



The Sinaitic Light

The Termination of Gifts

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This article uses the English terms for Elohim (God), Yah (Father) Yahoshua (Christ).

Objective and Learning Outcome

Objective:

This article sets forth the argument that gifts of the Holy Spirit was given to the church in the first century to propagate the gospel. Once the gospel was successfully broadcasted to the world, Yah terminated the gifts because it had accomplished its objective. The objective of this article is to argue the idea that charismatic gifts (tongues, healing, prophecies etc.) have ceased in this dispensation.

Learning Outcome:

Upon completion of this study, the reader will:

1. Understand the purpose of spiritual gifts;
2. Understand when spiritual gifts ceased;
3. Understand the difference between a continuationists and a cessationists;
4. Understand various scholars and church father's view on the termination of spiritual gifts and;
5. Understand the book of Revelation and John the Revelator's role in the termination of spiritual gifts;

Introduction

God ordained Moses to go to Egypt and deliver His people from bondage from the oppressive rule of Pharaoh. One of the concerns that Moses expressed to God was his lack of credibility in the eyes of Pharaoh and the Israelites. Moses feared that they would not believe him or accept him as God's messenger (Ex. 4:1). Yah's solution to Moses's concern was to validate him by making His presence known through signs and miracles (Ex. 4:2-9). These signs and miracles were ultimately performed by Yah, as all "gifts come from God." These gifts were granted to His servants to make non-believers, believers in His power and sovereignty as well as to validate those whom He sent to evangelize His word.^{1 2}

Today, many people believe that Yah continues to grant spiritual gifts to neo-Christians to either confirm His word, endorse the messenger or to demonstrate His approval. These people are essentially called Continuationists. There are several passages that are used in the Bible that seem to offer support to the continuationists' doctrine. Paul writes, "This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people" (Eph. 4:7-8). Continuationists believe that Paul's discourse to the Ephesians transcends time and dispensations. Therefore, the epistle to the Ephesians is also applicable to neo-Christians in this period. However, there are those who disagree with the application of biblical passages being applicable to neo-Christians in this era. These people are typically called Cessationists. Cessationists believe that the gifts of the spirit have ceased. This lesson will demonstrate that the gifts of the spirit and the apostolic era, which received the gifts, were dispensational and terminated in the first century AD after the destruction of the Temple, and the death of the last apostle, John the Revelator.^{3 4 5}

Continuationists

There are several different types of continuationists. They are Pentecostals, Charismatics, and Third Wave. Author and Evangelist, Dr. Garnet Howard Milne writes, "Charismatics do not necessarily hold that baptism of the Holy Spirit is a second experience following conversion. Neither do they regard tongues as an indispensable or essential sign of the baptism of the spirit" (Milne: 3). Continuationists do not believe that the gifts of the spirit were and are dispensational. They believe that they are *presently* active throughout neo-Christendom. Then there is the "Third Wave Movement", associated with the Vineyard churches and the late John Wimber (1934-1997). It teaches that the baptism of the Holy Spirit happens to all Christians when they are converted, but stresses that miraculous signs and wonders should be concomitant with the

¹ What was Moses's concern about being selected to speak with Pharaoh and the Israelites?

² What did Yah do through Moses to make people believe that He sent Him to deliver His people out of Egypt?

³ What are Continuationists?

⁴ What are Cessationists?

