

Gifts, Babies and the Bathwater...

The following is a letter containing relevant and topical questions we have received from many readers. We pray our reply will encourage Sola Scriptura:

Dear Terry & Mike, Thankyou for sending your newsletter 'Diakrisis', I always enjoy the contents. However, there are a few points in which I would like your guidance. The Word speaks of the gifts and there is no indication that these gifts will be confined to the apostolic era; in fact, in our Lord's parting message he said 'I am with you until the end of the age' after naming the gifts that would follow 'those that believe'

Also, in the subject of 'false prophets': certain passages of Scripture seem to indicate that both our Lord and St. Paul were quite open minded on these subjects, (Mk.9:38; Phil 1:16-18). I hasten to add that I do not endorse false teachings, neither do I espouse the Charismatic movement with a lot of its extravagant 'name it and claim it' dogmas. However, I hesitate to 'throw the baby out with the bathwater' if you pardon the expression. Certain evangelists have preached to millions of people who had never heard the name of Jesus. Maybe not all conversions are genuine, but if only 1% believe, is that not something to rejoice about; the Lords Word does not return void, (Is.15:11)...'

Statement: *'The Word speaks of the gifts and that there is no indication that these gifts will be confined to the apostolic era. In fact, in our Lord's parting message He said 'I am with you until the end of the age'; this was after naming the gifts that would follow 'those who believe'.*

Our reply: It would be easy to say the gifts have or have not ceased. However, we find this answer shortchanges the question and does not teach valuable truths concerning the 'sign gifts'. The real issue can be understood by posing another question: *what was the purpose of these gifts?* Let us answer this question in brief:

There are at least 19 gifts. These include 5 gifts in Romans 12; 5 gifts in Ephesians 4; and 9 'sign gifts' in 1Corinthians 12. That makes a total of at least 19 gifts! Sadly, many Christians who emphasise the nine 'sign' gifts are hardly aware of the existence of the other gifts in Romans and Ephesians. Then to add to the problem, the emphasis on the 9 'sign gifts' usually goes further with emphasis on just *one* of those gifts - the gift of 'tongues'. This is despite the Bible listing this gift as the *least of the gifts* in a descending order in 1Cor.12:28-30.

The *purpose* of these 'sign' gifts has been largely forgotten today. The gifts in 1Corinthians 12 were called 'sign gifts' because they *pointed to* something or someone. A sign post points us to something. The 'sign' gifts pointed to and approved the *Messiahship of Jesus Christ and the credentials of His Apostles*. The following Scriptures prove this:

'And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples...But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God...', (Jn.20:30,31); **'...Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs...'**, (Acts 2:22).

When John the Baptist asked the disciples for *proof* of the *identity of Christ*, Jesus did not at first verbally answer the question, but rather **'in the same hour'** performed the 'signs' as *proof*. Following this He *then* said to His disciples: **'Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached'**, (Lk.7:21-22). The proof of the Messiahship of Jesus was the very signs and wonders He performed!

Other verses (below) also make interesting reading when one considers the tenses of the verbs used: **'Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds'**, (2Cor.12:12); **'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost...'**, (Heb.2:3,4). The Greek uses the *aorist indicative* - the action is specific at a set point in time past rather than continuous. With these and many other scriptures, do we need again today to prove the Messiahship of Jesus or the credentials of the Apostles?

Despite what one would believe concerning the continuation or re-appearance of the sign gifts in history, it is fact that the gifts of the first century did historically cease in operation. Chrysostom (AD345-407),

Augustine and others unequivocally referred to these gifts as having ceased. This same consensus is also made by the great leaders down through the running centuries, (You can read this article on our website *'The Sign Gifts in History - The Facts'* http://taministries.net/?page_id=131).

So, the next question is: have the 'sign' gifts been *restored* today? The answer is again found in the answer to another question: *Are those gifts being today claimed as authentic the same as they were in the first century?* Let us take one area of the gifts and examine this - **'the gifts of healing'**:

We must first clearly distinguish between 'healing' by God Himself and the 'gift of healing'. The two are today sadly confused. The former is no doubt possible at any time. The second, however, refers to a 'gift' residing in a *human*. Let us note the characteristics of this 'gift' of healing as it was experienced in the first century: (Scripture references are only a small selection from the Gospel of Matthew):

1. *Jesus and His disciples performed the healings:* Mk.3:14,15 **'And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, 15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils'**.

Matt.10:1 **'And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease'**.

2. *They healed 'ALL' & 'EVERY'* (Matt.4:23,24; 8:16; 9:35; 10:1; 12:15...) Compare this with today's claims – the 'healers' today simply do not heal 'all' and 'every' person.

3. *The healings were instant:* (Matt.8:3; 20:30...**'immediately'**). Compare this with today's 'healings'.

4. *They healed completely:* (Matt.12:13,15 **'whole'**; 14:36 **'perfectly whole'**...). Compare this with today's faith healers.

5. *They healed at will:* (Matt.8:3). Compare this with the numerous failures today.

6. *They healed organic diseases* - that is, diseases that cannot be cured by psychosomatic means, (Matt.4:23,24; 9:35; 15:30). Compare this with today - for example, *AIDS and Downs Syndrome are 'organic' diseases which simply have never been cured!* And why do faith healers purposely shy away from such people who have these symptoms?

Christians who say the gifts have been restored need to examine the claimed 'gifts' today and see that they simply do not match the 1st century gifts and are not evident in any man on planet earth! Today we clearly have a counterfeit.

