

# WHAT REALLY HAPPENED AT PENTECOST?

PETER A. MICHAS

CHRISTIE D. MICHAS

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Peter A. and Christie D. Michas

Cover artwork by Peter A. Michas

Messengers of Messiah

7231 Boulder Avenue Box 164

Highland, CA 92346 USA

Tel. (909) 425-8751

[peterm@messengers-of-messiah.org](mailto:peterm@messengers-of-messiah.org)

[christiem@messengers-of-messiah.org](mailto:christiem@messengers-of-messiah.org)

[www.messengers-of-messiah.org](http://www.messengers-of-messiah.org)

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Words not in the original Greek text shown in parentheses.

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The name “Yeshua”, the actual Hebrew name, is used in place of “Jesus”.

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# Chapter 1 Gifts of the Spirit

But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7).

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:11).

Chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians provides the Biblical foundation for study of the gifts of the Spirit. The Greek word *charismata*, translated “gifts,” is the plural of *charisma*. *Charisma* is “a gift of grace, a gift involving grace (*charis*) on the part of God as the Donor.”<sup>1</sup> Demonstration of the grace of God is evident in the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (*Ruach HaKodesh*, the Spirit of the Holy One). These gifts operate in believers and have their source in God the Father through God the Son, Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus), and are empowered by the Spirit of God.

Paul begins his discourse on the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:

Now concerning spiritual (gifts) brethren, I do not want you to be unaware (1 Corinthians 12:1).

Note that the word “gifts” is in parenthesis, indicating that this word does not appear in the Greek text. In fact, a more accurate translation of the intended meaning is the use of the word “matters” in place of “gifts.” What Paul is actually saying is: “Now about spiritual *matters*, brothers, I do not wish you to be ignorant.”<sup>2</sup>

Paul was writing to the believers of the church in Corinth, one of the largest and richest cities in the Roman Empire. Located about fifty miles west of Athens, Corinth was at the crossroads of a major trade route, attracting Greeks, Romans, Jews, and a mixed multitude of sailors and merchants. Pagan temples and practices abounded, and presented many difficulties to the new Gentile believers. Given this situation, it was imperative that the believers be educated to understand and be able to discern the true gifts of the Spirit, as opposed to spiritual manifestations associated with paganism.

The fact that these new believers had once been followers of paganism is reflected in Paul's statement:

You know that when you were pagans, (you were) led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led (1 Corinthians 12:2).

Having come out of paganism, these believers in Messiah Yeshua were now united with the Spirit of the Holy One:

Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus [Yeshua] is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus [Yeshua] is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3).

The phrase "by the Spirit of God" (*en pneumati*) is also found in Matthew 12:28. The Greek word *pneumati* is also found in Matthew 5:3, and is translated "in spirit." Additionally, the Greek words *en pneumati* appear in other New Testament passages, and are also translated "in the spirit" (Matthew 22:43; Revelation 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; and 21:10).<sup>3</sup> The Greek word *pneumati* (pronounced: p nev ma tee) refers to the union of a human being's spirit with the Spirit of God. The word is derived from *pneuma*, meaning "spirit."<sup>4</sup>

Before Adam and Eve sinned, they were in a state of *pneumati*—perfect spiritual union and harmony with their Creator. But sin broke this union and resulted in humanity's spiritual separation from God ever since the Fall. Because life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), the blood of animals was sacrificed as a temporary "covering" for sin until the blood atonement sacrifice by Messiah Yeshua—The Lamb of God. Yeshua's all-sufficient and complete sacrifice, once and for all, brings redemption to all who receive Him as Messiah and Redeemer. Yeshua's sacrifice made it possible for the spirit of the believer to join with the Spirit of God, re-establishing the spiritual connection between man and God. Either the soul/spirit of a human being is dead to God, or it is made alive by the Spirit of God joining with the individual's spirit. These new Gentile believers in Corinth had become alive by the Spirit of God in a *pneumati* relationship with their Creator.

Paul emphasizes this union with the Spirit of God, and refers to its results in 1 Corinthians 12:3. The following is a way of translating this verse to convey the union of

the believer's spirit with the Spirit of the Holy One:

Therefore I make known to you, that no one whose spirit is in union with the Spirit of the Holy One can say, "Yeshua is accursed"; and no one can say, "Adon [Lord] Yeshua," except by union of their spirit with the Spirit of the Holy One (PAM).<sup>5</sup>

Union with the Spirit of God makes possible the operation of the spiritual gifts in the believer. And let us stress at this point that when a believer turns to God in repentance and receives the free gift of salvation through Messiah Yeshua, the Spirit of the Holy One immediately indwells, or joins with, the spirit of the believer. (This does not make the believer a god in any sense of the word.) From this time on, the spiritual gifts can be manifested. No subsequent experience of "filling" with the Holy Spirit is required for the manifestation of the spiritual gifts.

The spiritual gifts operate according to the will and purpose of God for the common good of the Body of Messiah:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And 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 Corinthians 12:4-7).

This scripture emphasizes the Oneness of God, which is essential to understanding (as much as is possible given the limited human mind) the true nature and relationship of God the Father, God the Son, and the Spirit of the Holy One. Never is there a separation of one from the others, or an independent will or action. God is *echad*, the Hebrew word meaning "one" (Deuteronomy 6:4; John 10:30). The Father, the Son, and the Spirit of the Holy One are one in essence, operation, and power.

The trinity concept, which came from the pagan concept of a trinity of three gods, was adopted with modification by Christianity to explain the relationship of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. However, it is a source of confusion because it does not fit the Hebraic concept of the Oneness of God that is so essential to understanding (again, given the limitations of the human mind) the true nature of God.



God is Spirit and cannot be reduced to fit the concept of a “person.” While the Father, Son, and Spirit are spirit in nature (and beyond the scope of human understanding), only the Son became incarnate and therefore took on a flesh body in the form of man. At no time in Scripture is God the Father referred to as any other form than Spirit (John 4:24). The Spirit of the Holy One is the very essence of the power of God the Father, not some separate spiritual entity.

The Spirit of the Holy One emanates from God the Father. Therefore, the spiritual gifts emanate from God the Father. And the gifts are apportioned according to the plan and will of God the Father.

But one and the same Spirit works in all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:11).

Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow (James 1:17).

This means that the gifts of the Spirit are never under the control or beck and call of any human being, to be manifested according to the will of the individual. This also means that the spiritual gifts are not “permanent acquisitions or talents.”<sup>6</sup>

For the gifts of the Spirit to manifest in an individual requires, first of all, the union of the person’s spirit with the Spirit of God. It requires a proper spiritual relationship with God the Father, by way of Yeshua, God the Son, empowered by the Spirit. Humility and the willingness to be used for the purposes of God are essential. Human will must be subservient to the will of God. There is absolutely no place for selfish motivation of any kind. Pride, including a sense of spiritual superiority, is contrary to the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit, as is the desire for personal gain, glory, and position. Everything accomplished by the gifts of the Spirit are for the benefit of the body of believers, not for the elevation or edification of any human being. Those who encourage or allow themselves to be revered or elevated as somehow spiritually superior or uniquely called reveal their own arrogance and pride. This kind of attitude shows that whatever they do is of their own will, not the will of God.

God distributes the spiritual gifts according to His will and purpose for the benefit of

the Body of Messiah. Just as the individual members of the Body of Messiah are to work together for the benefit of the entire body, so too the various spiritual gifts work together for the benefit of the entire body. For this reason, no one person will demonstrate all the spiritual gifts, or even necessarily one spiritual gift all the time.

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, (various) kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not (workers of) miracles, are they? All do not have the gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? (1 Corinthians 12:28-31).

The gifts of the Spirit are referred to in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Ephesians 4:11-12, and Romans 12:6-8. The word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, distinguishing of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. Ephesians 4:11 lists apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. And Romans 12:6-8 lists prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, mercy, and love. In the following chapters, we will closely study the various gifts of the Spirit.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Vol. 2, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear KJV-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English*, p. 509.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, refer to Greek text for each scripture listed.

<sup>4</sup> Vine, Vol. 4, p. 62.

<sup>5</sup> Translation by Peter Michas.

<sup>6</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, p. 1521.

## Chapter 2 Word of Wisdom

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him (James 1:5).

For indeed Jews ask for a sign, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:22-24).

### The Wisdom of God

The Hebrew word for “wisdom,” *hokmah*, literally means “skill (in living).”<sup>1</sup> In the Bible, the word is found in various contexts but primarily refers to “the ability to live life skillfully.”<sup>2</sup> This means good judgment in the practical application of knowledge, experience, and understanding in the everyday affairs of life. For the believer, this means knowing how to apply the Word of God in the individual’s own life.

The word or message of wisdom involves the operation of the Spirit of God to impart understanding and wisdom in the application of the Word of God, both for the good of the individual believer as well as for the good of the Body of Messiah:

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual (thoughts) with spiritual (words) (1 Corinthians 2:12-13).

The Spirit of God empowers the believer to learn, understand, and apply the Word of God, beyond mere human capabilities.

All true wisdom has its source in God:

The source of all wisdom is a personal God who is holy, righteous, and just. His wisdom is expressed against the background of his omnipotence

and omniscience. By his wisdom God numbered the clouds (Job 38:37), founded the earth (Prov 3:19), and made the world (Jer 10:12). Wisdom, being found in God, is regarded as a divine attribute (Job 12:13). He alone knows wisdom in its truest sense (Job 28:20, 23). The wisdom of God is not found in man's speculation. He alone must provide this wisdom for man's guidance so that man can live the best possible moral and ethical life (Prov 2:6; Job 11:6).<sup>3</sup>

In New Testament times, wisdom to the Jew was understood to have its source in God, and in the application of God's truth to human experience. In contrast, wisdom to the Greeks was considered to have its source in human knowledge, understanding, logic, and speculation:

This wisdom of the OT however, is quite distinct from other ancient world views.... Reflected in OT wisdom is the teaching of a personal God who is holy and just and who expects those who know him to exhibit his character in the many practical affairs of life. This perfect blend of the revealed will of a holy God with the practical human experiences of life is also distinct from the speculative wisdom of the Greeks. The ethical dynamic of Greek philosophy lay in the intellect; if a person had perfect knowledge he could live the good life (Plato). Knowledge was virtue. The emphasis of OT wisdom was that the human will, in the realm of practical matters, was to be subject to divine causes. Therefore, Hebrew wisdom was not theoretical and speculative. It was practical, based on revealed principles of right and wrong, to be lived out in daily life.<sup>4</sup>

Paul's denunciation of the wisdom of the pagan Greeks equally applies to all human philosophies that are devoid of the truth of God, and seek to elevate human wisdom in the place of the wisdom of God. Such humanistic thinking considers salvation through the atonement of Messiah Yeshua as mere foolishness:

For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE (1 Corinthians 1:18-19).

In fact, the wisdom of God became incarnate in Messiah Yeshua, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3).

## Fear of the Lord

Wisdom for man is not only to make one humanly wise, but also to lead him to fear the Lord, for this is the beginning of all wisdom (Job 28:28). True wisdom for man involves knowing the Holy One. So, men are to listen to the wisdom of God with attentive ears (Prov 2:2). In fact, inner happiness only comes when man attains this wisdom (Prov 3:13) through a strenuous search (Prov 2:4), which is actually a search for God himself (Prov 2:5). Skeptics will never find this wisdom and will never know the full meaning of life (Prov 14:6f.).<sup>5</sup>

The Word of God instructs believers that true wisdom is based upon fear of the Lord:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do (His commandments); His praise endures forever (Psalm 111:10).

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (Proverbs 9:10).

The Hebrew word, *yirah*, is translated as “fear” or “reverence.”<sup>6</sup> In this context, the meaning is more accurately conveyed as reverence or awe of God, rather than terror. Its usage is often linked to living in accordance with the commandments of God:

In several passages, “fearing” and proper living are so closely related as to be virtually synonymous ideas (Lev 19:14; 25:17; II Kgs 17:34; Deut 17:19). It is plausible that this usage of “to fear” as a virtual synonym for righteous living or piety grew out of viewing “fear” ... as the motivation which produced righteous living. ... This kind of fear was most appropriately learned by reading the Law (Deut 31:11-12).<sup>7</sup>

As stated above, this kind of fear (reverence) is best learned by reading the Word of God, and leads to the believer living in obedience to God’s will. (Such linkage between fearing the Lord and obeying His commandments is also found in Psalm 111:10; 112:1; and 128:1.) Therefore, to have fear of the Lord can also be understood as being fearful of not pleasing Him so that the individual seeks to live obediently in accordance with His ways. This requires study of the Word of God in order to learn the ways of God.

Significantly, the same word referring to reverence or awe of God is used in regard to worship of God:

[T]he term is used to refer to the worshiping congregation, gathered for worship.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, true worship is primarily focused on study of the Word of God. For this reason, it can rightly be said that the highest form of praise is study of the Word of God.

## God's Torah or Instructions

God's instructions for how to live are contained in the Word of God. The word "Law" is an unfortunate rendering of the Hebrew word *Torah*, which often leads to misunderstanding. Its true meaning is "teaching" or "instruction"<sup>9</sup>:

...God, motivated by love, reveals to man basic insight into how to live with each other and how to approach God. Through the law God shows his interest in all aspects of man's life which is to be lived under his direction and care. Law of God stands parallel to word of the Lord to signify that law is the revelation of God's will (e.g. Isa 1:10).<sup>10</sup>

Without the revelation of God's Torah—God's teaching and instruction—we would not know how to please God. We would not understand His plan of redemption or the prophecies that He has given us through the prophets.

In this regard, the words of Yeshua, who said that He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it, take on more significance and meaning:

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17).

Why would the Messiah come to abolish the Torah (God's instructions) or the writings of the prophets? Are they still not valid for believers today? Yet, Christians are taught that they are under grace and therefore free from the law. This is a complete misunderstanding of the real meaning of Torah.

It is completely true that Yeshua paid the price for sin once and for all so that He fulfilled all the sacrificial law. The sacrificial law pointed to the Messiah, and provided a temporary atonement for sin. Yeshua is the ultimate and final atonement, the only way of salvation and redemption. Only by the grace (unmerited favor) of God does any human

being receive salvation—absolutely no element of works is involved. The righteous who died prior to Yeshua’s sacrifice received salvation through God’s grace (not the law) because they trusted in God’s salvation and plan of redemption through the Messiah to come. We can see that the teaching that those in the Old Testament were “under the law” while believers today are “under grace,” without any consideration of Torah, is inaccurate and misleading. Both the Torah and grace are gifts of God, from Old Testament times, to New Testament times, and to our own time.

Though Yeshua’s sacrifice fulfilled the sacrificial law so that there is no longer Temple sacrifice for sin and a Levitical priesthood, Yeshua did not abolish the moral law, for example, the Ten Commandments. These are still valid guidelines for governing the lives of believers. Believers are not free from obedience to God’s instructions for how they are to live their lives.

In fact, acting in accordance with God’s instructions is to come from the inner being (spirit) of each believer, not merely as a result of external constraints. The heart of the believer is to be transformed by the power of the Word and Spirit acting together. God is looking for the “circumcised” heart, meaning a heart (spirit) that seeks His ways, and is obedient to His commandments:

But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men but from God (Romans 2:29).

...and in Him [Yeshua] you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ [Messiah]... (Colossians 2:11).

## The Doctrines and Traditions of Man

True wisdom is the proper application of God’s Word in such a way as to live a life that is pleasing to God. In contrast are man-made rules, doctrines, and traditions that are held to be godly, but are in fact contrary to the Word of God in their very nature and practice. Yeshua dealt with this issue among the religious leadership of His day:

And He answered and said to them, “And why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ... You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, ‘THIS PEOPLE

HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.  
BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE  
PRECEPTS OF MEN' ” (Matthew 15:3, 7-9).

Yeshua exposed the corruption, hypocrisy, and arrogance of the religious leadership. They assumed the external trappings of religiosity and a false appearance of godliness. Their hearts were not set on the things of God but on the material things of this world: wealth, power, influence. They were not leading the people in the ways of God. The same can be said in regard to much of Christianity and its leadership today.

In particular, Yeshua condemned the religious leaders for traditions that caused transgression of the commandments (instructions) of God. If He condemned the Jews for this type of transgression, would He not likewise condemn Christians for the same kind of transgression? Any doctrine, teaching, tradition, or practice that is contrary to the Word of God falls into this category. But without a solid foundation in Biblical truth, the believer is unable to discern false doctrines and traditions.

A primary example of Christian traditions that are man-made and transgress God's most basic instructions against adulterating Biblical truth with paganism are Christmas and Easter. Because these Christian traditions are seventeen hundred years old, they are blindly accepted and practiced by the majority of Christians. But study of the Word of God in conjunction with relevant history (i.e., fulfilled prophecy) reveals that the “man of lawlessness” (2 Thessalonians 2) is the one who gave us both Christmas and Easter. Daniel also referred to the man of lawlessness as the man who would make alternations in God's appointed times and law (Daniel 7:25). In 325, the Roman Emperor Constantine replaced God's Appointed Times (the Biblical/Jewish Holy Days) with pagan holidays (Sunday, Christmas, and Easter), and officially began the process whereby Christianity assimilated all kinds of paganism.<sup>11</sup>

The deception and delusion are so great that when this truth is presented, it is often rejected in shock, disbelief, and horror: “You don't celebrate Christmas?!” Some regard the truth as some form of “legalism”: “We aren't under the Law,” or “God knows the heart.” Some consider that unity of Christianity is more important than the truth: “You are causing divisions in the body.” Some justify keeping these days: “We don't worship the tree,” “We are honoring Christ, nothing of paganism,” “It's the perfect opportunity to witness about Christ,” or “We don't want to deprive our children of the fun festivities.” Others simply view the truth as totally irrelevant: “What difference does it make when He was born?” As Yeshua said: “... you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for



the sake of your own tradition.” Human reasoning, opinions, and justifications are elevated above God’s instructions and His truth. This cannot be pleasing to God, no matter how it is “dressed up” in the false appearance of godliness.

A Scripture that is often misinterpreted as justifying observance of these holidays is found in Colossians:

Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a (mere) shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ [Messiah] (Colossians 2:16-17).

But the context proves that Paul was not instructing the believers in Colossae that it was acceptable to participate in the pagan festivals of their city. In fact, Paul’s reference to the new moon and Sabbath refer to God’s Holy Days, not to any pagan holiday. Paul was explaining that ritual observance was not required because Messiah Yeshua is the substance of these days. The Biblical Holy Days were ordained by God to teach about the Messiah and to provide the prophetic pattern and timetable for God’s master plan of redemption. For this reason, they stand as a shadow—a prophetic pattern—of what was and is yet to come, but Yeshua is the substance—the prophetic fulfillment—of these prophecies. Just as Paul did not require the Gentiles to be ritually circumcised, he did not require them to ritually observe the Biblical Holy Days.

However, God’s purpose in giving believers the Biblical Holy Days as a profound teaching tool concerning all prophetic events still holds. Understanding their symbolic meanings, pictures, and patterns provides the believer with tremendous insight for correctly interpreting Biblical prophecy. Therefore, it is imperative that believers learn about God’s Holy Days as a fundamental part of their instruction in the Word of God.

The Word of God provides the foundation for all truth concerning the Messiah and God’s plan of redemption. When Constantine severed Christianity from its Hebraic root, much of this truth was lost. God’s Appointed Times, which are central to understanding Biblical prophecy, were replaced with pagan festivals. Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, which reveal the prophetic pattern and actual timetable for the crucifixion and resurrection, were replaced with Easter, a pagan fertility holiday. Rosh HaShanah, the real birth date of Messiah Yeshua, was replaced with Christmas, the birth date of the sun god.<sup>12</sup> The entire prophetic pattern and timetable was obliterated and replaced by a pagan calendar and pagan holidays.<sup>13</sup> We encourage you to do your own study concerning the assimilation of paganism by Christianity.<sup>14</sup>

## Witnessing with Wisdom

Wisdom brings a sense of humility, compassion, sensitivity and concern for others. This is especially true with regard to being a good witness of Biblical truth and salvation in Messiah Yeshua. Commitment to the study of the Word of God and to living in accordance with the Word of God are fundamental to being an effective witness of Biblical truth, as the Spirit of God guides and empowers. An arrogant, prideful, or judgmental attitude is not in line with Biblical truth, and therefore counterproductive to being an effective witness of the Gospel. Knowledge of the Word of God is fundamental to being able to share it in truth and love. This requires that we first judge ourselves, and be committed to living a life that is pleasing to God. Our life speaks the loudest to others and is therefore our best witness. If what we say is not in line with what we do, we cannot be a true and effective witness of what Messiah Yeshua has done in our lives. Yeshua Himself said to each believer, then and now:

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *The Open Bible* (NKJV), p. 876.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 874.

<sup>3</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, p. 283.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 283-284.

<sup>6</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary, p. 52, #3374.

<sup>7</sup> Harris, Vol. 1, p. 400.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 403.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 404.

<sup>11</sup> Peter A. Michas, *The Image, the Four Beasts, and the Seventy Weeks of Daniel*.

<sup>12</sup> Peter A. Michas, *The Scriptural Birth Date of Messiah Yeshua*.

<sup>13</sup> Peter A. Michas, Robert Vander Maten, and Christie D. Michas, *The Rod of an Almond*

*Tree in God's Master Plan.*

<sup>14</sup> A thorough book on the subject is *Come Out of Her, My People*, by C. J. Koster, available from Messengers of Messiah.

## Chapter 3 Word of Knowledge

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest (Hosea 4:6).

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

### Word of Knowledge

Paul states concerning the “word of knowledge”:

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit ... (1 Corinthians 12:8).