⁵ What is this lesson's argument?

proclamation of the gospel” (Milne: 3). Continuationists focus upon a Pauline passage which states, “There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:6-7). The previously stated passage has been used by continuationists to illustrate that Yah has given gifts to all men for various purposes. This doctrine is ratified by Paul’s statement,⁶

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts (1 Cor. 12:27-31).⁷

One of the primary indicators of possessing spiritual gifts granted by the Holy Spirit is the gift of speaking in tongues. Donald Gee (1891 - 1966), English Pentecostal Bible Expositor, based on his analysis as a continuationist says “there is no indication that the Holy Spirit would cease to bestow the gift of tongues” (Gee:10). Continuationists believe that the one who has received the approval of Yah demonstrates it through the “acceptance of Jesus and renunciation of sin, water immersion baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost or speaking in tongues” (Lynn: 223). However, (arguably) the Bible does not confirm this doctrine. Yah accepts and validates those who come to Him through Christ, and this process is endorsed by the author’s articulation of this ordained method in the book of Hebrews 10:22.^{8 9}

Yah’s acceptance of a worshiper is achieved through obedience of the Torah, faith and baptism, which are the only things Yah commanded from those who desired eternal life (Acts 2:37-38; John 6:29, 40; 1 John 3:23; 5:1-3; Rev. 7:14; 12:17; 14:12). Yet continuationists, like those within Pentecostalism who “trace their roots to the 1901 Pentecostal revival in the US” (Milne: 3) and other charismatic bodies, view speaking in tongues or *glossolalia* as a “sign of the acceptance of Jesus” (Synan: 153), which appears to be problematic because not all the disciples spoke in tongues or performed miracles. John the Baptist accepted Christ but performed no miracles. Furthermore, there is a concern about miracles continuing to be performed by the spirit after the first century. Dr. Millard J. Erickson, Professor of Theology at Western Seminary in Portland, writes, “There were some outbursts of speaking in tongues, or *glossolalia*, in North Carolina as early as 1896” (Erickson: 780). This is some 1900 years after the death of Christ and the apostles.^{10 11}

⁶ What passage(s) does continuationists use to support their belief?

⁷ Does Paul state that everyone receives the gift of tongues?

⁸ Who said, “there is no indication that the Holy Spirit would cease to bestow the gift of tongues”?

⁹ Who stated that continuationists believe that Yah’s approval is demonstrated by them receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, namely tongues.

¹⁰ What passages states that those who love Yah and those who are accepted by Yah are those who have followed the Torah (commandments of Yah), accepted Yahoshua as Messiah through faith and been baptized in the name of Yahoshua for remission of sins?

¹¹ Who believed in Yahoshua but did not perform miracles?

If continuationists' theory is true, then there was a 1900-year period of darkness where spiritual gifts were suspended. This would then be cessationism, not continuationism. Dr. Richard Gaffin, Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, states that "many continuationists are in fact cessationists, in that they recognize there are no apostles today. That reflects an appreciation of the unique authority of the apostles and the tie between that authority and the authority and (closed) canonicity of the New Testament" (Gaffin: 45). If the apostles ceased to exist or are limited to the first century, then gifts that were given to the apostles also abated. There is a lack of verifiable evidence in history to support the theory or propagation that gifts *like those given in the Bible* continued after the first century. There is also a lack of verifiable evidence that the first, second, and third century churches looked for these gifts to confirm their discipleship, leading many to believe that these gifts ran a course through time (dispensation) and then ceased. Those who feel that the gifts of the spirit have ceased because they were dispensational are called cessationists.¹²

Cessationists

Cessationists believe that "the authority of the Scripture must prevail" (Carson: 13), thereby, concluding if the Scripture states that the gifts of the spirit will cease, then it will cease when there is no evidence of it. "The 'cessationists' viewpoint denies the continuance of New Testament miraculous gifts such as prophecy, tongues, and healing, and confines the exercises of those gifts to the apostolic era or even until the completion of the New Testament canon" (Milne: 2). Cessationists like Dr. Augustus Hopkins Strong (1836 - 1921), Systematic Theologian and Professor of Theology at Rochester Theological Seminary, believe that miracles, prophecies, and tongues have ceased (Strong: 118). Dr. Charles Hodge, (1797 - 1878) Professor of Didactic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, agrees that healing, exorcisms and all types of miracles have also ceased (Hodge: 636). Cessationists, just like continuationists, follow Scripture to support their position. However, unlike continuationists, cessationists also follow verifiable accounts through history.^{13 14}