Added to this is the testimony of Scripture: Trophimus was *'left sick'*, (2Tim.4:20); Timothy took a little wine for his stomach ailment, (1Tim.5:23); Paul had a *'Thorn in the flesh'*, (2Cor.12:7-9); and Epaphraditus *'almost died'*! (Phil.2:25).

Something else which should be a warning to us today - in *every* place in inspired Scripture where *signs and wonders* are mentioned to do with the *end times* - they are *always false* or *lying!* (eg. Matt.24:24; 2Thess.2:9; Revelation, etc).

Statement: *'The...Lord's parting message He said 'I am with you until the end of the age'; this was after naming the gifts that would follow 'those who believe'.*

Our reply: The Lord's parting message is not found in the passage concerning the *'signs [not 'gifts'] that would follow 'those who believe'*, (Mk.16:). The words *'I am with you always, even unto the end of the world'* actually occur in Matthew 28:20 and have nothing to do with the 'gifts'. However, let us look at Mark 16:16-18: **'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. 17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover'**

Who is the passage addressed to? A look back at verse 14 tells us clearly: **'Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.'** The reference here is clearly to **'the eleven'** - the Apostles.

In verse 17 the phrase **'them that believe'** is referring to those who did believe, not those who would believe at that time or in the future. [Another example of the same Greek grammar is: *'And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all'*, (Acts 27:35)]

All the **'signs'** here, except one, were actually fulfilled! The demonic deliverance and healings were fulfilled many times (eg. Acts 5:14-16); the 'Tongues' were fulfilled in Acts ch.2,10 and 19; and the handling of snakes was fulfilled in Acts 28:3-6. But what about the 'drinking of poison'? The phrase here is **'and IF they drink any deadly thing'**. The **'if'** is *hypothetical*. This could well have occurred amongst the disciples. However, no record is given or needs to be given.

Mark 16 is simply not for the present, nor for all Christians. *Such signs have already served their purpose - to prove the Messiahship of Jesus and the credentials of His disciples.* We now have the closed canon of Scripture - the very inspired Word of God. We are warned in Scripture that the signs and wonders in the end time will be *lying, false* - counterfeit. If the 'sign' gifts were restored today, then we should be able to compare them favourably with the 1st century gifts.

Statement: *'Also, the subject of 'false prophets', certain passages of Scripture seem to indicate that both our Lord and St. Paul were quite open minded on these subjects, (Mk.9:38; Phil.1:16-18).'*

Our Reply: Both passages, Mark 9 and Philippians 1, do not in any way refer to *'false prophets'*. The passage in Mark is referring to another disciple doing a miracle in Jesus name. The passage in Philippians is referring to the way in which the *true Gospel* was preached! These passages in no way refer to *'false prophets'*. *References to false prophets by Jesus or the apostles were nothing short of scathing!* Jesus and the apostles were never *'open minded'* about false prophets but warned against them as **'ravening wolves'** (Matt.7:15); that they would **'deceive many'** (Matt.24:11); and that they would lead many astray in the end with false and lying signs and wonders, (Matt.24:24). They are linked with false teachers who would bring in **'damnable heresies'** and make **'merchandise'** of God's people and we are warned not to follow the **'pernicious ways'** of these **'brute beasts'** and that they are like **'dogs'** who go back to the **'vomit'**, (1Pet.2:1-22). We are to test them, (1Jn.4:1). Jesus and the apostles were not *'open minded'* to false teachers or false apostles.

Statement: *'...I do not endorse false teachings, neither do I espouse the Charismatic movement with its extravagant 'name it and claim it' dogmas. However, I hesitate to 'throw the baby out with the bathwater'...certain evangelists have preached to millions of people who had never heard the name of Jesus. Maybe not all conversions are genuine, but if 1% believe, is not that something to rejoice about?; the Lords word does not return void, (Is. 15:11)...'*

Our reply: The 'baby with the bathwater' analogy is today urgently in need of rigorous testing! Is false teaching or even a mixture of it really an innocent 'baby'? Or is it a 'snake' that has devoured the church for too long? God hates mixtures! (Lev.20:23-26; Ezra 9:2). We are supposed to be born of an 'incorruptible seed', (1Pet.1:23). God hates 'leaven' in our lives. 'Leaven' in the New Testament is a symbol of sin, false doctrine or error, (Matt.16:6-12; 1Cor.5:6-8; Gal.5:9). God's warning on a mixture of leaven and truth is clear: *'...Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened',* (1Cor.5:6,7). We are told to have the *'unleavened bread of sincerity and truth',* (1Cor.5:8). The Charismatic movement is not a 'baby' but a movement that was born out of new Pentecostal teaching at the turn of the 20th century. It was opposed strongly by the leaders of the day. One called it *'the last great vomit of Satan'*. But slowly by the middle of the 20th century this disguised 'baby' infiltrated one denomination after another and so the 'Charismatic movement' was born.

The fact that some (even '1%') are converted through 'certain evangelists' ministries is simply because the Gospel is 'the power of God unto salvation'. If people are converted it is because of God and His Gospel, and despite any false evangelistic effort. The thinking that because a false teacher or false prophet has seen 'conversions' and thus God endorses the 'evangelist', is actually dangerous pragmatic thinking. This evil thinking is rife in the church today and God detests it: *'And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come?...' ,* (Rom.3:8). The question here requires a negative answer - Paul is saying *'God forbid that we should do evil that good may come'*. Any lukewarmness here brings this response from God: *'So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth',* (Rev.3:16).

Terry Arnold & Mike Claydon

'We highly recommend the Videos/DVD's 'Does the Truth Matter Any More' by John Macarthur, available from this ministry. They address some of these issues very well'.