The Greek word *gnosis* (pronounced: *no sis*) refers to “knowing (the act)” or “knowledge.”<sup>1</sup> It comes from the word *ginosko*, meaning to “know,” “be aware of,” “have knowledge,” “perceive,” “understand,” or “be sure.”

Knowledge emanates from God: “For the LORD is a God of knowledge” (1 Samuel 2:3). The word of knowledge refers to knowledge that is revealed by the Spirit of God to the believer in a way that goes beyond the natural ability to know and understand.

When this happens, specific information or knowledge is spontaneously imparted to the believer by the Spirit of God to help guide the believer in the right direction according to the will of God. This includes such things as a warning for protection against harm, or essential information or knowledge to make an important decision or choice according to the will of God. It can also include information that helps a believer be guided by the Spirit of God in helping others for God’s purpose. Additionally, this includes the knowledge and understanding imparted by the Spirit of God in study of the Word of God

that goes beyond mere human reasoning and intelligence.

According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, *ginosko*:

signifies to be taking in knowledge, to come to know, recognize, understand, or to understand completely....<sup>2</sup>

In the N.T. *ginosko* frequently indicates a relation between the person knowing and the object known; in this respect, what is known is of value or importance to the one who knows, and hence the establishment of the relationship, e.g., especially of God's knowledge, 1 Cor. 8:3, "if any man love God, the same is known of Him;" Gal. 4:9, "*to be known of God;*" here the knowing suggests approval and bears the meaning 'to be approved;' so in 2 Tim. 2:19; ... . The same idea of appreciation as well as knowledge underlies several statements concerning the knowledge of God and His truth on the part of believers, e.g., John 8:32; 14:20, 31; 17:3; Gal. 4:9 (1st part); 1 John 2:3, 13, 14; 4:6, 8, 16; 5:20; *such knowledge is obtained, not by mere intellectual activity, but by operation of the Holy Spirit consequent upon acceptance of Christ* (emphasis added).<sup>3</sup>

As Vine points out, a believer's knowledge of God and His truth are acquired not merely by application of the intellect, but also very importantly by the power and activity of the Spirit of God. The work of the Spirit accompanies study of the Word. The Word and the Spirit work together to bring knowledge and understanding to the believer.

Vine also explains what "to be known of God" means. For God to know an individual implies his/her approval by God. Such a believer trusts and loves God, and seeks to be obedient to His will. Study of the Word of God is central to a believer's approval by God. Paul makes this very clear:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

Believers should be committed to study of the Word of God, which is the "word of truth." As the believer reads and studies, the Spirit gives understanding. If an individual does not study, how can he/she learn? If an individual does not take in the information,

how can the Spirit of the Holy One bring it to remembrance (John 14:26)? The Spirit does not say, “You don’t need to read or study. Here is all knowledge.” If a person searches for knowledge of God with a pure heart, the Spirit responds by revealing far beyond what would be learned by the human intellect alone. God also put the gift of knowledge in the Body of Messiah in the form of teachers of the Word.

The Spirit of God operates to bring forth the knowledge of God that is essential for our lives:

Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path (Psalm 119:105).

Therefore, the ultimate gift or word of knowledge relates directly to learning the Word of God, which has all truth the believer needs to understand God’s plan of redemption and how to live a life that is pleasing to God.

## Knowledge or Deception?

In this world, there is knowledge and there is deception. This can be understood from the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God told Adam and Eve not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, in order to test their obedience. Satan deceived them into eating from the tree with the enticement that it would open their eyes to be like God, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5). Indeed, when Adam and Eve ate from the tree, they became aware of both good and evil, as God knows both good and evil. And from that time on, every human being has also had the knowledge and choice of doing good or evil.

When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, their sin broke the direct spiritual link they had with their Creator. But God made a way for each and every human being to be brought back into that spiritual union. Through knowledge of the Word of God, we learn and understand how we can be brought back to God. That is why knowledge and the gift of knowledge are so essential.

Satan is a masterful deceiver who seeks to lead human beings to their destruction. The knowledge that he gives is deceptive knowledge, that which leads away from the true knowledge of God and His ways. This type of deceptive knowledge—which is actually

not knowledge of the truth, but rather error and deception—permeates the world in which we live. Spiritual deception also permeates Christianity in the form of false teachings, false doctrines, false rituals, etc. Such errors lead a person away from truth to a false spiritual path that leads to destruction. That is why commitment to the study of the Word of God is essential in order to guard against deception. Paul’s warning to Timothy is a warning to all believers:

O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly (and) empty chatter (and) the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge”—which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith (1 Timothy 6:20-21).

Not only does Scripture warn that lack of Godly knowledge leads to destruction but it also explicitly states that even God’s people are destroyed when they deliberately reject the knowledge that God brings to them:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest (Hosea 4:6).

Why is knowledge of the truth rejected? Could it be that the truth is not palatable and what people want to hear? Could it be that receiving and acting on the truth requires commitment and a willingness to change? Whatever the reasons or excuses for rejection of God’s knowledge, the results are the same: spiritual deception and destruction.

Without knowledge and understanding of the Word of God, how can there be discernment in judging what is of God, and what is not? But so often today, there is a lack of solid and in-depth teaching and learning of the Word of God. So many Christians are being deceived by all kinds of false teachings, doctrines, and practices because they lack spiritual discernment that can only be gained by knowledge of the Word of Truth. Some of them think they have the gift of knowledge, when they are actually deceived by false teachings.

Yeshua says that those who abide in His word are His true disciples:

Jesus [Yeshua] therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him,  
“If you abide in My Word, (then) you are truly disciples of Mine; and you

shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).

This means commitment to study of His Word and following His ways. It is the way the believer is renewed (Colossians 3:10), and discernment is acquired (Psalm 119:66).

Instruction in the Word of God is to be valued more than silver, and knowledge of the Word of God is to be valued more than gold (Proverbs 8:10). Isaiah prophesies a time when knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth (Isaiah 11:9). Those who are wise continually seek and acquire this knowledge (Proverbs 10:14), while fools disparage and downplay the importance of knowledge and study (Proverbs 1:22). Some teach that believers now need to go beyond salvation in Messiah Yeshua, and focus on a relationship with—and experience the power of—“the spirit.” Since the purpose of the true Spirit of God is to draw all to salvation in Messiah Yeshua, this is not only misleading, but also spiritually dangerous. For what spirit would lead individuals away from a focus on salvation in Messiah Yeshua as well as discourage and minimize study of the Word of God?

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, Greek Dictionary of the New Testament, p. 20, #1108.

<sup>2</sup> W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Vol. 2, p. 297.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.



## Chapter 4 Faith

Now faith is the assurance of (things) hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).

So faith (comes) from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ [Messiah] (Romans 10:17).

### What Is Faith?

The gift of faith can best be understood by first examining the Biblical meaning of faith. The Hebrew word *emunah* means absolute “trust,” “trustworthiness,” “assurance,” and “reliance.” The Greek word *pistis* expresses basically the same meanings as the Hebrew word. *Emunah* can be translated as firmness, faithfulness, or fidelity:

In its first occurrence in Scripture it expresses the sense of steady, firm hands, a very basic idea (Ex 17:12). From this mundane sense, Scripture moves almost entirely to a use of the word in connection with God or those related to God.

Basically, the term applies to God himself (Deut. 32:4) to express his total dependability. It is frequently listed among the attributes of God (1 Sam 26:23; Ps 36:5 [H6]; Ps 40:10 [H11]; Lam 3:23). It describes his works (Ps 33:4); and his words (Ps 119:86; 143:1).<sup>1</sup>

The very heart of its meaning is the idea of certainty. The Biblical meaning of faith conveys absolute certainty, confidence and assurance. This is in contrast to the popular concept of faith as something one hopes is true, but lacks the complete assurance that it is.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, translating *emunah* or *pistis* as “trust,” rather than “faith,” more clearly conveys its true Biblical meaning.

As referred to above, the first occurrence of this word in Scripture refers to the steady

hands of support given to Moses. The basic root word conveys the idea of support, upholding, to be established, to confirm, and to be certain. An analogy can be seen in the sense of “the strong arms of the parent supporting the helpless infant.”<sup>3</sup> In the same way, the believer is supported in the strong, steady, and firm hands of God. He is the Rock of our trust, and without trust, we have no stability.

“The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice...” (Deuteronomy 32:4).

When Elijah stood against the prophets of Baal, the Spirit of God supernaturally empowered him to stand in absolute, unshakeable trust in God. Likewise, when the believer faces major trials in life, the gift of faith—unshakeable trust in God—as supernaturally empowered by the Spirit of God, provides complete trust and confidence that God is in total control and will bring the believer successfully through whatever the difficulty or adversity.

## False Teachings about Faith

False teachings regarding faith are leading individuals away from its true meaning as well as destroying lives. The teaching that faith is a force is based upon an erroneous interpretation of Hebrews 11:1 in the King James Version:

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1, KJV).

Word-Faith teachers have taken the word “substance” out of context, and equated faith with a substance. However, according to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, the Greek word *hupostasis* literally means “a standing under, support,” therefore an “assurance.”<sup>4</sup> This word is accurately translated as “assurance” in both the Amplified and NAS Bibles:

Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title-deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see (and) the conviction of their reality—faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses (Hebrews 11:1, AB).

Now faith is the assurance of (things) hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1, NASB).

Using the word “assurance” is completely in line with what the whole Word of God teaches concerning true faith, which is actually trust in God.

The whole basis of the “faith” teachers’ false teaching that faith is some kind of substance hinges on a totally erroneous interpretation of this single passage in the Bible. Upon this error, they build an entire “house of cards” pertaining to how the believer can learn to direct the “faith substance” of their words to manifesting what they desire in life.<sup>5</sup>

1. “Faith is a power force.”
2. “This force of faith ... makes the laws of the spirit world function.”
3. “God cannot do anything for you apart or separate from faith” because “faith is God’s source of power.”
4. “Faith activates God.”
5. The teaching concerning making “positive or negative confessions.”
6. Formulas for the activation and operation of faith as a force to bring about a desired effect.

All of the above are false teachings/statements concerning faith. Faith is not activated by formulas or words. Faith is trust in God, pure and simple.

These false doctrines concerning faith result in destruction of real faith, which is trust in God, for when following the false teachings does not work, a person often loses trust in God, or trust in their own relationship with Him. The result is spiritual destruction. How many lives have been devastated, how many lives destroyed, by false teachings concerning faith?

What is the motivation for following such false teachings? If it is desire for material things of this world, then the person’s own motivations are impure. Such motivations do not lead a person to truth. But if a person is truly seeking God with a pure heart, then God can be trusted to expose the error of what is false, and lead the believer to sound Biblical teachings. For how can God bless a person who is following false teachings concerning faith? He cannot, but rather leads the believer to truth, which brings spiritual life as well as a life in this world filled with the true blessings of God.

## The True Foundation of Faith

Faith—complete trust in God—is based upon the Word of God:

So faith (comes) from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ [Messiah] (Romans 10:17).

So faith comes by hearing [what is told], and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ, the Messiah [Himself] (Romans 10:17, Amplified).

We learn from the Word of God Who God is, what His plan of salvation is, and that He can be trusted to fulfill His Word. Without knowledge of the Word of God, there is no solid foundation of truth upon which the believer's life and trust are established. The greater the foundation of knowledge in the Word of God, the more solid the believer's foundation is in truth and in trust of God. This requires commitment on the part of the believer to study the Word. The Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of Truth, guides the believer in all truth (John 14:17, 15:26).

It is significant that the word *emunah*, meaning trust or faith, and the word *emet*, meaning truth, have the same root word in the Hebrew. The Hebrew word *emet* conveys certainty and dependability. It appears in many contexts in the Bible, all related directly or indirectly to God.

The Word of God is referred to as the Word of Truth (Psalm 119:160; 2 Timothy 2:15; Galations 2:5, the truth of the Gospel). Yeshua Himself said:

“Sanctify them in truth; Thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

And He said that the Spirit of God would be sent to bear witness of Him:

“When the Helper [Spirit of God] comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, (that is) the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me...” (John 15:26).

Those who worship God must worship Him in truth, according to Yeshua's own words:

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

Trust in God is based upon truth and is therefore not a blind trust or blind faith. Just as trustworthiness (*emunah*) is an attribute of God, so too is truth:

...the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth... (Exodus 34:6).

He is the only living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 6:10), and cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18):

in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago... (Titus 1:2).

Jesus [Yeshua] said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6).

Therefore, we can trust God to fulfill all His promises, including His promises of redemption and eternal life.

Paul mentions truth first in referring to the spiritual armor of God, as well as faith (trust), by which all the “flaming missiles” (lies and deception) of Satan are extinguished (Ephesians 6:14-17). Truth must be sought and valued, or deception follows. Those who do not love the truth will be deceived by lies:

...because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false... (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11).

Note that God says He will allow a deluding influence to deceive those who do not love the truth. Therefore, it is essential that the believer be well established in the truth of the Word of God, so as not to be deceived.

## The Results of Faith

We previously discussed the link between truth and trust in God. Truth also connects to God’s mercy and peace:

Because it [truth] is an attribute of God which is manifest in man's salvation and life of service as God's child, the word is often coupled with another attribute of God related to our salvation, "mercy" or "love" (*hesed*, Gen. 24:27; Ps 61:7 [H8]; 85:10 [H11]; 115:1; Prov 14:22; 16:6; 20:28).

And because these attributes of God's truth and mercy lead to God's peace toward sinful men, saved by God's grace, the word is also often coupled with peace (Isa 39:8; Jer 33:6).<sup>6</sup>

Faith, trust in God, brings the peace of God:

And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua] (Philippians 4:7).

James (Jacob), the brother of Yeshua, emphasized the connection between faith and works. Believers are not to be merely hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word (James 1:22, 25). Living a life that is in accordance with the Word of God is the result of true trust in God and in His Word:

Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, (being) by itself. ... I will show you my faith by my works (James 2:17-18).

Believers are to be known by their fruit, which is displayed by their works:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control... (Galatians 5:22-23).

...so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please (Him) in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.... (Colossians 1:10).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Vol. 1, p. 85.

<sup>5</sup> Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>6</sup> Harris, Vol. 1, p. 53.

## Chapter 5 Gifts of Healing

But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being (fell) upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him (James 5:14-15).

The gift of healing, like all other gifts of the Spirit of the Holy One, is not a spiritual gift that becomes the personal acquisition of any individual:

While they [the spiritual gifts] could be associated with certain members in the Church (1 Cor 12:30), these particular individuals are not set forth as appointed with gifts so as to become official or regular workers of miracles or healers. While Peter and Paul (as well as Philip in Samaria) had an extensive healing ministry as recorded in the Book of Acts, they were not known as divine healers, nor is there any such designation elsewhere in Scripture. Gifts of healing were spontaneous within the assembly, and their exercise implied the rendering of service among believers. The pl., “gifts of healing,” suggests varieties of the sicknesses healed and the different manners in which the healings took place.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, if someone says, “I have the gift of healing,” or another says, “He or she has a healing ministry,” the error of this thinking and practice is revealed by the Biblical context of the manifestation of this gift.

The term “gifts of healing” occurs three times in 1 Corinthians 12:

to another faith, by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the



one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:8).

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, (various) kinds of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:28).

All do not have the gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? (1 Corinthians 12:30).

The gifts of healing apply to various forms of healing, both spiritual and physical. The manifestation of the gifts of healing is according to the Spirit of the Holy One, for the good of the Body of Messiah, and as a sign to unbelievers of the power of the Holy One.

### “By His Stripes, We Are Healed”

One of the most misapplied Scriptures in terms of physical healing is Isaiah 53:5,

But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being (fell) upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).

Word-Faith teaching misapplies this Scripture to refer to physical healing, but in fact it refers to spiritual healing. The context of this verse shows that Yeshua is the sinless offering for humanity's sin (Isaiah 53:5-12):

But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on him (v. 6).

For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke (was due) (v. 8).

...He would render Himself (as) a guilt offering... (v. 10).

...the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities (v. 11).

Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors (v. 12).

This is a powerful message about spiritual healing, the spiritual healing that Yeshua accomplished, once and for all time, for those who trust in His sacrifice for their sin. Yeshua paid the price for our sin so that the punishment which should have befallen us

was taken on by Him:

...“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua] our Lord (Romans 6:23).

## The Apostle James’ Instructions for Healing

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much (James 5:14-16).

We do not see James advising the sick person to go to a “healer” or someone with a self-appointed healing ministry. Neither does James say to call on the pastor. According to James, the person in need of healing is to call for the elders of the church. Why? Because the elders should be people with Biblical knowledge and Godly wisdom, who walk in faith (solid trust) in God. Therefore, the elders are qualified and equipped to help bring healing to a member of the body.

According to Zodhiates, the reference to anointing the individual with oil can be understood as anointing with oil for medicinal purposes, when this was appropriate:

The word *aleipho* (218), from which comes *aleipsantes*, normally is not used in a religious sacramental sense as the word *chrrio* (5548). Usually it means to rub or to apply ointment. Therefore, this refers to the application of medicinal assistance to the sick person first, and then the elders are commanded to pray for the sick.<sup>2</sup>

The anointing with oil does not refer to anointing in the sacred sense, as of the Messiah, who is the only Anointed One. In addition, Zodhiates explains that the phrase

“in the name of the Lord” refers to the prayer of the elders, not necessarily to the application of oil to the person’s body.<sup>3</sup>

According to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, *aleipho*:

is a general term used for an anointing of any kind, whether of physical refreshment after washing, e.g., in the Sept. [Septuagint] of Ruth 3:3; 2 Sam. 12:20; Dan. 10:3; Micah 6:15; in the N.T., Matt. 6:17; Luke 7:38, 46; John 11:2; 12:3; or of the sick, Mark 6:13; Jas. 5:14; or a dead body, Mark 16:1. The material used was either oil, or ointment, as in Luke 7:38, 46.<sup>4</sup>

In this regard, it is important to understand that at the time of the Apostolic Church, the elders performed many duties and services for fellow believers, including the rendering of medical or physical therapeutic assistance.<sup>5</sup> The Greek text is clear that the rubbing with oil for medicinal purposes is to be done prior to praying for the sick individual:

But before they pray, they must render whatever medical or physical therapeutic assistance they can. The order of the two things that the elders are supposed to do is not made clear from the translation, but it is absolutely clear from the Greek text. The word translated “anointing him” is in the aorist participle, *aleipsantes*, which makes it an act which precedes the prayer, “having rubbed him with oil.” ... Therefore, this refers to the application of medicinal assistance to the sick person first, and then the elders are commanded to pray for the sick.<sup>6</sup>

With the understanding that members of the body can assist in the healing process by their prayers and support, the proper attitude is also fundamental. It is telling that prior to his statement regarding healing, James exhorts believers to be patient, endure, and not complain against one another (James 5:7-9).

Job’s friends provide examples of how not to act toward a fellow believer who is enduring trials and suffering:

...some of his friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) came to comfort him,

but later they began to criticize him unmercifully along traditional lines of religious thought. They were certain that all these horrible things which had happened to Job were due to his own sin. They simplistically taught that all suffering is always the result of sin. Therefore, if Job would only repent of his sins, all would be well again. Job knew better. He was sure that he did not deserve this alleged cruel punishment, but he could not understand how God could let this happen to him.<sup>7</sup>

Job endured through all the adversities, and never blamed God. In other words, he never lost his faith (trust) in God. Therefore, Satan had no door to enter Job's life and cause destruction (James 5:11).

Another important point is that spiritual healing is central to physical healing. Therefore, if necessary, a right relationship between the person and the Lord should be restored. A person who is sick needs Biblical truth so as to walk in Biblical wisdom and leave the ways of the world behind. If sin is involved, repentance is essential for spiritual restoration. That is the reason James includes the confession of sins, along with prayers, so that sins are forgiven and healing can take place (James 5:15-16). When a person makes the right choices, he/she will experience spiritual and physical well-being. This also relates to lifestyle, for if one follows the ways of the world, this generally involves lifestyle choices that do not bring health and well-being.

Generally, miraculous physical healings are a sign of God's power to unbelievers. As a sign to unbelievers, the primary purpose is to direct individuals to the truth of the Word of God and to salvation through the atoning work of Messiah Yeshua. That is as true today as it was in the days of the Early Church.

Not all miraculous healings are performed by God. Supernatural healings can be mediated by demonic/Satanic activity. Such activity can also cause disease and abnormal physical conditions. For example, the demonic spirit appearing as the "Virgin Mary" in Medjugorje (in former Yugoslavia) caused a brain tumor to form in one of the visionaries, and later "cured" the brain tumor on a predicted date. Medical tests both confirmed the presence of the tumor and its total disappearance as predicted. The purpose in this particular case is to draw individuals to the Roman Catholic Church, a false

religious system based upon a sacramental system of works for salvation that is in direct contradiction to the Word of God. Thus, Satan's purpose in effecting physical healings is to draw individuals away from the true God.

## The Importance of Attitude in Healing

A negative attitude is a hindrance to being healthy. A word should be said here regarding harboring unforgiveness in one's heart. If a person holds on to bitterness and unforgiveness regarding past experiences, this is a serious hindrance to healing and good health. Moreover, the tendency to focus on negatives (adversities) in one's life instead of positives (blessings) results in an unhealthy mind, body, and spirit.

If a person cannot forgive, he or she cannot expect to receive the grace of healing from God. This is because healing starts spiritually, then works into the flesh:

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus [Yeshua] from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua] from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you (Romans 8:11).

Remember where the Spirit of healing comes from—from the Spirit of the Holy One. How can the Spirit of the Holy One dwell in someone who does not have Biblical truth, or who harbors bitterness, resentment, and unforgiveness in his/her heart (spirit)? Those who are constantly self-absorbed and self-centered have much more of a tendency to complain that life and others are not treating them according to their expectations. Sometimes they have an attitude of entitlement: "I deserve to have what I want and others should provide it for me." They have the tendency not to take responsibility for their problems, which are often the consequences of their own choices and actions, but instead place the blame elsewhere, whether blaming others or blaming external events and circumstances.

