhead, the Holy Spirit has always existed and ministered to His people. But something changed during Pentecost. So what exactly was the nature of that change? Many mistakenly believe that the disciples first received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. But as we will see, the Spirit worked in the lives of the disciples and Old

¹ Polhill, John B. Vol. 26, Acts. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1992.

Testament Saints before this momentous event. The purpose of this section is twofold: to answer the question, “What happened during Pentecost?” and to instruct us about the current ministries of the Holy Spirit.

A. **Regeneration:** An inner re-creating of fallen human nature by the gracious sovereign action of the Holy Spirit. This occurs when, in place of our old hearts of stone, we receive from the Holy Spirit a new heart of flesh.

1. John 3:5-8 *Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*

2. Titus 3:5 *He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit*

- Is it possible to be renewed *without* the Holy Spirit? Why or why not?
- What does this imply about Old Testament saints?

B. **Indwelling:** The Spirit’s continual residence within the saint following the occasion of regeneration. In other words, the Spirit dwells in the believer forever. Our bodies host the third person of the Trinity; thus, we are a temple of the Holy Spirit. God, with all His power, wisdom, and goodness, actually takes up residence within us. It is with this power that we are enabled to conquer sin and triumph over temptation.

1. Romans 8:9-11 *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*

2. I Corinthians 6:19 *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,*

- Is it possible to be regenerated without subsequently being indwelt by the Spirit? Why or why not?
 - Again, what does this imply about Old Testament Saints?
- C. **Sealing:** The Spirit is the pledge or guarantee that the believer will enter into his completed redemption at the return of Christ. The Spirit is the deposit that the Lord has placed within us, and which He will reclaim when He returns. Because we are sealed by the Holy Spirit, we can be confident that the Lord will come back for us.
1. 2 Corinthians 1:22 ***who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.***
 2. Ephesians 1:13-14 ***In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.***
- Is it possible to be regenerated and indwelt without subsequently being sealed? Why or why not?
- D. **Filling:** The ongoing controlling and directing of the believer's life by the Spirit of God, as opposed to the flesh. Being filled is not necessarily an everyday reality for every believer; rather, it occurs when a Christian continually repents of her sin and seeks God's will above her own. Outwardly, this will be manifested in an obedient walk with the Lord. The Spirit-filled Christian will also enjoy close fellowship with the Father, experience spiritual growth, receive strength for service, and be empowered for bold witness.
1. Ephesians 5:18 ***And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,***
 2. Galatians 5:16 ***But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.***
- Was it possible for an Old Testament Saint to be filled with the Spirit? Why or why not?

E. **Baptizing:** The work of the Holy Spirit in placing the believer into union with Christ as the Head, and with other believers as the Body of Christ.

1. 1 Corinthians 12:13 *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*
2. Galatians 3:27 *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*
3. Ephesians 4:5 *one Lord, one faith, one baptism,*
 - Why wasn't it possible to be baptized into Christ before Pentecost (note 1 Cor. 12:13)?
 - What else does the Holy Spirit provide to aid and assist the church in its ministry (1 Cor. 12:4-11; 1 Peter 4:10)?
 - Is it possible to be regenerated, indwelt, and sealed with the Spirit without being baptized in the body of Christ? Why or why not?

F. **Empowering:** The Spirit's coming upon an Old Testament person to empower that person for a certain task. Below are several examples of this empowering.

1. Genesis 41:38 *And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?"*
2. Exodus 31:1-5 *The LORD said to Moses, ² "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, ³ and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, ⁴ to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, ⁵ in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.*
3. Judges 3:10 *The Spirit of the LORD was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.*
4. Judges 14:5-6 *Then Samson went down with his father and mother to Timnah, and they came to the vineyards of Timnah. And behold, a young lion came toward him roaring. ⁶ Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat.*

- Is it possible to be empowered by the Spirit without being regenerated? (Hint: consider Balaam and Saul)
- At Pentecost, what task(s) did the Holy Spirit empower the disciples to do? (cf. Acts 1:8; I Cor. 12:4-11)

G. **Summary:** Although the Holy Spirit ministered to and through Old Testament saints in many ways, starting at Pentecost He began to do a new thing: He now baptizes both Jewish and Gentile believers into the Body of Christ, and equips this new entity (the church) with spiritual gifts so they can take the gospel to the world.