Paul says, "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" (1 Cor. 13:8). Paul states that prophesy, tongues and instant knowledge would cease. Dr. Wayne A. Grudem, Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies at Phoenix Seminary, writes, "the authority of God's messengers, the prophets, was not limited to the general content or just the main ideas of their messages. Rather, they claimed repeatedly that their very words were words, which God had given them to deliver. We see this in the fact that the characteristic which distinguished a true prophet was this: He did not speak his own words or "words of his own heart," but words which God had sent him to deliver" (Grudem: 22). The last prophet was John the Revelator. John's

¹² True or False. Many continuationists are in fact cessationists. Explain your answer.

¹³ When do some cessationists believe that gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased?

¹⁴ What do cessationists use to argue their position that special gifts granted by the Holy Spirit have ceased?

prophecy begins very much like those of his predecessors who say, “the word of God came” “thus says God” etc. After John the Revelator, there have been no new revelations given to the church (so-called) *that are verifiable*. Therefore, the deduction is that Yah closed the New Testament narratives with the book of Revelation and the sanctioning verses, serving as the benediction and epilogue for Yah’s word, which is amen. Yah says,

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come, and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll. He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Yahshua. The grace of the Lord Yahshua be with God’s people. Amen (Rev. 22:17-21).

The closing verses of the book of Revelation introduce the epilogue of the Bible. There are approximately 404 verses in the book of Revelation, and it is estimated that 278 of them are references to the Old Testament. That means that 68% of the book of Revelation is constructed from the Old Testament books; thereby, conjoining both Old and New Testaments in one book in its final theological treatise about the soteriological¹⁵ God, eschatological¹⁶ God and Christological¹⁷ son. The point this article makes is that after the close of the book of Revelation, in the first century AD, there were no more miracles; at least verifiable miracles. This allows one to deduce that the miracles witnessed in the first century were for a season and the Bible supports this supposition.^{18 19}

The Context of Gifts

One of the most profound witnesses to spiritual gifts and their purpose is found in the Gospel of Mark. Yahoshua tells the disciples that they were to evangelize the word of God and baptized those who believed. He says that signs would follow them. Some of these signs would be exorcisms, healings, and speaking in tongues (Mark 16:16-18). Mark tells his audience that there was a specific reason the disciples received these gifts. Mark said that the disciples went

¹⁵ Soteriology derives from the Greek word σωτηρία *sōtēria* “salvation” from σωτήρ *sōtēr* “savior, preserver.” It is a branch of theology that studies the process or dynamics of salvation in all religions.

¹⁶ Eschatology is a word that derives its origin from the Greek word ἔσχατος *eschatos* meaning “last or end.” It is a branch of theology that concentrates upon the final events of man’s history. End time judgment.

¹⁷ Christology derives its origin from the Greek word Χριστός *Christós*. It is a field of study within Christian theology concerned with the divine nature of Christ according to what is written in the Old and New Testaments. High Christology is concerned with Christ’s preexistence and his identity with God as God. The focus of this branch of theology originates primarily from the New Testament then read into the Old Testament to support questionable Christological views held within Christendom.

¹⁸ True or False. Sixty-nine percent of the book of Revelation is found in the Old Testament.

¹⁹ True or False. The book of Revelation is the last book of the Bible. Therefore, John, the author of Revelation is regarded as the last ordained prophet of Yah.

forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with accompanying signs (Mark 16:20). The word of interest in Mark's Gospel is "confirming." Confirming is the Greek word *bebaioō* βεβαιόω, and it means "to make firm, establish, confirm, make sure" (Strong's G590). The Greek word that Mark uses for sign is the word *sémeion* σημεῖον which means to "demonstrate as a miracle or to serve as an indicator, mark, token, sign (typically miraculous), given especially to confirm, corroborate or authenticate" (Strong's G4592). Mark tells his readers that Yah established his word with marks and indicators that would represent His presence. The purpose was to make non-believers become believers in the word of God propagated through the evangel. Speaking about spiritual gifts, Paul states, "tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers" (1 Cor. 14:22).^{20 21 22 23}