Not until an individual takes responsibility for his/her situation can the person begin to make positive changes in his/her own life. It's what we do with our situation that makes all the difference in the world. God helps us to overcome difficulties and

obstacles. Adversity in life actually works to develop maturity and strength of character, if a person handles adversity according to God's will.

If you allow the wonder-working power and grace of the Spirit to come into your life, it brings life to your mortal flesh. Why? Because you get out of your pity-party, you get out of your doldrums, you get out of your past, you lift yourself up and become pleased with yourself.

People must feel good about themselves to be happy and healthy. By gaining confidence in and applying the wisdom, knowledge, and faith (trust) of the Word of God, spiritual healing takes place. And if it is the Lord's will for physical healing to take place, this also happens.

God can physically heal in a miraculous way. He can also bring physical healing in a natural way. For example, God can provide the knowledge of how an individual can apply sound principles of nutritional healing in order to correct underlying causes of disease, which are often diet-related. (See following sections, "The Miraculous Process of Healing" and "Choose Life by Following God's Instructions.")

But it is essential to remember that the promise of God concerning healing is first and foremost spiritual:

But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being (fell) upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).

By His sacrifice for sin atonement, Yeshua brought spiritual healing. Isaiah 53:5 has been incorrectly interpreted as a promise of physical healing of all infirmities and disease. But the context is clear that spiritual healing is what Yeshua gives to all who receive His sacrifice for sin atonement. The physical body is mortal, and subject to illness and disease. And, in fact, the Word of God says that all must die. The physical body must die for it to be replaced by the incorruptible body that is promised to all who receive Yeshua's gift of grace of eternal life. Even for those who are alive at the time of the taking out of the Bride (commonly referred to as the Rapture), the physical body must cease to exist, as it is instantaneously transformed into the imperishable body.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable (body), it is

raised an imperishable (body); ...it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body... (1 Corinthians 15:42, 44).

Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable (1 Corinthians 15:50).

For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53).

## The Miraculous Process of Healing

It is very important to note that though God can spontaneously heal in miraculous ways, the process of healing which He designed to operate within the bodies of living creatures is truly miraculous in and of itself. In general, the healing process is taken for granted, but the more one learns about the biological nature of this process, the more one appreciates how amazing it is. In a very real sense, the natural process of healing is truly miraculous, just as the process that results in the birth of a living creature is truly miraculous. And it reflects a loving, compassionate, and merciful Creator.

With this understanding, it is absolutely essential that those who desire to be healed understand what the body needs in order for the natural healing process to be enabled to occur. Proper nutrition, adequate exercise and rest, avoidance of toxins, etc. are essential to support the body's own natural healing processes. To expect God to heal in spite of disregard for the causes of illness and disease is no different than expecting God to protect from the consequences of a fall due to gravity, if a person chooses to step off a cliff. We cannot disregard the natural processes and laws of nature God created, and expect Him to override them for us because we don't like the consequences. We must be responsible for the choices we make that affect our health and well-being, and not have a false notion that God must protect us from harm or heal us in spite of our making unhealthy choices. (Please refer to excellent sources at the end of the chapter.\*)

In this regard, it is fundamental to understand that the Standard American Diet (SAD) is causing a great deal of unnecessary disease and suffering. Heart disease, stroke, cancer,

diabetes, arthritis and a whole host of other health complaints run rampant when processed foods are at the core of the diet, rather than the whole foods God created. God created natural whole foods for the health and well-being of humanity, but humanity has applied technology in such a way as to strip nutrients from whole foods and to add all kinds of chemicals. This “counterfeit” food is sold as real food, and cannot provide the nutrients essential for life and healing. Moreover, man-made toxins contaminate the air, water, land, and food supply, resulting in more sickness, disease, and death.

Though modern medicine saves lives in some cases, the reports of medical errors are sobering. A 1999 Institute of Medicine report estimated that mistakes kill 98,000 Americans annually, and researchers found that a large part of that is due to medication errors.<sup>8</sup> Some estimate that pharmaceutical drugs contribute to more than 106,000 deaths each year in the U.S. alone.<sup>9</sup> This means a significant number of deaths result even when people take the correct prescription just as the physician prescribes. If people rely on medication as a quick fix for health problems rather than living a healthy lifestyle, they open themselves up to numerous drug side effects and additional health problems. Often more drugs are prescribed to deal with the side effects caused from prescription medication. This adds the potential of fatal drug interactions.

We are not advising against medical care or advising discontinuation of prescription medication. We are pointing out that the responsibility lies with the individual to seek knowledge and apply it in making the best choices to maintain good health and to do all that is necessary to correct the underlying causes of health problems, especially given the fact that the vast majority of cases are directly related to dietary and other lifestyle factors.

Unfortunately, many individuals look to their doctors as though they were gods, and put their total faith (trust) in them. But doctors are fallible human beings who, though they may be well-intentioned, are produced by a system that does not educate them in maintaining good health and correcting health problems through nutrition, exercise, and other healthy lifestyle choices. This includes the treatment of psychiatric disorders, hyperactivity, senile dementia, anxiety, and depression. According to Dr. Sydney Walker:

hundreds of thousands of Americans who are actually suffering from



common medical conditions such as hyperthyroidism, Lyme disease, and even poor nutrition are misdiagnosed with psychiatric disorders. Studies show that the rate of misdiagnosis is more than 4 in 10.<sup>10</sup>

Many examples can be given. For example, women suffering anxiety and depression due to hormonal imbalance are given antidepressants and anti-anxiety medication when natural (bio-identical) hormone replacement and proper nutrition would help correct the underlying causes of the condition.<sup>11</sup> Another common example is the use of prescription medication to treat hyperactivity and attention-deficit problems, when inadequate nutrition is often the root of the problem.

It is very interesting that the Greek word *pharmakia* gives rise to the English words “pharmacy” and “pharmaceutical.” This same Greek word is translated as “sorcery” in Revelation 18:23, which states that “all the nations were deceived by your sorcery (*pharmakia*).” According to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, *pharmakia* “primarily signified the use of medicine, drugs, spells; then, poisoning; then, sorcery....”<sup>12</sup>

The pharmaceutical industry is the most profitable industry sector in the world, the only industry in the world reaping enormous increase in revenue of 15-20 per cent annually, even as the rest of global industry endures flat growth.<sup>13</sup> Extremely powerful forces in both Europe and the U.S., pharmaceutical companies are behind the current push to make nutritional supplements in doses high enough to be therapeutic available only by prescription. The Vitamin Directive, recently passed by the European Parliament, will allow nutrients to be sold only at doses well below an effective level, so that higher therapeutic doses will only be sold as expensive drugs requiring a doctor’s prescription.<sup>14</sup>

This trend also threatens the U.S. by the action of Codex Alimentarius, a commission assembled by the World Health Organization, of which the U.S. is a member with one vote like all other members. If the U.S. fails to adapt to the Codex standards, economic sanctions would be imposed.

This new world order for the regulation of vitamins and supplements benefits the pharmaceutical industry, which is threatened by breakthroughs in natural health. Since natural substances cannot be patented, and without patents there are no enormous profits,

the pharmaceutical industry seeks control by such regulations. It deceptively states that these regulations are for the benefit of the public, while the hidden agenda is to protect and ensure continued profits, influence, and control of the market.

## Choose Life by Following God's Instructions

In the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), the Lord God sets forth His instructions for the health and well-being of His people, the Israelites. Because Christians are taught that they are no longer “under the Law,” these instructions are generally considered of little or no value or significance. But is this true? Believers should first understand that what has been translated as “Law” is more accurately translated as God’s “Instructions.”

The term *Torah*, signifying guidance and instruction, is primarily applied to the Five Books of Moses or Pentateuch... . The inaccurate rendering of Torah by Law has all along been a barrier, preventing non-Jews from understanding the ideal which is summed up in the term Talmud Torah, study of Torah... .<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, Yeshua Himself said He did not come to abolish the Torah (Instructions) but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). It is absolutely true that Yeshua fulfilled all the sacrificial law for the atonement of sin (Romans 8:2-4). However, does any believer really think that He did away with the Ten Commandments? The Ten Commandments are His instructions for how His people are to live. We are free to obey or disobey, but His instructions are just as valid for the well-being of His people (and humanity in general) today as they were in Biblical times. In fact, Scripture is very clear that the believer led by the Spirit of God lives in accordance with the Torah (Instruction) of God:

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law [Torah] of God, for it is not even able (to do so); and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ [Messiah], he does

not belong to Him (Romans 8:6-9).

Believers would do well to consider God's instructions regarding their health and well-being. The Lord said:

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him..." (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

And He said, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer" (Exodus 15:26).

Because the Israelites followed the instructions of God, they enjoyed good health in comparison to their pagan contemporaries. In light of today's scientific findings, the validity of God's instructions to the Israelites regarding clean and unclean foods, as well as proper sanitary measures, is confirmed. Because the superstitious pagans often believed disease was the result of evil spirits, they used incantations and magical formulas to deal with disease.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, the Israelites followed God's instructions and enjoyed good health because they were acting to decrease risk of disease by preventative measures in accordance with the laws of nature, which God created. These measures include sanitary disposal of excrement (Deuteronomy 23:12-13), washing and the use of running water (Leviticus 14:50), isolation and quarantine (Leviticus 13:1-4), dietary regulations (Leviticus 11), dealing with bodily discharges (Leviticus 15:2, 8), cleansing after touching the dead (Numbers 19:11-22), sexual morality (Leviticus 18), and circumcision and its timing (Leviticus 12:3).<sup>17</sup>

Following the instructions of God has protected the Israelites and the Jewish people from many of the diseases in the world. For example, in fourteenth century Italy, the Jews as a group experienced much less loss of life than others who died in epidemics of the plague.<sup>18</sup> Modern science validates that shellfish tend to become contaminated, whether

from chemical or microbial contamination. Also validated by scientific study is the fact that pigs tend to be very susceptible to parasites such as tapeworms, as well as carriers of viruses that can cause human disease (for example, swine flu).

Another amazing example of God's knowledge is revealed in the practice of circumcision on the eighth day. Two factors are necessary for proper blood clotting: vitamin K and prothrombin. Vitamin K is not formed in normal amounts in the intestinal tract until the fifth to the seventh day of life, with adequate levels absorbed by the blood by the eighth day. Even more amazing is the fact that prothrombin, also essential for clotting, actually peaks in amount on the eighth day of life,<sup>19</sup> when circumcision was prescribed. Scientific studies have also verified the significantly reduced risk of cancer of the testes in circumcised males, as well as significantly reduced risk of cervical cancer in women whose partner is circumcised.

Surely, the health and dietary instructions recorded in the Torah are from God, since man had no way of having this knowledge at the time, and which science has only relatively recently validated.

## The Placebo Effect in Healing

A placebo is a substance that is given as a medicine, but does not contain any active medical ingredient. Scientific studies show that about 30 per cent of people who are given a placebo instead of medication report an improvement or cure of their condition. Placebos may be given to an individual patient (more commonly used in Europe, rarely used in the U.S.), and are also used to test the efficacy and safety of drugs.

Recent examples of medical studies proving the effectiveness of placebos include:

1. Placebos worked as well as tranquilizers given to combat anxiety.<sup>20</sup>
2. Placebo surgeries for inflamed knee joints worked as well as arthroscopic lavage (fluid injection to flush irritating material out of the knee joint) and arthroscopic debridement (lavage plus a smoothing of rough areas of the joint). Published results stated: "At no point did either of the intervention groups report less pain or better function than the

placebo group.”<sup>21</sup>

The effectiveness of placebos seems to depend upon the patient’s belief that the medical therapy being used is the real thing. The placebo effect is enhanced by a trusting relationship between the patient and physician. Complex neurochemicals are involved, as there is a connection between the mind-brain and body that can powerfully affect the healing process. Endorphins, the body’s own natural pain relievers and “feel-good” chemicals, play an important role in this process.<sup>22</sup>

A word can be said here pertaining to certain healings that take place when a person attends a healing ministry meeting. If a person goes with the strong belief that he/she will be healed, it is possible to have healing take place due to the placebo effect. This is because of the powerful connection between the mind and the body, which results in real physiological responses having a direct effect on the healing processes of the body. In addition, the release of endorphins plays a major role in relieving pain and feeling better, even if the underlying condition has not actually been truly healed. If this is the case, the “healing” or pain relief may well be temporary.

## Notes

\* *Health and Nutrition Tips and Guidelines* by Christie Michas, available from Messengers of Messiah.

Hallelujah Acres, a Christian ministry focusing on nutrition and healing based on the Genesis 1:29 diet, P.O. Box 2388, Shelby, NC 28151, Tel. 800-915-9355, [www.hacres.com](http://www.hacres.com).

<sup>1</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 3, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, p. 1642.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Vol. 1, p. 58.

<sup>5</sup> Zodhiates, p. 1642.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 669.

<sup>8</sup> News article (unnamed source) dated August 18, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> *Journal of Longevity*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2002, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Syndey Walker III, M.D., *A Dose of Sanity: Mind, Medicine, and Misdiagnosis*, back cover.

<sup>11</sup> On the subject of natural hormone balance, please refer to John R. Lee, MD's books: 1.) *What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About Menopause*, and 2.) *What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About PREmenopause*. Dr. Lee was the leader in the use of bio-identical progesterone cream (not conventional prescription hormones) for balancing hormones naturally.

<sup>12</sup> Vine, Vol. 4, pp. 51-52.

<sup>13</sup> *What Doctors Don't Tell You*, July 2002, "New Drugs: New Profits for Old Product," p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Journal of Longevity*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2002, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Birnbaum, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts*, p. 630.

<sup>16</sup> Tenney, Vol. 3, p. 55.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 56-57.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 57-58.

<sup>20</sup> Walker, p. 80.

<sup>21</sup> Jenny Thompson, "Playing Knee Games," *Health Sciences Institute e-Alert*, July 18, 2002, HSI@agoramail.net.

<sup>22</sup> *The World Book Encyclopedia*, Vol. 15, p. 462.

## Chapter 6 Working of Miracles

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus [Yeshua] the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know...”  
(Acts 2:22).

God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will  
(Hebrews 2:4).

The working of miracles manifests according to the will of God, for the purpose of drawing all human beings to Messiah Yeshua. The miracles manifested by Yeshua provide evidence to show that He is the promised Messiah. As the Apostles and other disciples of Yeshua spread the Gospel, miracles performed by the power of the Holy Spirit verified the Gospel of Messiah Yeshua to be the true Word of God. However, miracles can also be performed by the power of Satan to deceive people, to draw them away from Biblical truth and away from salvation through Messiah Yeshua. It is essential that the believer discern between miracles of God and miracles of Satan.

### What is a Miracle?

Miracles are extraordinary or supernatural phenomena or occurrences, distinct from normal and usual events. In the Bible, they are often referred to as “wonders” and “signs.”<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word *pala* is a nominative verb meaning to “be marvelous, wonderful.”<sup>2</sup> Derivatives include: *pele*, “wonder”; *pili*, “wonderful, incomprehensible”; and *miplaa*, “wondrous work.”<sup>3</sup>

The basic meaning of the verb is “to be wonderful” and... “to cause a wonderful thing to happen.”

Preponderantly both the verb and substantive refer to the acts of God, designating either cosmic wonders or historical achievements on behalf of Israel. That is, in the Bible the root *pl'* refers to things that are unusual, beyond human capabilities. As such, it awakens astonishment (*pl'*) in man. Thus, the “real importance of the miraculous for faith (is)—not in its material factuality, but in its evidential character ... it is not, generally speaking, the especially abnormal character of the event which makes it a miracle; what strikes men forcibly is a clear impression of God’s care or retribution within it” (Eichrodt). We may add that it is essential that the miracle is so abnormal as to be unexplainable except as showing God’s care or retribution.”<sup>4</sup>

Another Hebrew word, *nes*, refers to a “signal pole, standard, ensign, banner, sign, or sail.”<sup>5</sup> Specifically, with regard to miracles, it refers to a sign. The word is also used to refer to the Messiah:

The word *nes* is also used in the prophets in connection with the return to Zion [Jerusalem]. He [Isaiah] says “in that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek” (11:10; cf. 11:12). So Israel’s messianic king will be lifted up (cf. Jn 3:14; Phil 2:9) that all men might rally around him.<sup>6</sup>

The “root of Jesse” is Yeshua, Who is The Ensign, the prophesied Messiah. Jesse was the father of King David, of the tribe of Judah, from whom the Messiah was prophesied to come (Isaiah 11; Romans 15:12).

There is a spiritual symbolic connection between the bronze serpent on the pole (*nes*), which was lifted up among the people as a rallying point for healing, and Yeshua being lifted up as a rallying point for spiritual healing for all the peoples of the earth:

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life” (John 3:14-15).



In addition to this spiritual picture, we also believe that there was an actual physical link between the pole on which the serpent was raised and the tree on which Yeshua was raised, that being Aaron's rod from the Tree of Life. (See *The Rod of an Almond Tree in God's Master Plan*, by Peter A. Michas.)

In the Greek text, three words are generally used to describe miraculous occurrences: *semeion*, referring to a "sign"; *dunamis*, referring to a "miracle" or "miraculous power"; and *teras*, referring to a supernatural "wonder." Let us look at how these words are used in the Scriptures to refer to miraculous events.

The first word, *semeion* (#4592), refers to a sign, miracle, or wonder<sup>7</sup>:

...a sign, mark, token (akin to *semaino*, to give a sign; *sema*, a sign), is used of miracles and wonders as signs of Divine authority; it is translated "miracles" in the R.V. and A.V. of Luke 23:8; Acts 4:16, 22; most usually it is given its more appropriate meaning "sign," "signs," e.g., Matt. 12:38, 39, and in every occurrence in the Synoptists, except Luke 23:8; in the following passages in John's Gospel the R.V. substitutes "sign" or "signs" for the A.V., "miracle" or "miracles;" 2:11, 23; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2, 14, 26; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; ...<sup>8</sup>

The second word, *dunamis* (#1411), refers to a miraculous power, miracle, or mighty wonderful work that is supernatural<sup>9</sup>:

...power, inherent ability, is used of works of a supernatural origin and character, such as could not be produced by natural agents and means. It is translated "miracles" in the R.V. and A.V. in Acts 8:13 (where variant readings give the words in different order); 19:11; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 29; Gal. 3:5; A.V. only, in Acts 2:22 (R.V., "mighty works"); Heb. 2:4 (R.V., "powers"). In Gal. 3:5, the word may be taken in its widest sense, to include miracles both physical and moral.<sup>10</sup>

An example of a Scripture that has both Greek words is Acts 8:13, in which *semeion* is #4592 and *dunamis* is #1411 in the Strong's Concordance:

And even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip; and as he observed signs [4592] and great miracles [1411]

taking place, he was constantly amazed (Acts 8:13).

The last word, *teras*, is translated “wonder” and is:

...something strange, causing the beholder to marvel, is always used in the plural, always rendered “wonders,” and generally follows *semeia*, “signs:” the opposite order occurs in Acts 2:22, 43; 6:8, R.V.; 7:36; in Acts 2:19 “wonders” occurs alone. A sign is intended to appeal to the understanding, a wonder appeals to the imagination, a power (*dunamis*) indicates its source as supernatural. “Wonders” are manifested as Divine operations in thirteen occurrences (9 times in Acts); three times they are ascribed to the work of Satan through human agents, Matt. 24:24, Mark 13:22 and 2 Thess. 2:9.<sup>11</sup>

It is very important to note that *teras* can refer to supernatural wonders of either Godly or Satanic origin.

## Biblical Miracles

The Bible provides the record of all kinds of miracles of God. The first miracle, and unarguably the greatest, is Creation itself, for God created the universe out of nothing. God exists outside of His Creation, outside of the physical dimensions of time and space as we experience them. God established the natural order, and is therefore able to work through natural laws in a natural or supernatural way, or to supersede them altogether. The miracle of Creation is actually ongoing, because God holds all of Creation together moment to moment. Otherwise, Creation as we know it would cease to exist:

For by Him all things were created, (both) in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together (Colossians 1:16-17).

This Scripture tells us that Yeshua, as incarnate YHVH\* (*Yehovah*), is both the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Yehovah/Yeshua is also the only Mediator between man and God. God created the universe and humanity in order to give of His

love and mercy. That is also the key to understanding God's purpose in performing miracles:

It is of interest to note that the function of God's wonders is ultimately to make mercy available to the recipient or reciter, and not just to make a demonstration of power. Thus in Ps 107:8, 15, 21, 31, *nipla'ot* is parallel with *hesed* "loving kindness, mercy." God performs 'marvels of love,' Ps 31:21 (H 22), *hipli hasdo*.<sup>12</sup>

One of the most wondrous miracles of Creation is Life. Unfortunately, because it is part of our everyday world, the miracle of Life is too often overlooked and taken for granted. The more science reveals of the mystery of Life, the greater our amazement of Life's miracle, and the greater still our awe of its Creator.<sup>13</sup> It is essential to point out that the myth of evolution is not true science because the concept of random evolution has been shown to be statistically so highly improbable as to be impossible.<sup>14</sup> Even "the textbook examples Darwinists themselves chose as the pillars of their theory are false or misleading."<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the Bible, we see many examples of miracles relating to the Creation, the Exodus, the formation of the nation of Israel, the Messiah—His conception, life, death and resurrection—the birth of the Church, and the spreading of the Gospel. The Creator's miraculous intervention in the course of human history clearly demonstrates a personal God of infinite mercy Who is continually involved in the affairs of human beings and the world. Certainly, God's miracles are an expression of His will, and are performed for a variety of purposes, including:

- 1) To show that an individual is ordained by God to be His representative; for example: Yeshua, Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles.
- 2) To protect and provide for His people; for example: delivering the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt; providing water and food in miraculous ways (manna; water from the rock; the ravens feeding Elijah; multiplication of flour and oil for the widow and Elijah).
- 3) To reveal and confirm Yeshua as God's promised Messiah
- 4) To provide a sign of God's judgment and to destroy evil and corruption;

for example: the Flood; Korah and his followers swallowed up by the ground for their rebellion against Moses and Aaron; Ananias and Sapphira drop dead for lying.