H. **Other Ministries of the Holy Spirit:**

1. **Convicts us of Sin** (John 16:8): The Holy Spirit convicts the whole world of our unrighteousness before God.
2. **Helps us Understand the Scriptures** (1 Cor. 2:14-16): As the divine Author of the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit also gives us insight into their meaning.
3. **Helps us to Pray** (Rom. 8:26): When we don't know how to pray as we ought, the Holy Spirit guides us.
4. **Gives us Assurance of Salvation** (Rom. 8:16): The Holy Spirit testifies in our own hearts that we belong to God.
5. **Gives us Spiritual Gifts** (1 Cor. 12: 7ff): The Holy Spirit empowers each member of the body of Christ with spiritual gifts for service.
 - Is it possible to live the Christian life without the power of the Holy Spirit? Why or why not?

V. **WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS?**

The New Testament contains several different lists, or descriptions, of the gifts of the Spirit. These lists are not intended to be exhaustive, but representative; they give us some idea of the various kinds of service that the Holy Spirit empowers different believers to perform.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11 *For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.*

Romans 12:6-8 *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*

- A. **Word of Wisdom:** The connection of wisdom with mystery (1 Cor. 2:7) implies that those gifted with the word of wisdom speak divine revelation, particularly in reference to Christ. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit, they disclose things not previously known.
 - Why would this gift be especially useful in the early church?
- B. **Word of Knowledge:** The handmaid of the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge is the ability to grasp and comprehend the mysteries revealed by the word of wisdom.
 - Why would it be important for the New Testament Church to have this gift?
- C. **Faith:** Not to be confused with saving faith, this refers to a supernatural conviction that God will move in a specific way. For instance, God revealed to Paul in the midst of a severe Mediterranean storm that God would spare every man on board. Though the gift of faith he was able to say in Acts 27:25, *"So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told."*
 - Why would this gift be important to the New Testament Church?
- D. **Gifts of Healing:** The supernatural ability to heal people's physical bodies. "Gift" implies that it is the person who heals who has the gift, as opposed to the one being healed.
 - How could this gift enhance the ministry of the apostles and the early church?

- E. **Effecting of Miracles:** Although healings can fit here as a subcategory, this refers to the ability to perform miracles – supernatural works of God. Examples include striking a sorcerer blind and rendering a venomous snakebite harmless.
- How would this gift enhance the ministry of the church? How could it hurt it?
- F. **Prophecy:** This refers to speaking forth from God, whether in speaking of the future, giving insight into the present, confirming a certain course, etc. This was Paul’s preferred gift, which he held to be superior to tongues. More will be said about this later.
- Why would prophecy be so important in the governance of the early church?
- G. **Distinguishing Spirits:** This speaks of the ability to discern the origin of “inspired” utterances.
- How would this gift protect the New Testament church?
- H. **Tongues:** This is the ability to speak in languages never acquired by natural means. This gift caught the attention of pilgrims in Jerusalem (**Acts 2**), and was much sought-after by the Corinthian church. More will be mentioned about tongues later on in this study.
- How could this gift help the New Testament church?
 - Given its spectacular nature, how could this gift be abused?
- I. **Interpretation of Tongues:** This refers to the ability to translate a language unlearned by natural means into one’s own native tongue.
- J. **Teaching:** This is the ability to grasp, arrange, and present revealed truth effectively so that the recipients can have an enhanced understanding of Scripture.²

² Robert Thomas, Understanding Spiritual Gifts (Grand Rapids; Kregel 1999) p. 194.