Spiritual gifts such as tongues were used to demonstrate that God was in the presence of the assembly revealing Himself through miracles, wonders, and signs to make nonbelievers become believers in the new faith. Dr. Paul P. Enns, Adjunct Professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, states that "tongues were used as a sign to unbelieving Jews and in this sense, were used in evangelism (1 Cor. 14:21-22). When unbelieving Jews would enter the assembly, and hear people speaking in foreign languages, it was a sign to them that God was doing a work in their midst, reminiscent of Isaiah's day (Isa. 28:11-12). This sign should lead them to faith in Jesus as their Messiah" (Enns: 287).^{24 25}

Enns explains the general purpose for tongues and miracles during the first century. Yahoshua informed his apostles that a man was intentionally blinded so that he could be healed of Yah to demonstrate His power (John 9:3). The purpose of this miracle and subsequent miracles was to confirm God's presence, Christ's ordination, and the evangel. Christ says, "and for your sake, I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him" (John 11:15). Christ continues to demonstrate that these incidents of illnesses and death were used as opportunities that God created to show His power and glory so that all would believe Him and His Messiah (John 11:40-42). Once people believed in Christ and accepted the evangel, there was no further need for miracles and signs, which Paul alludes to in his epistle (1 Cor. 14:22).²⁶

Summation

Christ was asked an eschatological question in Matthew 24:1-3. Christ responded by telling them that the evangel will be preached throughout the world and then the end shall come (Matt. 24:14). The end that Christ speaks of is the end of Jerusalem, Israel, and the nation of

²⁰ What word means to make firm, to establish and to make sure?

²¹ What word means an indicator, mark, sign, token?

²² What word means to authenticate, confirm or to corroborate?

²³ What is used as a sign to convince unbelievers that God is real, and that He desires to be in covenant with His people?

²⁴ What was given to lead people to faith in the Messiah?

²⁵ What was done to demonstrate to unbelievers that Yah was in their midst?

²⁶ What was the purpose of the miracles we see performed in the Bible?

Israel as they knew it, which explains why they wanted to know when the kingdom would be returned to them as a sovereign nation (Acts 1:6). The point of the passage (Matt. 24:14) is to illustrate that the apostles had evangelized the word of God to all inhabitants of the earth over a 37-year period (Rom. 1:8; 10:18; Col. 1:6,23; Acts 2:1-11; 8:4) then Jerusalem fell. John was the last surviving apostle to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit after the destruction of the Temple so he could admonish the churches in Asia Minor (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea; *Rev. chs. 2-3*).^{27 28}

The signs that were revealed to the Jews and Gentiles were to serve as a confirmation of the apostles and disciples' testimony that Yahoshua had come, died, risen, and ascended. The most prominent sign was *glossolalia*, a charismatic act that has transcended eras and dispensations according to charismatics. However, according to the Bible, it was given to an elect few for the spreading of the evangel. Paul asks, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret (1 Cor. 12:29-30)? The answer to Paul's question is no. "Nowhere is it said that 'speaking in tongues' is a charisma that all Christians should have" (Van Oort: 3).²⁹

There is no verifiable evidence of spirituals gifts after the first century. Internal evidence suggests that these gifts were given at a time when it was necessary to evangelize the New Covenant to help those who were in bondage to the Old Covenant to see that it had been nullified by the blood of Christ. Approximately 1500 years of sacrificing to atone for sins, Aaronic intercession, temple rituals, and laws were nullified through a new and better covenant. The New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Matt. 26:27-28; Heb. 8:6-13; 9:15-28; 10:15-18). The only way to demonstrate its authenticity was to confirm its message and messengers through signs and wonders which Yah was doing through them (Acts 2:22; 19:11). After the gospel was spread throughout the earth and confirmed by miracles (Acts 2:38-39), the gifts ceased because Yah's word had been presented to the entire *known civilized* world.^{30 31 32 33}