5) To demonstrate the power of God to the nations and to unbelievers.

Sometimes God uses natural phenomena (which may or may not be supernaturally effected), such as the east wind blowing back the waters for the Israelites to safely cross, while the Egyptians were swept away by the returning waters. The miracles associated with the Exodus provide a good example for study. When God sent Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses asked what shall he do if the Israelites do not believe he is sent by God:

Then Moses answered and said, “What if they will not believe me, or listen to what I say? For they may say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you’ ” (Exodus 4:1).

Then the Lord performed two miracles for Moses: turning his staff into a serpent, and back into a staff again; turning his hand “leprous like snow,” and restoring it to normal again. God gave these as two signs, and a third sign as well:

“And it shall come about that if they will not believe you or heed the witness of the first sign, they may believe the witness of the last sign. But it shall be that if they will not believe even these two signs or heed what you say, then you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water which you take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground” (Exodus 4:8-9).

God says that the signs are to be a witness that Moses is indeed sent by God, and so the Israelites should both listen to and follow him.

The miracles associated with Yeshua were/are also for the purpose of showing that He was sent by God as the promised Messiah. Yeshua performed many miracles: healing, including three cases of bringing the dead back to life; expelling demons from those possessed; turning water into wine; walking on water; miraculously multiplying bread and fish to feed the multitudes; and so on. Yeshua also showed His control over the forces of nature, which He (as Yehovah) created, by stilling the storm and causing the fig

tree to wither.

After all the miracles Yeshua performed, the corrupt religious leaders still did not believe. They asked Him for a sign:

And the Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Him asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. But He answered and said to them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘(It will be) fair weather, for the sky is red.’ And in the morning, ‘(There will be) a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot (discern) the signs of the times? An evil and [spiritually] adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given, except the sign of Jonah” (Matthew 16:1-4).

As Yeshua prophesied, He fulfilled the sign of Jonah by His resurrection. Still, they did not believe.

## Satan’s Counterfeit Signs and Wonders

Satan is also able to perform miracles, signs, and wonders, for the purpose of deceiving human beings and leading them away from God. However, the power of Satan cannot compare to the power of God. Satan is only a created being, but since he is able to operate outside the limitations of the physical realm, his supernatural power may seem impressive. Even though each human being has a spirit, the physical body is limited to the physical realm. Naturally, human beings are generally fascinated by manifestations that result from unseen forces that go beyond the four dimensions of the physical realm (the three dimensions of space plus time).

A good Biblical example of the manifestation of Satan’s power occurs in the account of Moses before Pharaoh. Men with occult powers in Pharaoh’s court were able to perform some of the same miracles that God performed through Moses and Aaron: turning staffs into serpents, turning water into blood, and causing a plague of frogs. Occult power is not power human beings possess, but it is supernatural power mediated by Satanic/demonic entities. However, such power is limited because Satan’s power is

limited and cannot compare to God's power.

God's greater power was manifested when the serpent from the staff of Moses consumed all the serpents from the staffs of Pharaoh's mediums. God's greater power was also manifested in the creation of gnats from dust. Only God has the power to create life, just as only God has the power to create something from nothing. Satan has the ability to manipulate matter and energy beyond human capability, as he operates in dimensions beyond the physical dimensions, producing supernatural effects in the physical realm.

This includes the ability to move material objects from one point in space to another point in space by supernatural means. Physicists now know that there must be several more dimensions than the four dimensions of the physical realm, in order for the universe to operate as it does.<sup>16</sup> These additional hidden (invisible) dimensions, beyond those of the space-time dimensions of our physical realm, reveal the reality of the spiritual realm. And unseen entities and forces operating in the spiritual realm produce effects in the physical realm.

Because God created all the dimensions of the universe, both visible and invisible, He has supreme control over everything that exists. The Genesis account of Creation records the miracle of Adam's creation from the dust of the earth. The Exodus account records the creation of gnats from the dust of the earth. Even Pharaoh's soothsayers recognized that this greater power could only belong to God Himself, for they declared: "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19).

God warns believers not to be deceived by such Satanic/demonic manifestations:

"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or wonder, and the sign or wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods whom you have not known and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deuteronomy 13:1-3).

Any sign or miracle that leads away from worship of the one true God of the Bible is

obviously not from God. But many people are deceived by Satanic/demonic manifestations, thinking they do lead to God. But any spiritual manifestation that leads to false religious beliefs and authorities is a lie and a deception. The only true test is that whatever is being tested must not be contrary to the Word of God in any way. Mixture of lie with Biblical truth is generally the most difficult for people to differentiate. Therefore, all aspects of the belief system and its doctrines must be judged according to the Word of God.

The Word of God explicitly forbids the believer from becoming involved in spiritual activities that connect to the spirit realm in a way that bypasses—and therefore leads away from—God:

“There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls upon the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord...” (Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

The lure of supernatural power and supernatural phenomena not of God ultimately leads to destruction.

The Biblical prophets warn of false vision and divination, false dreams and prophecies (Jeremiah 14:14, 23:32; Ezekiel 21:23; Zechariah 10:2). Yeshua warns of false messiahs and false prophets with the power to perform signs and wonders:

“For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance” (Matthew 24:24-25).

And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image... (Revelation 19:20).

In order to discern the source of miracles, the fundamental questions are: Does it lead the individual to salvation in Messiah Yeshua by grace alone? Is it in agreement with the

Word of God? If not, then it is not of God. Any miracle, sign, or wonder that draws people to put their faith (trust) for salvation in any religious system, spiritual belief, or spiritual authority that is contrary to the Word of God is false:

...the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10).

The world is filled with all kinds of spiritual deception, miracles, signs, and wonders to draw people away from the God of the Bible. The teaching that there are many spiritual paths to God is false, for Messiah Yeshua said:

“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6).

## Testing Miracles

The Roman Catholic Church claims to be the true church of Christ. With approximately one billion adherents, it is not only Christianity’s largest religious body but also the world’s single largest religious body. For these reasons, examining Catholic miracles is essential, especially because so many people assume they are from God. But let us apply the Word of God to determine the real source of these spiritual manifestations.

Weeping and bleeding statues and images, bleeding communion hosts, Marian apparitions, healings, and stigmata are associated with the Roman Catholic Church. What does the Word of God have to show us about the source of these miracles?

God explicitly forbids the making of statues and images for spiritual worship:

“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in



heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship [bow down to] them..." (Exodus 20:4-5).

The Hebrew word, *shachah*, is translated "bow down," "worship," or "do reverence."<sup>17</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church has deleted this commandment and hidden the omission by dividing the Tenth Commandment into two separate commandments (#9 You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, #10 You shall not covet your neighbors possessions).<sup>18</sup> This fact can be verified by comparing any Roman Catholic catechism with the Word of God. As one former Roman Catholic priest has stated, this is deliberate deception.<sup>19</sup> Church history shows that those who wanted to rid the church of these forbidden images (iconoclasts) were defeated and destroyed by those who profited from them, since the selling of icons was an important source of revenue for monasteries where they were produced.

No matter how the Roman Catholic Church attempts to cover up the Word of God, and to justify the use of images and icons, God's commandment is clear. The question is simple: Would God perform a miracle using something that He expressly forbids? The answer is obviously not.

We also have to ask what is the purpose of a statue or painting weeping tears or blood. Miracles involving icons have the effect of validating the authority of both the Roman Catholic Church, and her sister, the Eastern (Greek) Orthodox Church, which has its own set of miracles associated with icons. Both churches claim to be the one true church, but their claims are proven false because their doctrines are contrary to the Word of God.

A bleeding Eucharistic host (communion wafer) falls into the same category. Its use is clearly idolatrous because the wafer is considered to be God, and Roman Catholics are commanded to bow down before the Eucharist and worship it as Jesus Christ. Since Messiah Yeshua's sacrifice for sin atonement is complete, it is not God Who makes the host "bleed." The same is true regarding the manifestation of stigmata (bleeding marks resembling Christ's crucifixion wounds) in certain individuals.

Marian apparitions are claimed to be appearances of the Mother of Jesus, who wants to draw all humanity to "her son." The Roman Catholic Mary claims to be "the

Immaculate Conception,” referring to her sinless state, defined as Roman Catholic dogma in 1854. But the Word of God clearly states that all human beings are sinful (Romans 3:23). Only God is sinless, and Messiah Yeshua is God and the only sinless Mediator between man and God.

A study of Marian apparitions clearly shows that the Roman Catholic Mary is not the Biblical Miriam, mother of Yeshua. The Roman Catholic Mary is a false, deluding spirit whose purpose is to draw humanity away from true salvation in Messiah Yeshua. Yeshua never elevated His earthly mother as the Church of Rome has done with this false Virgin Mary:

And it came about while He [Yeshua] said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed.” But He said, “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the Word of God, and observe it” (Luke 11:27-28).

Yeshua clearly directs attention away from His earthly mother to the Word of God instead. In contrast, the Roman Catholic Mary leads to a false Christ and a false sacramental system of works for salvation.

The Word of God exposes miracles that are not of God, clearly and decisively. We cannot automatically assume that every church, organization, group, or movement that calls itself Christian is of God. Only by learning and applying the Word of God can we discern what is truly of God and what is a deception of the Adversary.

## Notes

\* YHVH (yod hay vav hay) is the Tetragrammaton, the four-letter Hebrew name of God. Its pronunciation is not known for certain, but *Yehovah* is more accurate than either *Jehovah* or *Yahweh* because there are no “j” or “w” sounds in the Hebrew language.

<sup>1</sup> Philip Birnbaum, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts*, p. 417.

<sup>2</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of*

*the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, p. 723.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 583.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, Greek Dictionary of the New Testament, p. 65, #4592.

<sup>8</sup> W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Vol. 3, pp. 75-76.

<sup>9</sup> Zodhiates, Greek Dictionary of the New Testament, p. 24, #1411.

<sup>10</sup> Vine, Vol. 3, p. 75.

<sup>11</sup> Vine, Vol. 4, p. 228.

<sup>12</sup> Harris, Vol. 2, p. 723.

<sup>13</sup> Gerald L. Schroeder, *The Hidden Face of God: Science Reveals the Ultimate Truth*.

<sup>14</sup> Gerald L. Schroeder, *The Science of God: The Convergence of Scientific and Biblical Wisdom*, p. 112.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth? Why Much of What We Teach about Evolution is Wrong*, (back cover text), available from Messengers of Messiah.

<sup>16</sup> An excellent book on this subject is *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory*, by Brian Greene.

<sup>17</sup> Zodhiates, Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary, p. 114, #7812.

<sup>18</sup> Rev. John P. Scholl, *A New Catechism of the Catholic Faith*, p. 84.

<sup>19</sup> *Catholicism: Faith in Crisis* (video tape), Lumen Productions, available from Messengers of Messiah.

## Chapter 7 Prophecy

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual (gifts), but especially that you may prophesy. ...one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. ...one who prophesies edifies the church (1 Corinthians 14:1, 3, 4).

The gift of prophecy is generally misunderstood because prophets and prophecy are often thought to be restricted to the prediction of future events:

For most people in modern times, the word ‘prophet’ conjures visions of someone who foretells future events. True, Scripture tells us of many prophets who made such predictions and the most common way in which an alleged prophet proved his authenticity was by making the predictions that came true in every detail.<sup>1</sup>

It is absolutely true that a large portion of the Word of God, as it was inspired by God and recorded by man, involves the predictive element of foretelling future events. However, there is more to prophecy than foretelling the future:

Since the predictive aspect of prophecy has been so stressed in modern usage as almost to overshadow other phases of prophetic activity, it is particularly needful that Bible students seek to understand the full original purpose of the movement and its importance in Biblical revelation and in the divine plan.<sup>2</sup>

The “prophet’s ability to foretell events is only incidental to his primary function,” which is as “a spokesman of God, who will direct the people in His ways.”<sup>3</sup> The Hebrew word *nabi* (*navi*) translates as “spokesman, speaker, prophet” (prophetess: *nebia* or *neviah*).<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the role of the prophet is to transmit a Divine message to others.<sup>5</sup> The person is referred to as a “prophet” only when he/she is transmitting the message of God. It is not a permanent position or title, but rather a function carried out only as directed by the will of God:

Strictly speaking, the work of a prophet is not the fulfilling of an office, but the performance of a function. It would appear that God on several occasions selected a man to give one or two messages and never again used him as His mouthpiece. On other occasions the Lord used a man or a prophet over a long period. The prophetic position is entirely a matter of relationship to God and cannot be enhanced or decreased by any human agency.

A great leader such as Moses or Samuel or David could also be a prophet. A priest such as Samuel or Ezekiel could also be a prophet. The name indicates a function rather than an office.<sup>6</sup>

## Purposes of Prophecy

The prophet functions as the mouthpiece of God to give the message of God to His people. The messages of God can be categorized according to purpose, including: 1) Rebuke, 2) Encouragement for God's people, 3) Revelation providing knowledge of God's character and purposes, 4) Information for guidance of God's people on a specific occasion, 5) Authenticating God's appointed leader or prophet, and 6) Revelation concerning God's Messiah and redemptive plan.<sup>7</sup>

On examining the prophetic declarations contained in the historical books and the longer messages in the major and minor prophets, it soon becomes apparent that more than half of what is said comes under the heading of rebuke for sin and the call to repentance. This activity evidently consumed far more of the prophet's time than any other feature of his work. There is a tendency among Bible students to pass rapidly over these sections, but in so doing a great part of the message of the prophets is missed.<sup>8</sup>

A good example of rebuke is seen in John the Baptist's call to repentance in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. The Biblical prophets' messages of rebuke continue to be extremely important for believers of today because of the rampant sin and apostasy within what calls itself Christianity.

Prophecy of the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) sets forth God's master plan of redemption, with His Messiah as its cornerstone. As the Apostle Peter says:

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that (would come) to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ [Messiah] within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ [Messiah] and the glories to follow (1 Peter 1:10-11).

With regard to Messianic prophecy, the prophets themselves did not necessarily understand all the words that God gave them to speak concerning His master plan of redemption. Even Yeshua's disciples did not understand much of what Yeshua spoke concerning His own sacrifice for sin and resurrection, until after the events transpired.

Even though we have examined the various purposes of prophecy individually, the Word of God as spoken by His prophets often includes a mixture of these various aspects. The predictive aspect of prophecy is often mixed with other aspects such rebuke and encouragement, revelation of God's nature and purpose, guidance of God's people in a particular situation, as well as Messianic prophecies. For this reason, it is understandable that the modern usage of the word "prophecy" is most often understood as predictive in nature.

## New Testament Prophets and Prophecy

The New Testament includes a great deal of prophetic material, including many references from the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). Of all the Biblical prophets, Yeshua is the greatest:

In His capacity as prophet, Jesus [Yeshua] Christ exposed the sin of mankind, showed the way of salvation through trust in Himself, encouraged God's people, revealed the nature of God to an extent never before shown, and made clear God's pattern for those who are saved. More space in the gospels is taken up by the account of His prophetic activities, that is, His revealing of God's truth, than by His other actions. "He taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt 7:29).<sup>9</sup>

After the Apostle John wrote the Book of Revelation, God's revelation to man was complete:

The end of this period [NT] when new divine revelations would no longer be given, was not immediately apparent. As in the case of the OT, they simply ceased. The entire Bible was written. Thereafter men in the Church were called prophets only in the extended sense of presenting God's people truths received, not by direct revelation, but from careful study of the completed and infallible Word of God.<sup>10</sup>

In the NT, as in the OT, a prophet was one who received his message directly from God. As the Bible neared completion and the existence of God's written Word in its entirety made direct communication no longer necessary, it became possible to use the term in an expanded sense of one who receives his message from God through the written Word and then passes it on to God's people for "upbuilding and encouragement and consolation" (1 Cor 14:3).<sup>11</sup>

The complete Word of God, comprised of both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, provides all the revelation of God that a believer needs to have a solid foundation and understanding of God's redemptive plan (including future prophecies), as well how to live a life in accordance with God's will. Yeshua Himself confirmed the Hebrew Bible as the Word of God in declaring that His people should believe "all that the prophets had spoken" (Luke 24:25). Remember that during Yeshua's life on earth, Scripture was limited to the Hebrew Bible since the New Testament had not yet been written. From the time the entire Word of God (both Old and New Testaments) was given and recorded, those who have been and continue to be called as true prophets of God do so not by "new revelation," but "in the extended sense of presenting God's people truths received"<sup>12</sup> in the completed and infallible Word of God.\*

The gift of prophecy relates to this aspect of prophecy, that is, speaking forth the revelation of the Word of God that has already been given, by the power of the Holy Spirit (Spirit of the Holy One):

In Ephesians 2:20; 3:5 and 4:11, Paul speaks of apostles and prophets as God's gift to His Church.... The passage in 1 Corinthians 11-14 refers many times to men and women as prophesying in the church gatherings, thus describing individuals in the church who either claimed to be acting as mouthpieces of God or *who were simply giving forth the true message*

*of God that they had received through a portion of His Word (emphasis added).*<sup>13</sup>

This is exactly what we see Peter doing at Pentecost. He proclaimed the prophecies of Joel concerning the pouring forth of God's Spirit upon all humankind (Acts 2:16-21). The prophecy was being fulfilled, beginning with Yeshua's disciples and spreading to all those who would receive Yeshua as Messiah and Redeemer. Peter also prophesied concerning Yeshua's ministry, miracles, death and resurrection, in accordance with the prophecies of King David (Acts 2:22-36). The gift of prophecy was clearly manifesting in Peter as he spoke forth with profound revelation the Word of God, as empowered by the Spirit of the Holy One (*Ruach HaKodesh*).

This understanding is entirely consistent with Paul's references to the gift of prophecy. And Paul considers this spiritual gift to be very high on the priority list of the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:1-6). That is because this gift enables one to speak the Word of God in a way that transcends human understanding and ability. It enables one to speak forth the Word of Truth with great power. In this way, the Spirit of God works to bring understanding to those who listen and learn the Word of God. This builds the entire body of believers in Messiah, and establishes each believer on a solid foundation of the Word of God.

If an unbeliever hears the Word of God prophesied, he/she can be convicted by the Spirit of God to believe:

But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you (1 Corinthians 14:24-25).

Even the ungifted believer is convicted by this type of prophesying. (The ungifted believer is one who has not manifested any of the spiritual gifts, but who is nonetheless a believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit.)

Teaching, in contrast to prophesying, involves the use of human understanding in both the learning and transmitting of what is learned, without this additional empowering by the Spirit of God to transcend human understanding. In the Early Church, there were both prophets and teachers, and in many cases a single person functioned in both capacities. What this means is that the person was a teacher, and at times, as the Spirit of God enabled, he/she went beyond mere human understanding in revealing the Word of God:



Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was (there), prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul (Acts 13:1).

Let it be clear that the ability to prophesy is not a permanent gift, but manifests only according to the will of God, not according to human will.

No human individual or organization could enable a man to become a true prophet. The NT speaks of prophets as one of God's gifts to His Church, along with evangelists and pastors (Eph 4:11). A church can ordain and install an evangelist or a pastor, but no one can become a prophet in the full meaning of the word unless God chooses to give him a message with orders to pass it on.<sup>14</sup>

From the Biblical perspective, it is therefore erroneous for anyone to call himself/herself by the title "prophet"/"prophetess," as in "I'm Prophet So-and-So," or "I'm a prophet." It is also erroneous to think that individuals can be trained to become prophets of God by attending so-called "schools of the prophets." The term "school of the prophets" has come into wide usage as the result of a translation error in which the KJV has rendered the word "college" in reference to the place where the prophetess Huldah lived (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:22). The Hebrew word that is translated "college" actually refers to "second" or "double," most likely referring to the second quarter of the city (Amplified and NASB translate "Second Quarter"; NIV translates "Second District").<sup>15</sup>

In addition, the reference to Samuel living in a certain area of the town Ramah, called Nabioth (literally "habitation"), where prophetic activity occurred among men associated with Samuel and Saul, has been erroneously understood to indicate some kind of "school of the prophets" (1 Samuel 19:18-20:1). According to Jewish tradition, Nabioth represents a school where Samuel taught, but most interpreters think this refers to the name of a section of the town.<sup>16</sup> Even if Samuel taught in some kind of school, this does not support the concept of a school where individuals can be trained to become prophets:

There is no Biblical evidence that groups of men were ever trained to become prophets. God called prophets as individuals. This was true of Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and in all other cases where there is record of such a call. The prophetic work was an individual activity, in which one man received a message from God and passed it on to God's people.<sup>17</sup>

Sometimes the term “prophet” is loosely applied to refer to individuals who attached themselves to recognized prophets of God in a desire to serve the Lord (1 Samuel 10, Saul meeting a company of prophets; Samuel 19, a group of men who met under Samuel’s direction; 1 Kings 18:13, “a hundred men of the Lord’s prophets”; 1 Kings 20:41, an unnamed prophet who was recognized by Ahab as “one of the prophets”). But none of these passages can be taken to support the notion that individuals can train to become true prophets of God in the fullest sense of the word, as is evidenced by “the unique and individual character of the prophet’s task.”<sup>18</sup>

New Testament prophets were inspired by the same Spirit of God as were Old Testament prophets. Prophecies of the New Testament add to God’s revelation concerning prophetic events of God’s master plan of redemption, including the Second Coming of Messiah and beyond to the New Jerusalem, the New Heaven and the New Earth. According to Paul, when the perfect things that God has prophesied are fulfilled, the spiritual gifts such as prophecy will pass away:

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known (1 Corinthians 13:9-12).