- K. **Pastor Teaching:** This is a combination of the gift of teaching with an element of shepherdly concern. These Christians can effectively minister the gift of teaching in a sensitive situation to comfort, encourage, or admonish the flock.³
- L. **Evangelism:** This is an unusual ability to persuade lost people to place their trust in Christ, and hence directs its attention primarily toward the will of the hearer.⁴
- M. **Exhortation:** This is a speaking gift where persuasion looms the largest. It is geared toward the will of the believer, just as the gift of evangelism is geared to the will of the unbeliever. The persuasion may come in the form of inducing someone to make the correct moral choice, or persuading the suffering to find hope in the Lord.⁵
- N. **Service:** This refers to the different kinds of physical help or relief administered wherever a need exists.⁶
- O. **Giving:** This is the ability to invest material resources in spiritual undertakings so as to reap the maximum spiritual benefit.⁷
- P. **Mercy:** This gift directs itself in particular to those experiencing some kind of distress, misery, pain, or anxiety, and consists in a special skill to relieve that distress, misery, etc through right action or right words.⁸
- Q. **Governing:** This is the special skill in administrative direction that enables the gifted one to steer the flock of God into channels of most effective service. It has to do with matters of organization, the harnessing of resources, and shrewd and wise direction – as in the piloting of a ship – to bring about the maximum potential of a local body of believers.⁹
 - Who determines who gets what gift (1 Cor. 12:11)? How does this knowledge guard against pride?

VI. ARE THE SIGN GIFTS FOR TODAY?

³ Ibid. p. 196.

⁴ Ibid. p. 192.

⁵ Ibid. p. 197.

⁶ Ibid. p. 198.

⁷ Ibid. p. 202.

⁸ Ibid. p. 200.

⁹ Ibid. p. 203.

In Acts we find many instances of the apostles speaking in tongues, performing healings, and doing miracles. This has prompted modern-day Charismatics to claim that, since the same Holy Spirit who indwelt the apostles still dwells in us, these supernatural ministries must still be normative, and we should not allow our materialistic mindset to interfere. This is the argument for *continuity*.

While most theologians agree that many of the gifts given to the early church are still operative today (i.e. teaching, mercy, etc.), and that miraculous events can still happen, there are biblical reasons to believe that the unique sign gifts¹⁰ such as healing, prophecy, and tongues have fulfilled their purpose and thus ceased in the church. In this brief study we will survey God's purpose for the sign gifts to determine if they are still necessary today.

A. The Purpose of Miracles:

1. Matthew 11:2-6 ***Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ⁴ And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."***
 - a. According to this passage, what was the purpose of miracles?
 - b. What is significant about Jesus quoting this portion of the Old Testament (Isa. 35:5-6; 61:1)? Why is there a link between the Messiah and miracles?
2. Acts 2:22 ***"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—"***
 - a. According to Peter, what was the purpose of miracles?
 - b. How did these wonders authenticate Jesus' ministry?

¹⁰ The distinction here between God performing miracles and the continued existence of sign gifts has to do with the empowerment of the individual. Those who argue that the sign gifts have ceased do not argue that miracles have ceased. But they do argue that God is no longer granting individuals special powers to perform such miracles at will.

3. 2 Corinthians 12:12 ***The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.***

- a. What are the signs of a true apostle?
- b. Why did God give the apostles the ability to work miracles (Acts 1:8)?
- c. Does the fact that the apostles were able to work miracles mean that the members of the modern church should expect the same? Why or why not? (Hint: What privileges or abilities did the apostles have which we do not?)

B. The Purpose of Tongues:

1. **Evangelism:** In Acts 2:6-8 Luke describes the conversion of thousands, after their attention was arrested by the tongue-speaking apostles:

And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?"

2. **Confirmation of God's Work:**

- a. Among the Samaritans: The Jews viewed this group derisively as half-breeds and historic rivals. So when they received the same gifts that the Jewish disciples had received at Pentecost, their place among God's people was firmly established.

Acts 8:14-15 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, ¹⁵ who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

- b. Among the Gentiles: The Spirit's gifts indicated that God intended to include not just the Samaritans but the Gentiles as well.