The New Testament saw a reemergence of prophecies endowed by the Holy Spirit to reopen the biblical canon that had been closed during the intertestamental period, after the time of Ezra and the Persian rule, closing the Old Testament canon with the book of Malachi. Dr. Henri A.G. Blocher, Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology, writes a section in the book titled *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, edited by Dr. D. A. Carson, Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Blocher writes, "The New Testament

²⁷ True or False. The gospel was confirmed by miracles for 37 years, then it stopped after the destruction of the Temple. The last apostle and prophet to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit after the Temple's destruction according to the Bible was John the Revelator. John received the gift in order to admonish the seven churches in Asia Minor and to close the New Testament canon.

²⁸ What passages demonstrate that the gospel of Christ had been proclaimed throughout the entire world?

²⁹ Where in the Bible does it say that charisma (gifts) is an anointing that every Christian should have?

³⁰ Why was it necessary to confirm the gospel with miracles?

³¹ What passages demonstrate that the New Covenant replaced the Old Covenant?

³² What passage shows that Yahoshua confirmed the New Covenant or rather New Testament before his death?

³³ What passages show that it was Yah performing miracles through Yahoshua and the disciples to confirm His message of salvation?

testifies to the resumption of prophecy with the arrival of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:7-10), and John the apostle signals the cessation of it by his warning at the end of Revelation. The implication is that there can be no more Scripture: the closure of prophecy entails the closure of the canon” (Carson: 626).³⁴

Not only did gifts cease to be given by the Holy Spirit, but it also closed the New Testament canon, affording no additional prophecies or development in doctrine after the first century AD. The book of Revelation demonstrates the closing of the New Testament canon thereby, ending any special revelations and gifts from Yah. All gifts were terminated because the gospel had been successfully evangelized. This was Augustine of Hippo’s (354 - 430) position. He says “In the earliest time the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spoke with tongues which they had not learned ‘as the Spirit gave them utterance.’ These were signs adapted to the time. For it was proper for the Holy Spirit to evidence Himself in all tongues, and to show that the Gospel of God had come to all tongues [languages] over the whole earth. The thing was done for an authentication and it passed away” (*Ten Homilies on the first Epistle of John VI, 10*).^{35 36}

Conclusion

Cessationists may believe that spiritual gifts ceased in the first century for different reasons. The most revealing reason is that of why the gifts were given in the first place. That reason was to confirm a new theology. Once this new theology had been introduced and confirmed, and the church established with God’s confirmation, there was no reason to continue with the miracles. Mankind now lives in the age and era of faith (not signs) with tangible records of spiritual gifts that were given thousands of years ago to confirm this faith predicated upon the apostles’ testimony. The gifts of the spirit given during the apostolic era were dispensational and ended after the first century AD.

There is much more to discuss on this subject. If you have questions about this study and others, feel free to join us in fellowship, prayer, praise, and study every Saturday at 11:30 am, or call us for consultation pertaining to this subject or any other you might find intriguing. We are a Messianic Judaic assembly teaching the doctrine of Sinaiticism, which means keeping God’s word in the faith of Christ (Rev. 12:17; 14:12-13), proclaiming his gospel to the world and to those who are seeking God’s truth without interpretation or church tradition. May the blessings of the Most High be with you and thank you for reading our article.

³⁴ True False. The Old Testament canon closed with the book of Malachi. It reopened with the book of Matthew introducing the New Testament and closed with the book of Revelation.

³⁵ The book of Revelation demonstrates the closing of the New Testament _____ thereby, ending any special _____ and _____.

³⁶ What was the church Father’s, Augustine of Hippo’s position on the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

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