## True Prophet or False Prophet?

A true prophet of God must speak in the name of the Lord (Deuteronomy 18:20-22). Any prophet who speaks from another source (another spirit) is not a prophet of God. Only God can be trusted to lead in pure truth. Prophets whose message, knowledge, and understanding come from spiritual sources other than God ultimately lead away from the one true God of the Bible. Such false prophets and false prophecies promote a false gospel mixed with dangerous error and deception. Paul warns believers not to be led astray by a false gospel, no matter how “spiritual” the messenger may seem to be:

But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed (Galatians 1:8).

Scripture shows that signs and wonders were associated with some, but not all, true prophets of God. Scripture shows that signs and wonders are also associated with false prophets and prophecies in order to deceive by delusion and deception:

...the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false... (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11).

Any prophet who leads individuals away from the true Word of God is a false prophet, no matter what kind of supernatural manifestations are displayed.

The Word of God warns that false prophets can make accurate predictions, can work signs and wonders, and can have dreams, visions, and messages that they may even believe are from God. None of this can be taken as proof of being a true prophet of God.

“If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods whom you have not known and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 13:1-3).

This passage refers to those who work signs and wonders and are able to accurately predict future events, but lead people to a false god. This warning can equally be applied to false prophets inside Christianity who lead believers to a Jesus Christ other than the true Messiah Yeshua, and to a gospel other than the true Gospel, and to a spirit other than the true Spirit of God.

The Lord denounces such false prophets who lead His people away from the truth:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you to futility; they speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the Lord” (Jeremiah 23:16).

The Lord says these self-deluded prophets have false dreams, falsely claim to prophesy in His name, and pervert the true Word of God (Jeremiah 23:25, 26, 31, 36).

The Lord warns that He will abandon and punish those who falsely prophesy, as well as those who abandon Him to follow false prophets (Jeremiah 23:33).

False prophets today may use the name of Jesus Christ; may perform signs, wonders, miracles, and healings; and may accurately predict future events, but all these things are not conclusive proof that they are prophets of God:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS’ ” (Matthew 7:21-23).

Yeshua is speaking to those who were deceived into thinking they were doing all these things in His name. And how many Christians are following after such false prophets and false ministers? Is a false revival sweeping vast numbers into apostasy? The Lord says “many” will say to Him they prophesied, cast out demons, and performed many miracles in His name, but Yeshua says He never knew them. If there are many such false prophets in Christianity, then that shows that there must be even larger numbers of followers of these false prophets and false ministers being led to their destruction.

It is clearly brought out in Deuteronomy 13:1-5 that a man might claim to speak for the Lord, might perform what appeared to be a miracle, and might make a prediction that would come true, and still be a false prophet. *It is the duty of God’s people to check carefully the content of any revelation and see whether it is in line with what God has revealed previously.* Paul brought out this truth very clearly (Gal 1:8) where he said, “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed” (emphasis added).<sup>19</sup>

The ultimate test of a true prophet of God is that all that is spoken in the name of the Lord is in complete agreement with the entire Word of God in its proper context:

The final test is strict conformity to (agreement with) the previously certified revelation, by Moses first and by the prophets to follow (Deut 13:1-18). ... [This] requirement is emphatic, the entire thirteenth chapter [of Deuteronomy] being devoted to it.<sup>20</sup>

Beware of those who claim to receive “new revelation” directly from God. To claim such new revelation is to imply that the Word of God is somehow incomplete. Beware of those who misinterpret the established Word of God in order to support false revelations and false teachings that promote a false Jesus Christ, a false gospel, and a false spirit.

In order to be able to accurately judge a teaching, a prophecy, a miracle, a healing, etc., each individual believer must be thoroughly grounded in the truth of the Word of God. Every believer has the obligation and responsibility of studying the Word of God to see whether or not such things are of God:

Be diligent to present yourselves approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, (to see) whether these things were so (Acts 17:11).

## Notes

\* The Word of God is infallible in the originally inspired languages in which it was given and recorded.

<sup>1</sup> Reuven Drucker, *The Book of Joshua, ArtScroll Tanach Series*, p. xxvii.

<sup>2</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 4, p. 875.

<sup>3</sup> Drucker, p. xxviii.

<sup>4</sup> Harris, R. Laird, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, p. 544.

<sup>5</sup> Drucker, p. xxv.

<sup>6</sup> Tenney, Vol. 4, p. 876.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 896-897.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 896.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 902-903.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 903.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 876.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 903.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 876.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 884.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 886.

<sup>20</sup> Harris, Vol. 4. p. 545.

## Chapter 8 Discerning of Spirits

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).

### Warning Against Deception

The Word of God continually warns believers not to be deceived. The deception that Yeshua and the Apostles address involves those masquerading within the body of believers: false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13), false brethren (2 Corinthians 11:26; Galatians 2:4), false christs (Matthew 24:24), false teachers (2 Peter 2:1), and false prophets (Matthew 7:15; 24:11; 24:24; Acts 13:6; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1). While it is true that these warnings apply to all false forms of spirituality, the most dangerous deceptions for believers are those that mix lethal lies with Biblical truth in such a way as to pervert the real Gospel of Messiah Yeshua:

Spiritual deception is not just something that happens to unbelievers. The apostle Paul went to great lengths to warn the Corinthians not to be deceived by a “Jesus” that wasn’t Jesus Christ the Son of God, a spirit that wasn’t the Holy Spirit and a gospel that was not the true biblical Gospel (2 Corinthians 11:4). Throughout the New Testament, believers are continually warned not to be deceived by spiritual teachings and experiences that are not from God.<sup>1</sup>

For this reason, believers must continually discern what they are hearing and seeing within Christianity. But how can a believer be assured he/she is not being deceived?

## The Gift of Discernment

Paul refers to the gift of discernment as “the distinguishing of spirits” (1 Corinthians 12:10). The Greek word translated as “distinguishing” is *diakrisis*, referring to “a distinguishing, a clear discrimination, discerning, judging ... judging by evidence whether they are evil or of God.”<sup>2</sup> This same Greek word, translated “discern,” appears in verse 14 of Hebrews 5:

But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil (Hebrews 5:14).

The previous verse contrasts believers who are “babes” with those who possess a mature understanding and experience in the Word of God:

For everyone who partakes (only) of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe (Hebrews 5:13).

It is generally the case that a believer with greater maturity in the Word also possesses greater discernment skills. The mature believer is one who has progressed beyond the mere “milk” of the Word of God, and possesses an in-depth knowledge and understanding to better judge all spiritual manifestations.

The Word of God is the standard by which all spiritual manifestations must be judged. Often people are amazed at and attracted to spiritual manifestations, regardless of their source. It is as if the occurrence of a spiritual manifestation validates the truth of the message and reliability of the conduit or medium by which the manifestation presents itself. Today’s popularity of all kinds of spiritual mediums and manifestations attests to this incredible magnetic appeal to a wide audience. So it has always been. But God’s instructions clearly warn against such involvement in spiritual activity that does not emanate from Him:

“There shall not be found among you ...one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls upon the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord...” (Deuteronomy 18:10-12).



Paul dealt with such a woman, who declared him to be a servant “of the Most High God” proclaiming the true Gospel (Acts 16:16-18). But by the gift of discernment, Paul identified the “spirit of divination” and commanded the spirit to leave her. Since this woman was involved in divination, which is forbidden by God, the spirit she connected with could not be of God.

Involvement in such occult activities opens the door to the spiritual realm in a way that is contrary to the will of God, precisely because it does not connect to God. Instead, connection is made to unsaved, deceiving spirits (disembodied spirits of the dead). These spiritual entities operate outside the physical dimensions in such a way as to manifest supernatural phenomena and powers. But believers should not be impressed by these false spiritual manifestations:

The Bereans were not impressed by supernatural power and spiritual experiences that had not been tested by the Word of God. They did not depend on signs and wonders and miracles. They depended on the authority and reliability and trustworthiness of Scripture. ...[They] tested their leaders and tested their teachings as they “searched the scriptures daily” to see “whether those things were so (Acts 17:11).<sup>3</sup>

The Word of God is never superseded by so-called “new revelation,” for God never changes and neither does His Word (Malachi 3:6). Nevertheless, believers in massive numbers are being swept away by false spiritual manifestations and false teachings:

Today it is very sad to see so many believers falling under the influence of the same spirit that influenced me [Warren Smith] when I was in the “new age.” This spirit says that it is a time for “breakthroughs” and for the fulfillment of our “destiny”; that there is something “new” and exciting in the wind. This teaching claims that we are in the midst of a great “transition” that will result in a “paradigm shift,” and that through “new revelation” and “personal experience” God is now in the process of taking the church to a “new dimension” and to a whole “new level.” Many Christian leaders these days are so sure that what they are hearing and experiencing is from God, they are rarely testing the spirits, or even

considering the possibility that they are being deceived.<sup>4</sup>

Believers focusing on spiritual (and emotional) experiences are especially vulnerable to spiritual deception. The Word of God never places the emphasis in the believer's life on seeking spiritual experiences and spiritual manifestations. In fact, Yeshua condemns this kind of behavior:

“An evil and [spiritually] adulterous generation seeks after a sign...”

(Matthew 16:4).

Rather, the emphasis is always on learning the Word of God and applying it in order to live a life pleasing to God. The more the believer studies and learns the Word of God, the more the Spirit has to “work with” in revealing the understanding of why something is in error, using the Word as the standard. Knowledge of the Word, along with understanding imparted by the Spirit of God, reveals the errors, lies, deceptions and delusions:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The Spirit of God can give the believer discernment that something is in error and contrary to God, without the believer necessarily understanding at the time why it is false. As the believer continues to seek Biblical truth, however, the Lord will provide the answer. Ultimately, the answer is to be found in the Word of God, as the Spirit of God gives enlightenment.

## The Spirit of Antichrist

False spiritual manifestations are a powerfully effective tool Satan employs to deceive those lacking spiritual discernment:

“for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order, if possible, to lead the elect astray. But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance” (Mark 13:22-23).

If it is not possible for a believer to be deceived, why did Yeshua and the Apostles give

so many warnings for believers to guard themselves against deception?

The spirit of antichrist is at work, just as it has always been at work down through the centuries. The prophet John refers to the “last hour,” meaning the period of time from Yeshua’s First Coming to His Second Coming. John also refers to “many antichrists” arising during his time:

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not (really) of us... (1 John 2:18-19).

As we can see from John’s remark that false antichrists went out from among the believers, these were individuals who claimed to be of the true faith in Messiah Yeshua.

The spirit of antichrist presents a false christ, a false gospel, and a false spirit to deceive those who lack spiritual discernment. For this reason, the gift of discernment is a gift that all believers should earnestly seek. Spiritual truth should be the highest priority in the believer’s life, and the primary way in which the believer avoids spiritual deception and is able to spiritually discern between what is and what is not of God, is through continuous and diligent study of the Word of God. As the believer studies the Word, the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of Truth, exposes false spiritual manifestations for what they are.

We can already see the world’s religions coming together under the influence of a false unity movement. Not only is the purpose to reverse the Reformation and bring all Christians back under the authority of the Pope, it includes bringing all the world’s diverse religions together in unity with a false promise of peace. Who is at the forefront of this ecumenical movement? The Pope falsely claims to be the sole “supreme authority ... as the representative of Christ on earth and the visible head of the mystical body,” as signified by his title, Vicar of Christ.<sup>5</sup> This is the spirit of antichrist that promotes a false christ, a false gospel, a false unity, and a false peace.

As Halley states:

Popes claim to hold on earth the place of God, to have Supreme Authority over the Human Conscience, to Forgive Sin, to Grant Indulgences, and

that Obedience to Them is necessary to Salvation. How could anything be more Blasphemous?<sup>6</sup> [See Revelation 17:3.]

To this list of blasphemies can be added the Pope's claim of infallibility. Only God is infallible, only God is the Supreme Authority, only God can forgive sin, and only God can grant salvation. Clearly, the Pope sets himself in the place of the one true God. One who places himself in the place of God, in the place of Christ [Messiah], is following the spirit of antichrist.

Let the believer in Biblical truth beware of any movement that promotes unity with the Roman Catholic Church, which is identified with the Harlot, Mystery Babylon, described in Revelation Chapter 17. The Harlot represents the Apostate Church, and includes all elements of apostasy within Christianity.

## Revival or Apostasy?

There is much teaching today concerning "great revival" occurring around the world. But Yeshua says:

"I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).

This doesn't sound like a great revival. Nowhere in the Bible is a great revival prophesied to occur prior to Yeshua's Second Coming. Instead, the Bible warns about the apostasy, the falling away from Biblical truth:

Let no one in any way deceive you, for (it will not come) [the Second Coming of Messiah Yeshua] unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed ... (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

So-called revival is sweeping the charismatic circles. False and perverted teachings and practices that present another christ, another gospel, and another spirit are drawing enormous audiences. Many within the body are warning of the false teachings and false spiritual manifestations. We are not judging the intent of the heart in those who follow this movement, but we pray that those who desire truth allow the Spirit of Truth to expose the lies and deception in the false teachings and false spiritual manifestations. The

Lord says for His people to come out of the Apostate Church, referred to as the Harlot (false Bride of Messiah) in the Book of Revelation:

“...Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities” (Revelation 18:4-5).

Yeshua warns us that many who are deceived and following a delusion think they are serving Him and performing all kinds of things in His Name:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles? And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS’ ” (Matthew 7:21-23).

Clearly, these are individuals who really thought they were following and serving Messiah Yeshua. But Yeshua says He does not know them, which means that they were following a false christ, a false gospel, and a false spirit.

But the Spirit explicitly says that in the later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1).

The Spirit of Truth warns believers about the apostasy—the falling away from Biblical truth. Paul even says that anyone, even an angel from heaven, teaching contrary to the true Gospel, is to be accursed (Galatians 1:8). Because there is so much deception both within Christianity and in the world, believers should pray for discernment so that they are not deceived. The believer must be rooted firmly in Biblical truth, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, in order to be equipped to discern what is of God and what is of Satan:

in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Christianity today is filled with apostasy, but how many Christians recognize it? Many examples can be given, but let's take a look at not only the largest Christian church in the world, but also the largest religious body in the world: the Roman Catholic Church. Paul would have rightly judged the christ, gospel, and spirit of the Roman Catholic Church to be another christ, another gospel, and another spirit, contrary to the Word of God. Why? Because any religious system that has a system of works for salvation is in error. The Roman Catholic doctrine of salvation is just such a system of works for salvation, which is obtained by partaking of the Roman Catholic sacraments. This sacramental system negates the all-sufficient atonement for sin for all time that Yeshua accomplished in His sacrifice:

And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sin; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.... For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. ...Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer (any) offering for sin (Hebrews 10:11, 12, 14, 18).

The Word of God teaches that Yeshua's sacrifice for sin atonement is complete and all sufficient. Because of this, there is no longer any priesthood of God that offers up sacrifices for salvation. Yet during every Roman Catholic Mass, priests continually offer Christ's sacrifice "time after time," in direct contradiction to the Word of God.

Salvation does not come from works of any kind:

For by grace [unmerited favor of God] you have been saved through faith [trust]; and that not of yourselves, (it is) the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Therefore, those who put their trust (faith) in any system of works for salvation are following a false religious system, a false christ, a false gospel, and a false spirit.

There are Roman Catholics who are saved, but this is in spite of the Roman Catholic Church, not because of it. Those who are saved are putting their full trust (faith) in Messiah Yeshua for salvation, not putting their blind faith in the Roman Catholic Church for salvation. The same can be said for individuals throughout Christianity who have the

real Spirit of God and follow the true Gospel of Messiah Yeshua. The true Spirit of God knows the heart of the individual and so can work in any circumstances. However, the Spirit of God will also lead a person to truth, and out of deception, as long as the person is listening and being obedient to the Spirit of Truth.

Since the Word of God clearly exposes the Roman Catholic Church as an apostate church, it is clear that any movement whose purpose is to unite all Christianity is Biblically in error and a part of the apostasy. When Biblical truth—even the most fundamental truth of salvation—is set aside for the sake of unity, then this is clearly apostasy. Consequently, the Ecumenical Movement that joins Protestants and Catholics together is part of the apostasy.

Another powerful unifying force in Christianity today is the Charismatic Movement because it crosses all sectors of Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church had its own Charismatic Renewal in the 1960s. Charismatics are found in all Christian churches, denominational and nondenominational. With the emphasis on experiencing “the gifts” and manifestations of “the spirit,” it is drawing tremendous numbers all over the earth. But it is not the Spirit of God that is leading more and more into apostasy.

Any spirit or spiritual phenomenon that leads people to the Apostate Church is false, no matter how many “signs and wonders” that are displayed. In fact, the Apostate Church is certain to have all kinds of false signs and wonders:

the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And so for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false... (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11).

The Apostate Church and its false spiritual manifestations may have the appearance of godliness: people turning to “God,” praying, and being healed. But a false christ, a false gospel, and a false spirit do not lead to the true God of the Bible.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Warren Smith, *Reinventing Jesus Christ: The New Gospel*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Vol. 1, p. 315.

<sup>3</sup> Warren, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Robert C. Broderick, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 599.

<sup>6</sup> Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, p. 732.



## Chapter 9 The First Pentecost at Mount Sinai

“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. ...” (Exodus 19:5-6).

Pentecost marks one of the most profound events in all of human history. On that day, God fulfilled what had long been prophesied:

“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jeremiah 31:33).

Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus) instructed His disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they received the power by which they would proclaim the “Good News” (Gospel) of the Messiah’s coming, sacrifice for sin atonement, and resurrection.

And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” (He said), “you heard from Me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:4-5).

“...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

In our study of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is essential to establish a Biblical foundation for understanding what actually happened on Pentecost in Jerusalem almost two thousand years ago. To do so requires a basic understanding of the prophetic significance of the Biblical Holy Days, for they foreshadow God’s plan of redemption for humankind.

## The Biblical Holy Days: The Prophetic Pattern of God

On the fourth day of creation, God established a prophetic timetable: “God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years ...’ ” (Genesis 1:14). The word “seasons” is translated from the Hebrew word *mo’adim*, meaning appointed times and religious festivals.<sup>1</sup> Paul also taught the Gentiles that the feast days, new moons, and Sabbath days are shadows of things to come (Colossians 2:16-17).

The Biblical (Hebrew/Jewish) calendar is a luni-solar calendar, by which the months are calculated according to the lunar cycle (thus the reference to “new moons” above). “Things to come are future things and shadows (foreshadows) of things to come are prophecies, i.e., *the whole of the divine calendar is a prophecy*. It is the most comprehensive, the backbone prophecy to the whole Bible.”<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, all Biblical prophecy is fulfilled in accordance with the prophetic pattern of the Biblical Holy (Feast) Days, as regards their symbolic meaning, pattern and timetable. Pentecost is one of these prophetically appointed times of God. The appointed times include: Passover (*Pesah*), Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost or Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*), Feast of Trumpets (*Rosh HaShanah*), Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), and Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (*Sukkot*).

The prophetic fulfillment of Messiah Yeshua’s life, ministry, death and resurrection follows this Biblical prophetic pattern. He was conceived during *Hanukkah* (Feast of Dedication, or Festival of Lights), born on Rosh HaShanah, dedicated at the Temple on Yom Kippur, and visited by the shepherds during Sukkot. (See *The Scriptural Birth Date of Messiah Yeshua*, by Peter A. Michas.) He began His ministry on Rosh HaShanah, was crucified on Passover, and rose on the first of the seven weekly Sabbaths (Saturday, not Sunday) counted between Passover and Pentecost, the period of time referred to as First Fruits.

On the day of Pentecost following His resurrection, the Holy Spirit (*Ruach HaKodesh*, the Spirit of the Holy One) was sent by God to indwell believers in Messiah Yeshua. But this wasn’t the first time an event of monumental spiritual proportions occurred on Pentecost. The pattern is to be found in the Old Testament (Old Covenant) and took place in regard to the nation of Israel.

## The Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai

Messiah Yeshua came to fulfill God's redemptive plan for humanity. If we want to understand the New Testament (New Covenant), we need to go back to the Hebrew Bible, for in fact the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and the New Testament constitute one book, the inspired Word of God.

God's plan of redemption for the nation of Israel sets the pattern for the redemption of all humankind. Just as the Passover lambs were sacrificed the night before Israel was released from bondage in Egypt, Messiah Yeshua was sacrificed as God's Passover Lamb to release humankind from the bondage of sin. God's appointed time for the required sacrifice was Passover, and the symbolic meaning, pattern and timetable of Passover point to Yeshua as God's promised Messiah.

According to rabbinic tradition, the giving of the Mosaic law (Torah) is associated with Pentecost:

The association of Shavuot with the establishment of the covenant between God and Israel, although not explicit in the Bible, is exceedingly ancient. Exodus 19:1 has the Israelites arriving at Sinai on the New Moon of the third month after the Exodus, that is, in the month of Sivan. A report in 2 Chronicles 15:10-13 tells that King Asa of Judah (913-873 B.C.E.) called a great assembly of the people "in the third month" for a national ceremony of covenant renewal. The pilgrimage festival of Shavuot, falling in that month, would have been the most likely occasion for that ceremony.<sup>3</sup>

The Hebrew word *Torah* is most often translated as "law," but is more accurately translated as "instruction," referring to God's instructions for us to learn and understand Him and His ways. The Torah also specifically refers to the first five books of the Bible, recorded by Moses, which provide the foundation of God's instructions.