Acts 10:44-47 While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured

out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, ⁴⁷ “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”

c. Among Old Testament Saints:

Acts 19:1-6 And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ² And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” ³ And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.” ⁴ And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.

John the Baptist’s disciples had taken their faith as far as it could go, but faith in John’s baptism was not enough. They had to turn to the Messiah, of whom their teacher had spoken. God sent Paul to preach to them the whole gospel and welcome them into the church. Luke includes this account to convey the message that even faithful followers of the last Old Testament-style prophet needed more: They needed to believe in Christ and be baptized by the Spirit.

3. Impartation of Prophetic Revelation:

1 Corinthians 14:2 For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit.

Simply put, a mystery (cf. 1 Cor. 13:2 and 15:51) is a once-hidden truth of God and His program that has now been revealed. So to speak in tongues is to speak a revelation from God. Thus, tongue speaking is essentially untranslated prophecy.

C. The Discontinuity of the Gifts:

To believe in the *discontinuity* of the gifts is to believe that some of the spiritual gifts of the early church do not operate in the same way today. They do not continuously carry on to the modern era.

1. Ephesians 2:19-22 ***So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.***

- a. What distinction(s) does Paul make between Christ, the apostles and prophets, and the rest of us?
- b. How does the foundational nature of the apostles and prophets grate against the notion that the sign gifts – especially the divine revelatory gifts such as tongues and prophecy - are continuing today?

2. Hebrews 2:2-4 ***For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, ⁴ while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.***

- a. What is the identification of “***those who heard***” in verse 3? How are they different from the rest of us (vv. 3-4)?

Note: Hebrews was likely written by a second-generation Christian who was not an apostle. He warns his audience not to neglect the great salvation which was conveyed to us “***by those who heard.***” One should note that the author separates himself from the apostles who originally heard live teachings from Jesus. The author believed in the credibility of their teachings because it was corroborated with miracles.

- b. Why is it significant that this second-generation author bases the credibility of the gospel upon the first generation’s miracles (as opposed to his own)?
- c. Why is it significant that vs. 3 says this message was “***attested***” (or, ***confirmed***)?

D. The Reality of Discontinuity

1. Why would the close of the Canon be a problem to those who maintain that all of the sign gifts (healing, prophecy, tongues, etc.) are in effect? How does this grate against their basic argument?
2. Is it possible to have the gift of apostleship in our day and age? Why or why not?

Acts 1:21-22 [the qualifications for Judas' replacement] ***"So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."***

E. The Problem of Verification

When revelatory gifts were in place, they were always subject to verification: the gift of tongues was verified by the presence of a translator; the gift of prophecy could be verified by a prediction coming true; the gift of healing was its own verification.

Whenever Jesus healed someone in Scripture it was always instantaneous, 100% successful, permanent, required no recovery period, and done apart from any medical attention that could possibly discredit the miracle.¹¹ One more aspect should be noted: in almost every case of healing the affliction was *organic* in nature. *Organic* afflictions compose roughly a third of all illnesses and are associated with a demonstrable change in a bodily organ or tissue (i.e. a broken bone, torn ligaments, paralysis, etc.). This contrasts with *functional* diseases associated with a change in body or organ tissue without any tissue damage (i.e. a bad back, migraine headaches, a sprained ankle, etc.). When the famed Christian illusionist André Kole met with Oral Roberts and Benny Hinn he challenged them to produce evidence of an organic healing, one which could not be explained away by such mental phenomena as the placebo effect. After many promises and in one case a book - by Benny Hinn¹² - no solid proof has been given.¹³

1. How legitimate would Jesus' ministry be if he had simply cured people of bad backs and migraine headaches?

¹¹ Cf. André Kole, "Are Faith Healers for Real?" in Richard Mayhue, *The Healing Promise* (1994; Ferne: Mentor, 1997) p. 54.

¹² Benny Hinn's book provided ten case studies of organic healing but did not have any documentation

¹³ Ibid. p. 58.