The Feast of Shavuot (Shavuot means "weeks") is the second of three pilgrimage festivals, as it occurs on the sacred calendar. Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread is the first pilgrimage festival, and Sukkot, or Feast of Tabernacles (Booths), is the third pilgrimage festival. All Jewish males were required to go to Jerusalem for each of these three great annual feasts.

Shavuot is also called Pentecost, a transliteration of the Greek word meaning “fiftieth.” Fifty days were counted from the day after Passover (sixteenth day of Nisan, also called Abib), which marked the beginning of the barley harvest, to Pentecost (sixth day of Sivan), which marked the beginning of the wheat harvest (Leviticus 23:15-16). Shavuot is also referred to as the Feast of the Harvest and the Day of First Fruits, when the best ripe produce of the fields was offered to God (Exodus 23:16; Numbers 28:26).<sup>4</sup>

In the third month after the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites were gathered at Mount Sinai under the leadership of Moses (Exodus 19:1-2). They were told to prepare because on the third day, the Lord would manifest His presence and give His covenant to them. Thunder, lightning, and a thick cloud; fire, smoke, and quaking of the mountain; and a very loud supernatural sound of a trumpet (*shofar*<sup>\*</sup>) signaled the presence of the Lord (Exodus 19:16-18; 24:15-17). These supernatural manifestations took place in the sight of all the Israelites, filling them with such fear and awe that they asked Moses to be the one to hear God speak (Exodus 20:18-19).

Moses ascended the mountain and remained there for forty days and forty nights. During this time, the Lord gave Moses His Instructions (Torah) and the Ten Commandments, which were written on the stone tablets “by the finger of God” ... “on both sides” (Exodus 24:12, 18; 31:18; 32:15-16). This was the first Pentecost and sets the prophetic pattern for the events of Acts, Chapter 2.

## The Date and Day of Pentecost

God ordained the following seven Biblical festivals, the appointed times of the Lord (Leviticus 23):

- 1.) Passover (*Pesah*): 14th of Abib (Nisan)
2. Unleavened Bread (*Matzah*): 15th through 21st of Abib (Nisan)
- 3.) First Fruits (*Bikkurim*): 17th of Abib (Nisan)
- 4.) Pentecost (*Shavuot*): fifty days after Passover
- 5.) Feast of Trumpets (*Rosh HaShanah*): 1st of Tishri
- 6.) Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*): 10th of Tishri
- 7.) Feast of Booths/Tabernacles (*Sukkot*): 15th through 21st of Tishri

Notice that all but Pentecost occur on specific dates of the Biblical (Jewish) Calendar. In contrast, God did not give a specific date for Pentecost (first fruits of the wheat harvest) but ordained that it be observed on the fiftieth day following the presentation of the wave offering (first fruits of the barley harvest), that took place on the day after Passover. The counting of the omer began the day the wave offering was presented, and continued for fifty days to Pentecost.

At the time of Yeshua, there was a controversy as to when the omer was to be presented. The Pharisees determined that “the day after the Sabbath” (Leviticus 23:11) meant the day after Passover, since Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread\*\* was considered an annual Sabbath day of rest. The Sadducees, on the other hand, interpreted the “day after the Sabbath” to refer to the day after the weekly Sabbath (during the week of Passover), and therefore to always fall on the first day of the week (Sunday) each and every year.

Significantly, the Temple observances at the time of Yeshua followed the Pharisaic interpretation, and we can see from the unfolding of prophetic events that this was the correct interpretation. This has important implications for understanding the actual day that the Holy Spirit was sent to indwell believers in Messiah Yeshua. (A detailed body of evidence and discussion is given in *The Rod of an Almond Tree in God's Master Plan* by Peter A. Michas, but for the purposes of this study the following conclusions are presented.)

The actual timetable of the crucifixion and resurrection has great significance for what happened on the Pentecost following Yeshua's ascension. Both the King James Version and the Amplified Bible state in Acts 2:1 that the day of Pentecost had *fully* come. As stated above, Pentecost came on the fiftieth day of the omer, as counted from the day after Passover. In the year of the crucifixion (30 C.E.), the fiftieth day fell on Friday, the sixth of Sivan. However, Pentecost is actually observed for a two-day period, including the fiftieth and fifty-first days of the omer. Therefore, it seems that Scripture is referring to the second day of Pentecost, the fifty-first day of the omer, on the seventh of Sivan.

In the Talmud, there is disagreement as to whether the Revelation at Sinai (and the giving of the Ten Commandments) occurred on the sixth or seventh of Sivan.<sup>5</sup> The date for observance of Shavuot was nevertheless set as the sixth of Sivan. We believe the

actual date is the seventh of Sivan, the fifty-first day of the omer, because it fits the prophetic pattern and fell on a weekly Sabbath (Saturday).<sup>6</sup>

On the first Pentecost, God's commandments were written "by the finger of God"—by the Spirit of the Holy One (*Ruach HaKodesh*)—on stone tablets. On the Pentecost following Yeshua's resurrection, the Spirit of the Holy One wrote the commandments in the very heart (spirit) of those who believed in Yeshua as the Messiah. On this day was the beginning of the fulfillment of what God said in Jeremiah 31:33, "... I will write My law within them, and on their heart I will write it... ."

As on the first Pentecost, fulfillment came on the seventh of Sivan, the fifty-first day of the omer. It is interesting to note that this day was the fifty-first day of the omer based upon the Pharisaic method of counting, but was actually the fiftieth day of the omer based upon counting from the day of Yeshua's resurrection on Sabbath. In the actual year of the crucifixion, according to the Jewish (Biblical) calendar, both the resurrection day and the second day of Pentecost fell on a weekly Sabbath.

## Notes

\* The shofar refers to the ram's horn, used in ancient times as a signaling trumpet and still blown today on Rosh HaShanah and at the end of Yom Kippur.

\*\* By the time of Yeshua, the observance of Passover and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread were merged, beginning on the 15th at sunset.

<sup>1</sup> Phinehas Ben Zadok, *Which Day Is the Passover?*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus*, p. 145.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Birnbaum, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts*, p. 575.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary*, p. 71.

<sup>6</sup> Aryeh Kaplan, *The Torah Anthology: Exodus III*, Vol. 6, p. 156.

## Chapter 10 What Really Happened at Pentecost?

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance (Acts 2:4).

Before His ascension, Messiah Yeshua instructed His disciples to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the power of the Holy Spirit (Spirit of the Holy One):

“...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The first Pentecost, when God gave His commandments (Torah, His instructions) to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai, reveals the prophetic pattern for understanding the events of the Pentecost following Yeshua’s ascension.

Acts Chapter 2 has been used to support the concept of speaking in unknown languages, referred to as “tongues,” but close examination of the passage in its context clearly shows that the languages/dialects spoken were intelligible, not unintelligible. Let us examine the relevant Scriptures in order to better understand one of the most powerful and profound events of all human history.

### At the Temple on the Day of Pentecost

Pentecost was one of the three annual festivals when all Jewish males were required to be at the Temple in Jerusalem for its observance. Though the Book of Acts describes an “upper room,” where the disciples met together, this is not where the supernatural events took place. The misconception that the disciples were still in the upper room results from a problem in translation:

And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent,

rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting (Acts 2:1-2).

According to Scripture, the disciples had all come together on the day of Pentecost. In fact, all Jewish males would have gathered together in one place—on the Temple Mount—for the observance of Pentecost. The Greek word *oikon*, translated “house,” is actually a reference to the House of God, the Temple. This same word also refers to “the house” of God in Matthew 12:4, 21:13; and Luke 11:51 (emphasis added):

But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions; how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?” (Matthew 12:3-4).

And He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a ROBBERS’ DEN” (Matthew 21:13).

“from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the house (of God)...” (Luke 11:51).

These Scriptures consistently indicate that the Temple was referred to as the “house of God,” and the Greek word *oikon* is used in this context. This understanding definitely fits the context of the feast of Pentecost, when all Jewish males gathered together at the Temple for its observance. If the disciples had gathered in the same upper room on the day of Pentecost, as they had in Acts 1:13, then why would not the same Greek word *huperoon*, translated “upper room,” be used?<sup>1</sup>

“In one place” refers to a place within the Temple courtyard. The “they” most likely refers to the male disciples listed in Acts 1 and not the women, for it was in the Temple area that this occurred. This is not to say that this gift is not for women. But in this instance, it is very unlikely the women present in the Upper Room were involved, as women did not play much of a part in feast-day events on the Temple Mount.

## The Spiritual Manifestation

And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting (Acts 2:2).



The Greek word *pnoe* is translated as “wind.” It refers to a blowing or blast, as of the rushing wind.<sup>2</sup> This Greek word can also signify “breath, the breath of life” of God (Acts 17:25).<sup>3</sup> It is related to the Greek word *pneuma*, which can mean “spirit” and “breath.”<sup>4</sup>

According to *Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament*:

It was not wind, but a roar or reverberation “as of the rushing of a mighty wind”.... It was “an echoing sound as of a mighty wind borne violently” (or rushing along like the whirr of a tornado). *Pnoe* (wind) is used here (in the N.T. only here and 17:25 though old word) probably because of the use of *pneuma* in verse 4 of the Holy Spirit. In John 3:5-8 *pneuma* occurs for both wind and Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

This was a very powerful supernatural event, completely unmistakable from a natural phenomenon. The great sound was one aspect of the manifestation of the Spirit of God, that same power and breath of life mentioned in Genesis, referring to the Spirit of God at Creation.

The disciples are sitting together, somewhere in the courtyard of the Israelites, when this awesome whirring roar, like the rushing violent wind of a tornado, blasts onto the Temple Mount and into the Temple courtyard of the Israelites. The entire area is filled to capacity with Jews, not only from Israel, but also from the Diaspora (places where Jews settled after their dispersion). This powerful manifestation of God’s Spirit descends over the little band of believing men, who were sitting off to themselves to avoid persecution. But God will not have His People or His Word hidden, placed under the proverbial basket, but revealed in all His power and glory.

The powerful sound precedes a powerful visual manifestation on that wondrous day of Pentecost:

And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them (Acts 2:3).

Upon the heads of the disciples appeared “tongues” of fire. The Greek word *glossai* is translated “tongues.” This word refers to intelligible languages. This same word is used to refer to the tongues of fire, which represented intelligible languages:

“...the fire-like appearance presented itself at first, as it were, in a single body, and then suddenly parted in this direction and that; so that a portion of it rested on each of those present” (Hackett). The idea is not that each

tongue was cloven, but each separate tongue looked like fire, not real fire, but looking like (*hosei*, as if) fire.<sup>6</sup>

What the fire-like “tongues” symbolized now powerfully manifested in the speech of the disciples:

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance (Acts 2:4).

As this small group of men who believe in Yeshua as the Messiah discretely sit together in the Temple courtyard, this powerful move of the Spirit of God manifests itself upon them. At first a single fire-like column appears, which then splits into many fire-like images of languages. In the Book of Exodus, the pillar of fire is one of the most remarkable manifestations of God’s presence (“the pillar of fire by night,” Exodus 13:21). The burning bush is another example of a fire-like manifestation of the presence of the Holy One (Exodus 3:2). And when the Lord manifested His presence upon Mount Sinai, a supernatural fire was seen by all the Israelites (Exodus 19:18; Deuteronomy 5:4).

We believe that the fire-like images of languages which appeared above the heads of the disciples were similar to the manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit, by which the Ten Commandments were written on the two stone tablets by “the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18). But this time, rather than writing on tablets of stone, the words of God were written in the hearts (spirits) of human beings, and expressed as the powerful message of salvation in Messiah Yeshua.

The multitude of Jews, in Jerusalem from every nation, looked on in bewilderment as each one heard the message of salvation in his own native language (Acts 2:5-6).

And they were amazed and marveled, saying, ‘Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear (them) in our own language to which we were born?’ (Acts 2:7-8).

The Galileans normally spoke in an uneducated slang of Aramaic and Greek. Because of this, the multitude was amazed at hearing unlearned men speaking fluently in all these various dialects and languages.

In a sense, this seems to be somewhat the reverse of the event at the Tower of Babel, when God divided the “tongues” of men into all the various languages. Just as God was able to take one language and to impose language barriers which in essence divided it into many dialects, so too God was able to communicate with man, each in his own particular dialect, all from one tongue, that spoken by Peter.

Peter spoke powerful words of prophecy, and each man heard in his own language. Since Peter was speaking one tongue, not repeating the same message in various languages, this also seems to be a miracle of hearing and understanding, each one in his own language.

An interesting comparison can be made to the First Pentecost, when the Ten Commandments were given to the nation of Israel:

The Ten Commandments had to be heard, and the Torah describes the phenomenon as one involving a crescendo of sound. Israel had to hear and be moved; though God did not “speak” to them with vocal chords, mouth, and tongue, He “spoke” in the sense that a voice and words were heard.<sup>7</sup>

The description of the “phenomenon as one involving a crescendo of sound” was also true at this particular Pentecost. This powerful and unusual sound got the attention of all those who had gathered on the Temple Mount, signaling that something of a powerful, supernatural nature was happening. Those who had ears to hear were receptive to Peter’s powerful prophesying on this day that had been foretold by the prophet Joel.

As far as what the one pure language was which God spoke forth through Peter, we believe that it was pure and perfect Hebrew, and since Peter was uneducated, this was not something he was able to speak as a result of education, but as a result of the power of the Spirit of God.

Two Greek words that refer to intelligible language are *glossa* (Acts 2:4, 11) and *dialektos* (Acts 1:19; 2:6, 8; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14). The word *glossa* (plural: *glossai*) is translated as “tongue” or “language.” This word refers to either the tongue, as an organ of speech, or to the supernatural ability to speak in another language that has not been learned.<sup>8</sup> Since the tongue is used for speech, this word is also used to refer to intelligible language. The word *dialektos* refers to the particular language or dialect of a country or district.<sup>9</sup> The English word “dialect” is derived from this Greek word. Dialects include very closely related forms of the same basic language (such as Hebrew and Aramaic).

In comparing various English translations of the Bible, we can see that the word *glossai* in Acts 2:4 is translated either as “tongues” (KJV, NAS, and NIV) or as “languages” (Amplified Bible). The same word is translated “tongues” in Acts 2:11 in KJV, NAS, NIV, and Amplified versions. Either way, this word refers to intelligible language.

In comparison, the word *dialektos* is translated variously as “tongue,” “dialect,” “language,” and “Aramaic.” For example, the King James Version translates *dialektos* as “tongue” in Acts 1:19, Acts 2:8, Acts 21:40, Acts 22:2, and Acts 26:14; and as “language” in Acts 2:6. The Amplified Bible translates *dialektos* as “dialect” in Acts 1:19, Acts 2:6, Acts 2:8, and Acts 21:40; and as “tongue” in Acts 22:2 and Acts 26:14. The New American Standard translates *dialektos* as “language” in Acts 1:19, Acts 2:6, and Acts 2:8; and as “dialect” in Acts 21:40, Acts 22:2, and Acts 26:14. The New International Version translates *dialektos* as “language” in Acts 1:19, Acts 2:6, and Acts 2:8; and as “Aramaic” in Acts 21:40, Acts 22:2, and Acts 26:14. These various words all refer to intelligible language.

In Acts 2:4-13, the supernatural gift of speaking in a language that was unknown to the speaker occurs. The event is described from the viewpoint of the hearers, who understood in their own languages and dialects.<sup>10</sup> They knew that the disciples were uneducated Galileans, who did not know all these languages, and so they understood this was a supernatural manifestation. In this regard, it is essential to understand that “tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers” (1 Corinthians 14:22).

Therefore, the purpose of this spiritual gift is as a sign to unbelievers in Messiah Yeshua, in this case, unbelieving Jews. Those who heard in their own language of the work of God through Messiah Yeshua, and received Him as the Messiah, believed as a result of witnessing this spiritual manifestation of the Holy Spirit. And since the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to draw each human being to Messiah Yeshua, this clearly follows the Biblical pattern.

Not all who heard believed, but significantly, those referred to as “devout” were the ones receptive to the message of salvation through Messiah Yeshua (Acts 2:5). When they heard about the ministry, death, and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua in their own language, they were “pierced to the heart” and became believers and followers of Messiah Yeshua (Acts 2:22-43).

Paul makes reference to “strange tongues” (singular: *heteroglossus*, “strange tongue”). *Hetero*, which has been translated as “strange,” is more accurately translated as “other”<sup>11</sup>:

In the Law it is written, “BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT

LISTEN TO ME,” says the Lord. So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers... (1 Corinthians 14:21-22).

The above is a reference to Isaiah 28:11,

Indeed, He will speak to this people through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, He who said to them, “Here is rest, give rest to the weary,” and, “Here is repose,” but they would not listen (Isaiah 28:11).

Paul refers to the gift of tongues as a sign to unbelievers. Isaiah prophesied of a time to come when the Lord would speak to the Israelites who had gone into captivity. He would speak to them in a multitude of “foreign tongues” (“strange tongues”), and yet they would not listen. Paul is connecting the gift of tongues to the revelation of Messiah Yeshua to unbelieving Jews and Israelites who would hear the message of the Lord in a foreign tongue, and yet still not come to believe in Yeshua. Yet, there would also be those who would hear and believe.

Isaiah (Chapter 28) speaks of Ephraim’s captivity, which is a reference to the captivity of the northern Ten Tribes of Israel by Assyria. On the day of Pentecost, Jews and Israelites from all over the ancient world gathered together in Jerusalem. Acts 2:9-11 lists the diverse peoples and regions that this multitude represented. As they lived in other lands, they no longer spoke Hebrew, but spoke the languages of the foreign nations in which they lived. As the message of Messiah Yeshua was proclaimed at Pentecost, they heard in their own languages, the “foreign tongues” of the nations. Paul’s reference therefore confirms that speaking “in tongues” refers to known languages, and that it is a sign to unbelievers (not to believers).

“And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity” (Acts 2:12). They were attempting to comprehend this powerful manifestation from the mouths of uneducated Galileans. It caused them great confusion. If this was a manifestation of God, why was God using these common Galileans and not the Temple priests? One to another, they questioned the meaning of this incredible event.

There were those in the crowd who would not accept that God had chosen these men of Galilee, these believers in Yeshua. Mocking and ridiculing the disciples (Acts 2:13), they discounted their words as drunken babble: “They are full of sweet wine,” referring to the strong wine that has been kept for a year.<sup>12</sup>

“But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven” raises his voice by the power of the Spirit of the Holy One and speaks the message of the Spirit of God to all who would listen: “Men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give heed to my words” (Acts 2:14). Peter commands them to pay attention to this message being spoken by the power of the Spirit of the Holy One through him.

“For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is (only) the third hour [9 a.m.] of the day” (Acts 2:15). Peter makes it clear that the accusations of the scoffers are untrue. These Galileans were not flopping on the ground or acting out of control in any manner, but were boldly proclaiming the Word of God in languages/dialects that were not native to them in Galilee.

Peter quickly recaptures the audience’s attention away from the mockers:

“but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even upon my bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth My Spirit and they shall prophesy’ ” (Acts 2:16-18).

Peter then continues to quote from Joel 2:28-32, as the Spirit gives him utterance (Acts 2:19-21). He brings forth a powerful message of salvation (Acts 2:22-40). He attests to the miracles and signs performed by God through Yeshua, and to His death and resurrection. That day, three thousand receive the message and are baptized. Significantly, at the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, three thousand were killed for rejecting God’s message and worshipping the golden calf. At that time, God wrote His Commandments on stone by the power of the Spirit. Now God’s promise to write His Commandments in the believer’s heart began to be fulfilled.

Absolutely nowhere in this chapter of the Book of Acts are the abuses of speaking in “other tongues,” or the folly of so-called “holy laughter,” taught or justified. God’s ability to use humans to speak a message by the power of the Spirit of the Holy One, which indwells all believers, is clearly taught. The message that God proclaims by the power of His Spirit is also clear. It is the message of salvation for humanity through the atonement of Messiah Yeshua, fulfilling in its entirety the sacrificial law, and the resurrection of Yeshua from the dead, as He was found without sin under the law.

The Greek text of these passages is clearly written in a grammatical form to emphasize that this power of God occurred then and can occur in anyone today, if one is

willing to allow God to use him/her as the Spirit chooses. Therefore, the spiritual gifts have remained in operation from this time forward, and did not cease with the Early Church. However, 1 Corinthians 12 is clear that all the spiritual gifts of God are under the control of the Spirit, not under the control of human beings, as is so clearly demonstrated in the events of Pentecost.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Vol. 3, p. 304.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 219.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 3, p. 20-21.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p.21.

<sup>7</sup> Michael L. Munk, *The Wisdom in the Hebrew Alphabet*, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> Vine, Vol. 4, p. 142.

<sup>9</sup> Vine, Vol. 2, p. 309.

<sup>10</sup> Vine, Vol. 4, p. 142.

<sup>11</sup> Vine, Vol. 3, p. 146; Vol. 4, p. 143.

<sup>12</sup> Robertson, Vol. 3, p. 25.

# Chapter 11 The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

“I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit”

(Mark 1:8).

What does being baptized in the Spirit mean? Some use it to describe the infilling of the believer by the Holy Spirit as manifested by speaking “in tongues,” which is considered evidence of salvation. The experience is referred to as “the baptism of the Holy Spirit” (or Holy Ghost), and is considered separate and distinct from the experience of repentance and salvation. But is this understanding supported in the New Testament?

We have seen that the gift of tongues, as it occurred at Pentecost, involves speaking intelligible languages one has not learned, by supernatural empowering of the Holy Spirit. God’s purpose in manifesting this spiritual gift is as a sign to unbelievers, such as the Jews who did not believe in Messiah Yeshua. Having witnessed the supernatural signs and hearing Peter’s words, three thousand received the Gospel of Messiah Yeshua that day. (For a full discussion of the Gift of Tongues, see Chapter 12.)

## The Biblical Concept of Immersion

To better understand the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we must first understand the concept of baptism from the Hebraic roots context of the Bible. The Greek word, *baptisma*, translates as “baptism,” and refers to the processes of immersion, submersion, and emergence.<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word, *tevilah*, translates as “immersion.” In the Biblical context, *tevilah* refers to the “act of taking a ritual bath in a *mikveh* (gathering of water).”<sup>2</sup> The water for a *mikveh* must come from a running (“living”) source, such as a spring or river, and must be sufficient for complete immersion of the body.<sup>3</sup> Immersion may take place in a *mikveh* bath or directly in a stream or river.

According to the Torah (Mosaic law), a purifying bath was required to remove uncleanness due to various situations, such as leprosy, menstruation, seminal discharge, childbirth, and contact with a corpse (Leviticus 12:2; 15:2-13; Numbers 19, Deuteronomy 23:10-11). Ritual purification symbolizes spiritual purification, and is not necessarily connected with physical cleanliness.



Immersion was also done in the case of proselytes accepted into Judaism. It was considered a bath of purification to symbolically remove the uncleanness of paganism. Prior to immersion, proselytes received “adequate instruction in religious doctrine and practice.”<sup>4</sup> During the Roman period:

Many Romans attached themselves to Judaism with varying degrees of intensity. The greater number of “those who revered God” renounced polytheism and image worship, abstained from forbidden food, kept the Sabbath, and attended the synagogue on frequent occasions.<sup>5</sup>

Proselytes were full converts to Judaism, who kept all the Mosaic law, including circumcision. God fearers, such as Cornelius, were partial converts who accepted most belief and practice, without circumcision.<sup>6</sup>

## The Immersion of Repentance

Given the Biblical concept of immersion, let us examine the immersion (baptism) of John the Baptist. John called all Jews to repentance in preparation for the coming of the Messiah:

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4).

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet, saying, ‘THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!’ ” ... and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins (Matthew 3:2, 3, 6).

The immersion of John was an immersion of repentance, not an immersion of salvation. That would come later, after Yeshua’s resurrection and the events of Pentecost. The Hebrew word for repentance is *teshuvah*, “denoting a return to God after sin.” (In contrast, *meshuvah* denotes a turning away from God, also called apostasy, a falling away from Biblical truth.<sup>7</sup>)

Those who immersed themselves in the Jordan River did so as a public display of their repentance. Walking out into the water, they proclaimed their need for spiritual purification, and totally immersed themselves beneath the water. John stood nearby as a

witness of their act of self-immersion. He was not dunking them under the water, but merely acting as a witness, as prescribed by Jewish law. Generally, the witness was a priest, but in this case, the prophet John, who had called all to repentance, performed the role of witness.

Likewise, John witnessed the immersion of Yeshua in the Jordan River:

Now it came about when all the people were baptized, that Jesus [Yeshua] also was baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, “Thou art My beloved son, in Thee I am well-pleased” (Luke 3:21-22).

During Yeshua’s immersion, the Spirit of the Holy One manifested “like a dove.” This does not mean as an actual dove, but in a form resembling the shape of a dove. We believe this refers to the shape of the dove’s hovering wings, which resemble the Hebrew letter *kaf*. The reason for its significance is that the anointing oil was poured on the head of a high priest or king in the pattern resembling the shape of this Hebrew letter.<sup>8</sup> The oil symbolized the Spirit of the Holy One. This manifestation of the Spirit of God signified the anointing of Yeshua as the Anointed One (Messiah) of God.

## The Immersion of the Spirit of the Holy One

Not until after Yeshua’s resurrection and the subsequent indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit in believers of Yeshua, could there be a “baptism” of the Holy Spirit. This word is used in a metaphorical sense to describe the spiritual immersion of the believer’s spirit in the Spirit of the Holy One. When a person comes in repentance for sin and turns to God for forgiveness through the atoning work of Messiah Yeshua, sin is forgiven and the direct spiritual connection is made to God by the Spirit. Therefore, to be “baptized in the Spirit” means to be immersed or joined in unity with the Spirit of God. One’s spirit is no longer separated from God, but is joined to God through the Spirit. This makes possible the manifestation of the spiritual gifts according to the will of God.

We prefer using the name “Spirit of the Holy One” because this is a more accurate way of translating *Ruach HaKodesh*. *Ruach* means “Spirit” and *HaKodesh* means “the Holy One.” These are two nouns, not an adjective and a noun, as in the English “Holy Spirit.” The Holy One is God the Father, and the Spirit is of the “Holy One,” not a

separate god or entity. The power of God manifests in the Spirit of the Holy One and in “the Anointed One,” Yeshua Himself, Who is also fully God. And the purpose of the Spirit of the Holy One is to draw all humanity to Messiah Yeshua, the only Mediator between humankind and God.

No mediator other than Messiah Yeshua, the Son of God and fully God, is required or even possible. No other person or spiritual entity, whether priest or the “Virgin Mary” or such, can be a mediator or co-mediator between a person and God. To place or accept anything between Yeshua and God is fundamentally contrary to the Word of God and to the only way of salvation.

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, (and) one mediator also between God and men, (the) man Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua], who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony (borne) at the proper time (1 Timothy 2:3-6).

At the moment of receiving Messiah Yeshua as one’s Savior, the Spirit of the Holy indwells (joins in unity with) the believer. As a result, there is a direct line of spiritual communication via the Spirit of God. In a metaphorical sense, the believer is a temple of the Living God because the Spirit of God takes up residence, not in a building such as the Temple, but in the very spirit of the individual:

Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and (that) the Spirit of God dwells in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Collectively, the body of believers in Messiah Yeshua is The Temple of The Living God, by the connection of each individual in unity with the Spirit of God

From the moment a person receives the gift of salvation through Messiah Yeshua, the Spirit of God indwells and joins the individual to God, and the gifts of the Spirit may manifest according to the will of God. There is no subsequent experience or “infilling” with the Holy Spirit. No manifestation of any of the spiritual gifts is required as a sign or evidence of being “Spirit-filled.” Each believer is in union with the fullness of the Spirit of God from the moment of receiving the free gift of salvation in Messiah Yeshua.

However, if a believer is taught that a secondary experience of “filling” with the Holy Spirit (Ghost) is required, then by the power of suggestion, the individual may well display certain behaviors that are learned and expected. The pressure to do so is very great, especially if the belief is that “speaking in tongues” is evidence of salvation.

Let us examine a Scriptural passage that is sometimes misunderstood as proof of a secondary experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. According to Acts 19:1-6, Paul found certain disciples in Ephesus who had received the immersion of repentance, but not the immersion of the Holy Spirit. They had not even heard of the Spirit of the Holy One:

...Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found some disciples, and he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” and they (said) to him, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” And they said, “Into John’s baptism” (Acts 19:1-3).

The reference to “disciples” indicates these individuals had become “learners” of the Word of God, but not yet followers of The Way, the name given to followers of Messiah Yeshua (Acts 28:22). The wealthy city of Ephesus, located in southwestern Asia Minor (today Turkey), was one of the most important pagan centers in the ancient world. It was the center for the cult of Diana (Artemis), and her temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Yet, even here, the message of repentance had reached a small group of twelve who had heard and received the immersion of repentance that John the Baptist had proclaimed. This group likely included Jews as well as Gentiles who had converted to Judaism.

These disciples had heard the message of John the Baptist and had responded with repentance, and public immersion as an outward sign of their repentance. But they had not yet heard that Messiah Yeshua had come, or of His works and resurrection, or concerning the events of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon believers. For this reason, they had not yet received the immersion of salvation in Messiah Yeshua, accompanied by the indwelling of the Spirit of the Holy One.

Paul explains to them that the immersion of John was an immersion of repentance, and that John taught to trust in the Messiah to come (Acts 19:4). When they heard the Good News of Messiah Yeshua, they understood and believed. They desired to be immersed into salvation in Messiah Yeshua and into the Family of God:

And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus [Yeshua] (Acts 19:5).

Being “baptized in the name of Jesus” actually refers to being immersed into the Name of God, which means to become a spiritual member of the Family of God. It does not mean that the literal stating of “I baptize you in the name of Jesus,” or even, “I

baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” is required as part of some ritual of baptism.

In fact, whether these individuals were immersed in water is not completely clear. Since they had already been immersed in water according to the immersion of repentance, it could be that the immersion (baptism) referred to here is in actuality a reference to them being spiritually immersed into the Name of Yeshua and Family of God. Either way, the spiritual experience was the same, and they manifested the spiritual gifts to those who were witnessing these events:

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they (began) speaking with tongues and prophesying (Acts 19:6).

If water immersion took place, Paul would not have laid his hands upon them while they were immersing, for the reasons previously explained. When he did lay his hands upon them, it could have been as a gesture of welcoming them as fellow heirs into the Family (Kingdom) of God. According to Jewish adoption laws, an adopted child was especially treasured as it required special loving effort to bring such a child into the family. These individuals were being adopted into the Family of God, and receiving their new family name written in heaven, not on earth.

On this occasion, they manifested both the gifts of tongues and prophesying. No doubt they were prophesying of the goodness and mercy of God and His Messiah Yeshua in language(s) they had never learned. By the manifestation of these spiritual gifts, God powerfully demonstrated that the gift of salvation and entry into the Family of God was being extended to the Gentiles, as well as the Jews. Any of the witnesses, whether Jew or Gentile, would have seen this supernatural manifestation as a sign of God’s will and power. Therefore, again, the manifestation of the gift of tongues remains in the context as a sign to unbelievers. This included any Jewish believer in Messiah Yeshua if they had not previously believed the gift of salvation also included Gentiles to come into the Family of God.

This passage does not support the concept of baptism of the Holy Spirit, or infilling of the Holy Spirit, as a separate experience from receiving salvation, one in which tongues as *unintelligible* speech is said to be evidence of salvation. Neither does it support the practice of the laying on of hands to “get the gift” of “speaking in tongues.”

## Immersion into the Family of God

In the previous section, we referred to the immersion of the believer into the Family of God. Certain Biblical passages make reference to being “baptized” in the name of Jesus or in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. But what does this actually mean?

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

And Peter (said) to them, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [Yeshua Messiah] for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus [Yeshua] (Acts 19:5).

Messiah Yeshua gave His disciples the Great Commission, telling them to go out into the world and make “learners” (disciples) of the Messiah and the Word of God. The call to repentance and salvation in Messiah Yeshua is extended to all, for God desires that all human beings be saved.

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

Messiah Yeshua authorized His disciples and gave them the power of the Spirit of the Holy One to help bring others into the Family of God. The Family of God is the same as the Kingdom of God. So when the Scripture makes reference to Paul going to the synagogue in Ephesus and persuading the Jews about the Kingdom of God, this also refers to the immersion into the Family of God, which is accomplished by receiving the immersion of salvation in Messiah Yeshua.

And he [Paul] entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading (them) about the kingdom of God (Acts 19:8).

Being immersed into the Family of God does not depend upon water immersion (baptism) with specific words recited in a baptismal ritual, including “in the name of Jesus” or “in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” In other words, a person is immersed into the Family of God by the power of the Holy Spirit as a result of the individual’s repentance (turning away from sin and toward God) and receiving of Messiah Yeshua as the only Savior and Mediator between man and God. As soon as a person does so, the spirit of the person comes into union with the Spirit of God, and is therefore a member of the Family of God. Water baptism is not required for salvation, but is an outward declaration of repentance and trust in Messiah Yeshua for the forgiveness of sin and salvation. That water baptism is not required for salvation is confirmed by Yeshua’s words to the repentant man crucified by His side:

But the other answered, and rebuking him said, “Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he was saying, “Jesus [Yeshua], remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:40-43).

According to Yeshua’s own words, this man, who had not been water baptized, would be with Him in Paradise. After Yeshua gave up His physical body, His spirit went to Paradise, which was a part of Sheol, the dwelling place of the souls of the dead. Prior to Yeshua’s resurrection, Sheol was divided by a “great chasm” into two parts: Sheol Paradise (“Abraham’s bosom”) and Sheol Torment (Luke 16:22-26). The pagan Greeks referred to Sheol Torment as Hades, from which we get the English word “Hell.” Sheol Paradise was the dwelling place of the spirits of those who believed (trusted) in the true God and the promised Messiah, because until Yeshua paid the price for sin atonement, no human spirit could dwell in the presence of God. The spirits of those who rebel against God and reject His Messiah dwell in Sheol Torment, and remain there until the time of judgment.

Yeshua went to Sheol Paradise, not Sheol Torment (Hell). There He revealed Himself as the promised Messiah to the righteous who had trusted in God for their salvation. Even though the spirits of the unsaved were separated from Sheol Paradise, they witnessed this revelation of the Messiah (1 Peter 3:19). When Yeshua took the spirits of the saved with Him, *Sheol* Paradise ceased to be, but *Sheol* Torment continues to be the dwelling place of the unsaved. When Yeshua ascended into Heaven forty days after His resurrection, the

saved spirits ascended with Him in a “cloud,” which was actually a manifestation of the *Shekinah* (Glory Cloud) of God (Acts 1:9).

Another Biblical example that shows water baptism is not required for salvation involves the Gentile Cornelius and his household, who manifested the gifts of the Spirit before being immersed in water. The manifestation of the spiritual gifts is a sign of immersion into the Spirit of God, which can only take place in a saved individual. That is why Peter said water immersion as an outward testimony of repentance and belief (trust) in Yeshua could not be refused:

And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, “Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we (did), can he?” (Acts 10:45-47).

The manifestation of speaking in tongues, intelligible languages, was a sign to those Jewish believers who witnessed the event that God was giving salvation to the Gentiles, as well as the Jews. Up until this time, the Jews thought that the things of God belonged to them exclusively. Now, they were truly amazed as God revealed Himself to the Gentiles.

It is important to note that for a person to decide to be immersed into the Family of God requires the individual to be able to make a responsible decision in the matter. This precludes the religious tradition of infant baptism. There is no infant baptism in the New Testament, and in the cases of household baptisms, this refers to whole families of adults only.

In fact, salvation is not by works, only by grace. This means that water baptism cannot confer salvation, and therefore cannot be said to be required for salvation. Salvation is a free gift of God, based upon one’s trust (belief) in Messiah Yeshua and His full payment for sin, once and for all. It is accompanied by immersion of the Spirit of the Holy One, joining the believer together in a direct line of communication to God, with Messiah Yeshua as the only Mediator. No other mediator or co-mediator is involved. No works of any kind by any human being can make any payment for sin. Therefore, any doctrine that claims Messiah Yeshua’s sacrifice was not sufficient for sin atonement is false and contrary to the Word of God.



## Baptism of the Holy Spirit OR Judgment Fire

A reference to fire in regard to the baptism of the Holy Spirit has been misapplied in some circles to justify unknown tongues and the “holy laughter” experience. The error results from a misinterpretation of Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16. Because Matthew 3:12 provides the context for proper interpretation, let us focus on Matthew 3:10-12.

“And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:10-12).

The Greek word, *puri*, appears in both verses 11 and 12, and refers to the Judgment Fire of God, not to a fire of spiritual gifts, as some contend. According to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, *puri* (root word *pur*) refers to:

...the fire of Divine judgment upon rejectors of Christ, Matt. 3:11 (where a distinction is to be made between the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the fire of Divine retribution; Acts 2:3 could not refer to baptism); Luke 3:16...<sup>9</sup>

It is important to note that the fire referred to “as tongues of fire” in Acts 2:3, that rested over the heads of the disciples signifying the power of the Holy Spirit, is not the same as the Judgment Fire referred to in Matthew 3:11-12.

The meaning of this Scriptural passage must be understood within the context of Matthew 3:10-12, which confirms that it is the Judgment Fire of God that will befall those who do not receive salvation in Messiah Yeshua:

“And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matthew 3:10).

“...but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12).

Trees refer to human beings; trees that do not bear good fruit are those who reject Messiah Yeshua. Likewise, the chaff refers to those who reject the Spirit of God Who draws all human beings to Messiah Yeshua. Either a person receives the Spirit of the Holy One or that person will receive the fire of Divine Judgment.

Let us understand the immersion into the Holy Spirit or Judgment Fire in the Biblical context:

There are three baptisms here, water, spirit, and fire. John used water only. This method was continued during our Lord's ministry. But after His resurrection He told them "John, indeed, baptizes in water, yet *you* shall be baptized in holy spirit after not many of these days (Ac. 1<sup>5</sup>). From Pentecost onward two baptisms obtained. At first, those who were baptized in water received the baptism of the holy spirit also. Cornelius received the spirit before he was baptized in water (Ac. 10<sup>44-48</sup>). Now there is only one baptism (Eph. 4<sup>5</sup>). In one spirit we all were baptized into one body (1 Co. 12<sup>13</sup>). ...

The baptism of fire is the burning of the chaff. ... Those whom He does not baptize in holy spirit, in grace, He will baptize in fire, in judgment.<sup>10</sup>

Either a person is immersed in the Holy Spirit or the Judgment Fire of Divine retribution. Messiah Yeshua is the only Judge.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Vol. 1, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Birnbaum, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts*, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 239, 391.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>6</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 4, pp. 908-909.

<sup>7</sup> Birnbaum, p. 670.

<sup>8</sup> Aryeh Kaplan, *The Torah Anthology: Exodus VI*, Vol. 9, p. 227. The reference to the shape “like an inverted U”, as signified by the Greek letter omega, W, also describes the Hebrew letter kaf, K, which is written like the letter U on its side.

<sup>9</sup> Vine, Vol. 2, p. 102.

<sup>10</sup> A. E. Knoch, *Concordant Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 13, Matthew 3:11-12 commentary.

## Chapter 12 The Gift of Tongues

So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers... (1 Corinthians 14:22).

All do not speak with tongues, do they? (1 Corinthians 12:30).

...in the church, I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue

(1 Corinthians 14:19).

We previously discussed the events of Pentecost on the Temple Mount, which reveal that the gift of tongues is the supernatural ability to speak in intelligible language as a sign to unbelievers. Peter proclaimed the fulfillment of Joel's prophecies regarding the outpouring of the Spirit of the Holy One (Holy Spirit) among believers in Messiah Yeshua, as well as concerning the ministry, death, and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua. He was understood in all the various languages and dialects of the Jews who had gathered at the Temple from every part of the Diaspora. This was a powerful display of the work of the Spirit of the Holy One, and its purpose was to bring the Word of God concerning Messiah Yeshua to all who heard.

We also previously discussed other events recorded in the book of Acts that relate to the gift of tongues. For example, when Paul proclaimed the salvation of Messiah Yeshua to the disciples in Ephesus, these Gentile believers also exhibited the gift of speaking in tongues (Acts 19:5-6). This occasion is consistent with what happened at Pentecost because the supernatural ability to speak in intelligible language they had not learned was a sign to unbelievers. In this case, the unbelievers included those who, though they believed in Messiah Yeshua, had not yet understood that the Gentiles were also to receive salvation and the indwelt Spirit of the Holy One, just as they had.

## “Tongues”: Intelligible Languages

Two Greek words that refer to intelligible language are *glossa* (Acts 2:4, 11) and *dialektos* (Acts 1:19; 2:6, 8; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14). The word *glossa* (plural: *glossai*) is translated as “tongue” or “language.” This word refers to either the tongue, as an organ of speech, or to the supernatural ability to speak in another language that has not been learned.<sup>1</sup> Since the tongue is used for speech, this word is used to refer to intelligible language. The word *dialektos* refers to the particular language or dialect of a country or district.<sup>2</sup> The English word “dialect” is derived from this Greek word. Dialects may include very closely related forms of the same basic language (such as Hebrew and Aramaic).

In comparing various English translations of the Bible, we can see that the word *glossai* in Acts 2:4 is translated either as “tongues” (KJV, NAS, and NIV) or as “languages” (Amplified Bible). The same word is translated “tongues” in Acts 2:11 in all four versions (KJV, NAS, NIV, and Amplified). Either way, this word refers to intelligible language.

In comparison, the word *dialektos* is translated variously as “tongue,” “dialect,” “language,” and “Aramaic.” For example, the King James Version translates *dialektos* as “tongue” in Acts 1:19, Acts 2:8, Acts 21:40, Acts 22:2, and Acts 26:14; and as “language” in Acts 2:6. The Amplified Bible translates *dialektos* as “dialect” in Acts 1:19, Acts 2:6, Acts 2:8, and Acts 21:40; and as “tongue” in Acts 22:2 and Acts 26:14. The New American Standard Bible translates *dialektos* as “language” in Acts 1:19, Acts 2:6, and Acts 2:8; and as “dialect” in Acts 21:40, Acts 22:2, and Acts 26:14. The New International Version translates *dialektos* as “language” in Acts 1:19, Acts 2:6, and Acts 2:8; and as “Aramaic” in Acts 21:40, Acts 22:2, and Acts 26:14. These various words all refer to intelligible language.

## A Sign to Unbelievers

Another example of salvation being brought to the Gentiles, as evidenced by the gift of tongues, is told in the story of Cornelius. Cornelius, a Roman centurion, was a Gentile who revered God (Acts 10:1-2). In a vision from God, Cornelius was instructed to send for the apostle Peter (Acts 10:3-8). He did so, and as his men were approaching Joppa, where Peter was staying, Peter was prepared for this visit by also experiencing a vision,

in which he was to understand that the Gentiles were not to be considered unclean (Acts 10:10-16). Up to this time, it was not considered permissible for Jews to associate with Gentiles (Acts 10:28).

The Spirit of God directed Peter to go with them to Caesarea, where Cornelius, his relatives, and close friends were gathered together (Acts 10:17-27). When they heard the witness of Peter concerning Messiah Yeshua, they believed and received the indwelling of the Spirit of the Holy One, as demonstrated by the gift of tongues:

And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, “Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we (did), can he?” (Acts 10:45-47).