2. How does the lack of organic healings challenge the authenticity of faith healers and their contention that the healing gift still exists today?
3. Do you believe it is fair to ask those who claim to have the gift of healing to produce verifiable results? Why or why not?

F. The Key Issue: Defining Prophecy

The issue of continuity and discontinuity ultimately hinges on one's definition of prophecy. If we hold to the traditional understanding of prophecy from the Old Testament, in which prophets spoke directly from God, then it is difficult to believe in the continuation of prophecy while also maintaining a fixed and final canon. Any modern-day "prophet" would be speaking with the same authority as Isaiah, and their words could thus be inscripturated, leading to an ever-expanding canon.

This problem has led many orthodox charismatics to rethink the nature of New Testament prophecy. Wayne Grudem, in particular, has sought to tone down the authority of the New Testament prophets by adopting a different definition of prophecy. In his view, though the apostles continued to provide Old Testament-style prophecy, other church-age "prophets" should be understood as providing divine guidance and suggestions, but not authoritative commands. This "prophecy lite" thesis has been largely debunked in theological circles.¹⁴ The New Testament church saw no difference between Old Testament and New Testament prophets; they both spoke authoritative and often predictive prophecies from God.

The continuity or discontinuity of prophecy also determines how we will view tongue speech. As we discussed earlier, prophecy is closely related to the gift of tongues, as tongues is simply untranslated prophecy (1 Cor. 14:1-5). How do we know? In 1 Corinthians 14:2 Paul makes it clear that one who speaks in tongues speaks "mysteries" – a term he uses throughout that letter¹⁵ to speak of God revealing what was once hidden in regards to Himself and His program. Then in 14:5 he states that prophecy is not greater than tongues when tongue speech is translated, because in that case divine revelation has been understood, making it simply prophecy through a translator.

So the question we have to ask ourselves is whether or not prophecy is still in existence. We know that there will be new prophecy during the Tribulation, but what about in the

¹⁴ Farnell, F. D., "The Current Debate about NT Prophecy," BSac 149 (1992): 277–303.

¹⁵ 1 Cor. 2:1; 2:7; 4:1; 13:2; 15:51

interim? (If prophecy is on hold, then so too is tongue speech, since it is untranslated prophecy.)

Two Scriptures seem to indicate that prophecy is indeed out of service. The first comes from the glorified Christ at the end of Revelation:

Revelation 22:18-19 *I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.*

Revelation is a prophetic book full of predictions about the future, written in part to silence false prophets. Jesus' warning accomplishes this mission, as no prophet can say, "Here's another prophecy Jesus left out of the book."

In the words of one commentator, "The comprehensive scope of Revelation's coverage of encouragement-parenthesis (chaps 2-3) and predictive elements (chaps. 4-22) and of the extensive time span from the first century to the eternal state also commends the view that vv. 18-19 anticipate no more prophecy."¹⁶ Revelation does not allow for the addition of any more prophecies about the future until the Two Prophets of Revelation 11 come on the scene.

The second scripture is Ephesians 2:20, in which the church is said to be ***built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.*** Notice that the church is being built upon Christ and the foundation of two kinds of men, the apostles (like Peter, John, etc.) and the prophets (such as Luke). The teachings of these men laid the foundation for everything the church would subsequently do and become, and when their generation passed away, the foundation was complete. There can be no modern-day apostles, as no one alive has seen the risen Lord. And, as the grammar seems to indicate, as the apostles go, so go the prophets. Their work was foundational, but not ongoing. Therefore, there is strong evidence for the belief that the prophetic sign gifts – including tongues – are no longer in operation.

VII. CONCLUSION

Jesus was eager to go to heaven in part so the Holy Spirit could come to believers in a powerful new way. Although His sign gifts are not in effect, the Spirit's power is in no way diminished. The Holy Spirit still empowers Christ's followers to conquer sin, build the

¹⁶ Robert L. Thomas, Revelation 8:22 An Exegetical Commentary. (Chicago: Moody Press 1995), 517.

church, and advance the gospel. We need never go it alone, as God will always be with us through the presence and power of His Holy Spirit.