These Gentile believers received the immersion into the Spirit of God, and were supernaturally enabled to speak in languages they had not learned, as a sign that God was also pouring out His Spirit upon Gentile believers in Messiah Yeshua. According to Acts 10:46, the circumcised believers heard the Gentiles exalting God, which means they *understood* the languages that were being spoken. We believe that one of the languages spoken was very likely Hebrew, which the Gentiles did not know.

## Strange Tongues or Foreign Languages?

Paul makes an interesting statement to the Corinthian church regarding the gift of tongues:

In the Law it is written, “BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME,” says the Lord. So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers...” (1 Corinthians 14:21-22).

The reference to “strange tongues” (“other tongues” in KJV) comes from Isaiah: Indeed, He will speak to this people through stammering lips and a foreign tongue... (Isaiah 28:11).

The Greek word, *heteroglossois*, translated as “strange tongues,” is more accurately translated as “other tongues” because the Greek word *heteros* refers to “other” or “another of a different sort.”<sup>3</sup> Isaiah prophesied a time when the Lord would speak to the Israelites, who had gone into dispersion. He would speak in a multitude of “foreign tongues,” and yet they would not listen. Paul is connecting the gift of tongues to the

revelation of Messiah Yeshua to unbelieving Israelites who would hear the message of the Lord in foreign tongues, and yet still not come to believe in Yeshua.

Isaiah (Chapter 28) speaks of Ephraim's captivity, which is a reference to the captivity of the northern ten tribes of Israel by Assyria. On the day of Pentecost, Israelites and Jews from all over the ancient world returned to Jerusalem. As they lived in other lands, they no longer spoke Hebrew, but spoke the languages of the foreign nations in which they lived. As the message of Messiah Yeshua was proclaimed at Pentecost, they heard in their own languages, the "foreign tongues" of the nations in which they lived. Paul's reference therefore confirms that the gift of speaking in tongues does indeed refer to speaking known languages, and that it is a sign to unbelievers.

## Paul's Instructions Regarding the Gift of Tongues

Paul lists the gift of tongues, as well as the interpretation of tongues, last on the list of the spiritual gifts, which seems to be an indicator of relative importance and emphasis (1 Corinthians 12:10). He also states that not all speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:30). Each of the gifts, as previously discussed, manifests according to God's will, and is not a permanent gift for any individual.

In addition, Paul emphasizes order in the manifesting of this gift:

If anyone speaks in a tongue, (it should be) by two or at the most three, and (each) in turn, and let one interpret; but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. ...for God is not (a God) of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints (1 Corinthians 14:27, 28, 33).

When the gift of tongues manifests as a sign to an unbeliever, the unbeliever is able to understand (interpret) the intelligible language that is spoken.

In Chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians, Paul emphasizes the importance of believers manifesting the gifts of the spirit in a way that edifies the Body of Messiah. In this context, over and over he emphasizes that speaking in a tongue that no one understands does not edify the body in any way.

One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself... (1 Corinthians 14:4).

But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what shall I profit you, unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching (1 Corinthians 14:6).

So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air (1 Corinthians 14:9).

What edifies the Body of Messiah most is the knowledge, understanding, and revelation of the Word of God. For this reason, Paul says: “In the church I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousands words in a tongue” (1 Corinthians 14:19). In this regard, it is important to note that due to Paul’s educational background, he knew many languages. When Paul states that he speaks “in tongues more than you all” (1 Corinthians 14:18), this likely refers to his ability to speak many languages, since every Scriptural example of the gift of tongues refers to intelligible language. It is even possible that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council of supreme authority that met in Jerusalem (Acts 26:10). Members of the Sanhedrin had to understand many languages and dialects in order to hear cases presented to them and pass judgment.

If the tongue that cannot be understood by man is a form of “ecstatic utterance,” then Paul is saying that this type of tongue is not something that edifies the body, but only edifies oneself, and therefore is not something that should be practiced in the church, but something one can do privately (1 Corinthians 14:2, 4). It seems probable that Paul was dealing with a particular situation in the Corinthian body. Were there individuals in the body of believers who were “speaking in tongues” that could not be understood, causing confusion and disruption? Was this practice interfering with teaching and learning the Word of God, which Paul considered the primary focus in order to edify the Body of Messiah?

In all this, Paul stresses the use of one’s mind in addition to one’s spirit to learn the Word of God, to pray, and to praise God:

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is (the outcome) then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also (1 Corinthians 14:14-15).

Therefore, the teaching that a person needs a “prayer language” in the form of unintelligible speech is not Biblically supported. In the case of a person praying when



he/she cannot find the words, truly the Spirit of God communicates beyond the ability to speak, but this does not require a so-called “prayer language”:

And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for (us) with groanings too deep for words (Romans 8:26).

“Groanings too deep for words” conveys a deep sense of spiritual and/or physical anguish on the part of the believer who is praying, rather than being a manifestation of some kind of “tongue.”

Paul’s instructions concerning tongues are especially relevant today due to widespread misunderstanding and misapplication, particularly in circles that emphasize spiritual experiences and supernatural manifestations. We as believers should remember Yeshua’s words that it is an evil and (spiritually) adulterous generation that seeks after signs (Matthew 16:4), and that many will say they manifested the gifts of the spirit but were not of God (Matthew 7:22-23). Remember also Paul’s repeated warnings concerning false ministers of the Messiah, who are supernaturally empowered by Satan and his demons to work false signs and wonders (2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; 1 Timothy 4:1).

### The Gift of Interpretation

The gift of interpretation is the ability to understand a foreign language never learned, by the empowering of the Holy Spirit. A good example that fits the Biblical perspective was shared by a reliable source with Christie Michas. The believer was supernaturally given the ability to understand Arabic, and this was in the context of providing a sign concerning the believer’s testimony about Messiah Yeshua. In this case, the sign was given to Muslim Arabs. We can see that the gift of tongues and the gift of interpretation manifest in the Body of Messiah according to God’s will, as witness to the truth that Yeshua is the Anointed One of God, Messiah and Savior of humankind.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Vol. 4, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> Vine, Vol. 2, p. 309.

<sup>3</sup> Vine, Vol. 3, p. 146; Vol. 4, p. 143.

## Chapter 13 Erroneous Teachings Concerning Tongues

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The issue of tongues is a source of much controversy and confusion in the Body of Messiah. But the Bible instructs believers in understanding the difference between the Biblical gift of tongues and other manifestations, whether self-generated or empowered by Satanic and demonic activity. Applying Biblical truth dispels erroneous teachings and practices of “tongues.”

We previously discussed the actual events at Pentecost, and the manifestation of the gift of tongues as the supernatural ability to speak in a language unknown to the speaker, for the purpose of proclaiming salvation in Messiah Yeshua, as a sign to unbelievers. We previously explained how the spirits of believers are joined in unity with God by immersion in the Spirit of the Holy One (Holy Spirit), and that those who manifest the gift of tongues exhibit the supernatural ability to speak in a language unknown to the believer, as a sign to unbelievers, just as the disciples did at Pentecost. We previously studied Paul’s instructions to believers regarding the gift of tongues, recognizing that their Biblical application is very relevant today, as there is so much misunderstanding concerning this particular spiritual gift.

Now, let us apply Biblical truth that we have learned to evaluate certain teachings about tongues. The following teachings are taken word-for-word as they appeared in a newsletter from the Pentecostal perspective. We want to stress that we are in no way judging any person for their beliefs, especially when sincerely held in the desire to serve and please the Lord. However, Scripture emphatically teaches believers to apply the Word of God to determine if a teaching is true or not. The Bereans did this even when Paul taught:

And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, (to

see) whether these things were so (Acts 17:10-11).

For the purposes of Biblical evaluation, each section of the previously mentioned newsletter is first presented as it originally appeared, word-for-word in the STATEMENT. Following the STATEMENT is a RESPONSE, which applies Biblical truth in order to see if the teaching is Biblically sound or not. (Note that the King James Version is used in the newsletter quotes.)

STATEMENT: “Someone said ‘Do I have to speak in tongues?’ ” The answer to that query is “No, but you get to!” We don’t have to receive gifts from God but we get to. Further, we are exhorted to seek gifts. “But covet earnestly the best gifts” 1 Cor 12:31.

RESPONSE: The first part is correct, you do not have to speak in other languages at all, it is your privilege. Yes, you can—as the Spirit provides the occasion and the language—not at your beckoning, as is believed and practiced in most Charismatic and Pentecostal circles. And, as previously discussed, the true gift of tongues is all for the glory of God as a sign to the unbelieving world, not for in-house demonstrations of the power of God.

The reference to 1 Corinthians 12:31 is stated in such a way as to imply that the believer should seek tongues as one of the “best gifts.” However, if taken in context, Paul’s statement: “But earnestly desire the greater gifts” does not refer to seeking tongues, which he places at the bottom of the list of the spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:10). Paul consistently emphasizes those spiritual gifts that edify the Body of Messiah, and states that tongues that cannot be understood do not edify the body, but only oneself (1 Corinthians 14:2, 4). Furthermore, Paul states that not all believers speak “with tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:30).

It is correct that we are to seek to be used by God in the manifestation of the spiritual gifts, as given for God’s purposes, not human desires. Yes, we are definitely extorted to seek the best of the spiritual gifts. The reason to seek the best of the spiritual gifts is simple. The more humble and devoted to allowing ourselves to be a tool for God, the more God is going to allow us to operate in the gifts when His occasion arises. Again, of the utmost importance is the awareness that the gifts are not under the control or call of any individual, but totally under the control of the Spirit of the Holy One.

STATEMENT: “God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will” (Heb 2:4). This verse tells us that signs and gifts are God’s stamp of approval and if we pass by them we are neglectful.

RESPONSE: Signs, wonders, miracles, and even “gifts” can be counterfeits of Satan. Therefore, to naively assume that all such phenomena are necessarily “God’s stamp of approval” is very dangerous. The question is, “How do we discern supernatural activity of the Spirit of God from that of the Adversary? Look closely at this verse: “God also bearing witness.” Bearing witness to whom and for what purpose? The ones to receive the witness are unbelievers. The witness is seeing God’s power manifested as He wills in a person, as proof that He is the Almighty God. This does not mean God automatically places His stamp of approval on anything anyone does, even if the name of God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit is used. God does not automatically put His stamp of approval on anything you do, no matter how you say, proclaim, or pray it. He will place His witness of His glory only on *His work* as *He wills* and only for *His purposes*. Believers are simply to be willing and spiritually prepared to be used when called upon.

The assumption that the occurrence of signs and wonders among Christians proves the manifestations are of God must be called into question. Signs and wonders are not proof that the supernatural manifestations are of God. In fact, Scripture continually warns believers to test the spirits and apply the Word of God in order to discern if spiritual manifestations are of God or not. And we cannot disregard the possibility that speaking “in tongues” can also be unconsciously self-generated.

STATEMENT: If we are to do the will of God we must discover the Biblical support and application for tongues and their meaning. There are numerous reasons for receiving and practicing the gift of tongues.

RESPONSE: We agree that we must study ourselves approved before God in order to Biblically verify the truth of what is being stated or written, as well as the source (spirit) of any manifestation. From our previous studies, we learned that God used the evidence of speaking in known languages by those who had not learned these languages. Its sole purpose was to bear witness to the unbelieving Jews, and its manifestations were solely under the supervision and power of the Spirit of the Holy One. At no time was this manifestation ever at the call of the apostles and disciples.

In the following statements, we will examine Charismatic/Pentecostal beliefs concerning the reasons for tongues.

STATEMENT: For the Assurance of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” (1 Cor 12:7). Manifestation means that something noticeable is happening. Speaking in tongues is

EVIDENCE that you are being filled with the Holy Ghost. It is a simple, God appointed way for you to MANIFEST the gift of the Holy Spirit.

RESPONSE: First of all, the concept of a second, later experience, after salvation, involving the filling with the Holy Spirit is incorrect. (See Chapter 11: The Baptism of the Holy Spirit.) The Scriptures are very clear that once you are saved, you receive all that God has to give—the fullness of God now dwells in you. (This does not make the believer a god, only spiritually connected to God.) If we use a little common sense, we will realize that if you get all that God has to give, and that in the spiritual sense the union of your spirit with the Spirit of the Holy One causes the fullness of God to dwell in you, what else can you get? The Word of God shows you got it all when you were saved.

Now on to the word “manifestation.” This manifestation of the indwelling Spirit of God comes as a result of your humility and obedience to be used of God to be a witness of His glory to unbelievers, according to His will. The ability to manifest anything from God is already residing in you when you came to believe. He can use you, as you are now one of His children. Once your spirit is united with His, you are a child of God ready to be His servant. He placed the essential tool in you at salvation: the Spirit of the Holy One, who raised Messiah Yeshua from the dead. This same Spirit is residing in you and also vivifying your mortal flesh, to be serviceable for His purposes, not yours.

STATEMENT: Often there is debate over the purpose of tongues but this scripture tells us that the manifestation of the Spirit is for our “profit.” This word “profit” in Greek means “to contribute, to be better for, profit.” Tongues help the individual believer and the body of Christ to be what God has appointed us to be. They contribute to our spirituality and we use them for the betterment of our walk with Him. We profit because of them.

RESPONSE: This is a misguided explanation of the words for the “profit withal.” The text here is in no way supporting any form of personal profit from tongues. This is strictly speaking of the expansion of the Body of Messiah. Yes, the capability to manifest the spiritual gifts is given to each one of us as believers, since we are filled with the Spirit of the Holy One at salvation. Therefore, we can be used if God so chooses to use us to expand His kingdom by manifesting one of the spiritual gifts, according to His will and purpose, not our own.

STATEMENT: The common sign of the baptism of the Holy Ghost in the early church was the sign of speaking in tongues. “While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Ghost

fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, ... because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God” (Acts 10:44-46).

RESPONSE: In Chapter 11, we learned the real meaning of the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” (more accurately, the immersion of the Spirit of the Holy One), which refers to the believer’s spirit joining in unity with the Spirit of the Holy One. Those who listened to the words of Peter, and believed, were saved, and their spirits were united with God’s Spirit. And now they were His servants and He chose to use them to prove His point that Gentiles were entitled to this same salvation by His power and grace. God chose to have these new children of His, His new servants, manifest the power of God as a witness to the Hebrew-speaking Jews present. The message of God was spoken to them in Hebrew, which the Jews knew was unknown to these Gentiles. There is no record of any subsequent manifestation of this gift again by these particular Gentiles. It had served its purpose as a powerful witness of Messiah Yeshua to a group of unbelieving Jews.

STATEMENT: God knows the ways of Satan better than we do and He has provided us with evidence of our filling. God wants us to know the reality of His presence and power. Without this evidence we are more vulnerable to attacks of doubt. How many times has the devil told you that you were not saved? I have had this attack many times over the years but I am always able to reassure myself that my salvation is real when I remember that I have been baptized in the Holy Ghost with THE EVIDENCE OF TONGUES. Satan has no evidence that I am not saved but God has given me evidence that I am. Thank God for the evidence.

RESPONSE: Paul said that not all would speak in tongues, referring to believers in the Body of Messiah (I Corinthians 12:30). Every instance of the true gift of tongues shown in the Scriptures was a single and unique manifestation, as a sign to unbelievers. The evidence of a person’s salvation is the fruit of the Spirit, not tongues. Believers are to show evidence of their salvation in their works, lives, and how they handle trials. Salvation does not come by works, but as James said, “faith without works is dead,” and “I will show you my faith by my works” (James 2:17-18).

The statement that “Satan has no evidence that you are not saved” is ridiculous. Satan has plenty of evidence if you are not saved. All he has to do is look at your fruit, for the only evidence that you have to present to the world of your salvation is your fruit.

Moreover, believers should not be naive concerning Satan's counterfeit tongues. Followers of certain false religious cults mimic the gift of tongues, speaking intelligible languages that they never learned. In a cable program about demonic possession, this particular ability was documented.<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, we have also shown that it is possible for a believer to think he/she is displaying the gift of tongues, when in fact he/she is self-generating sounds that are not true language. Certainly this is not proof of salvation, although there are sincere believers who are saved and believe they are manifesting this particular gift.

STATEMENT: To Use To Edify Yourself. "He that speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself..." (1 Cor 14: 4) God has given us the means to edify ourselves. The Greek meaning of this word is: to be a house builder, i.e. to construct or confirm, edify, embolden. This definition tells me that we are building ourselves up as the house of God when we speak in tongues. We are made bold when we practice this gift. We confirm the power of God flowing through us.

RESPONSE: In referring to those who speak in a tongue no one else can understand, Paul says, "One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself..." (1 Corinthians 14:4). But Paul goes on to discourage this practice, not encourage it! Taken in context, Paul says that the speaking of an unknown tongue is self-centered and has no value to the body of believers. His main concern is the edification of the Body of Messiah, and that the gifts of the Spirit manifest for this purpose. Any tongue that is spoken but not understood does not bring edification to the body, and therefore is not to be practiced among the body of believers.

STATEMENT: This is probably the main reason Satan does not want us to receive the Baptism. When we are endowed with power from on high and the ability to strengthen ourselves the Devil has little chance of victory in the spiritual war in which we are engaged. As we exercise the gift of praying in tongues we are "stirring up" the Holy Spirit within us. Paul wrote to Timothy to do this very thing. "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6).

RESPONSE: Note the statement: "*As we exercise the gift of praying in tongues*" (emphasis added). *Who* is exercising the gift? The gifts of the Spirit, including the true gift of tongues, are not to be exercised (controlled) by any human being, to be turned on and off at will. This is totally contrary to the Biblical instruction concerning the gifts of



the Spirit, which are completely under the control of the Spirit of the Holy One, manifesting only in accordance with the purpose and will of God (1 Corinthians 12:11).

It is also erroneous to use the Scripture that Paul told Timothy to stir up the gift of God to refer to manifesting tongues (2 Timothy 1:6). In fact, what has happened is that Timothy is now back in line with God after having been sent away by Paul to learn maturity and humility. Paul is now telling the more mature Timothy to stir up that gift of God, the message of salvation that he learned from Paul before, and go out to teach the Gospel. He is telling Timothy to remember when he first came to this truth and he, Paul, laid his hands on him for service to God. This laying on of Paul's hands on Timothy has absolutely nothing to do with speaking in tongues as evidence of being saved, or as some kind of spiritual weapon against Satan.

STATEMENT: Tongues Are Full of Faith. Believe this one thing above all. When you pray in tongues you are exercising faith and every syllable you utter is full of faith. Tongues please God for they are full of faith. This is one reason why there is so much opposition to tongues. They are received in faith, they are spoken in faith, they help build faith and they count with God. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Heb 11:6.)

RESPONSE: What is faith? The Hebrew word, *emunah*, meaning "faith":

denotes absolute belief in divine providence, in God's unfailing goodness, in his aid and deliverance in times of distress. ...The very Hebrew word *Emunah*, which is commonly translated *faith*, means trust, reliance, full confidence in a promise.<sup>1</sup>

Faith is total, unshakeable trust in God, and is demonstrated in every aspect of a believer's life. Faith is shown in our absolute trust of God in all situations. Faith in God is shown in our obedience to Him and keeping of His commandments. Faith in God is shown in our total belief in the Word of God and our commitment to studying and learning the Word of God. Faith results in our becoming humble, willing, knowledgeable, and prepared servants of God.

Yes, Scripture is true:

And without faith it is impossible to please (Him), for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and (that) He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

STATEMENT: To Introduce Prophetic Statements During Corporate Gatherings. “I would that you all spoke with tongues, but rather that you prophesied: for greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.” (1 Cor 14:5)

The gift of tongues for public ministry is a beautiful gift and is manifested for the edifying of the body of Christ. The Church is built up and strengthened when the operation of the gift of tongues, coupled with interpretation, is present. Tongues and their interpretation provide a vehicle of direct audible communication between Jesus and the body. What could be more energizing than hearing the Lord speak His mind into a meeting?

RESPONSE: There is absolutely no possible way to see in this verse that there is to be another tongue not intelligible to everyone else in the corporate body before prophecy can be given. God uses the gift of another tongue in a corporate body only if there is an unbeliever in the audience who speaks another language unknown to the particular congregation. Then, and only then, does God manifest this gift to show the unbeliever His glory and to speak a message specifically for him/her to hear and understand.

ENDNOTE: The purpose of this chapter is to expose the errors taught and practiced in Charismatic/Pentecostal circles concerning the gift of tongues. There is a true gift of tongues and it is essential for all believers to understand what true tongues are and what they are not, for this is an area of Christianity that has drawn many into false manifestations, signs, and wonders. The result is apostasy, a falling away from the true Word of God.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Philip Birnbaum, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts*, pp. 41-42.

## Chapter 14 False Spiritual Manifestations

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness... (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

...in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

### Christianity's False Teachers, False Prophets, and False Ministers

Today in Christianity, there are many false teachers, false prophets, false ministers, etc. who are leading people into apostasy (falling away from Biblical truth). Some of these individuals have the appearance of having great power of God. The Adversary, Satan, is quite capable of performing all kinds of signs and wonders, and to a generation that seeks such signs and wonders, this opens the way for great spiritual deception. Simon Magus is an example of such an individual during the time of the Apostles:

Now there was a certain man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city, and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God" (Acts 8:9-10).

Simon Magus is a perfect example of a man who was considered by large numbers of people to have and display the power of God. Magic in this case does not refer to magical tricks, but to real supernatural power and manifestations empowered by Satanic and demonic forces. Just as many of the Jewish people were deceived by Simon Magus, so too many Christians today are deceived by false ministers, teachers, and prophets whom they believe are displaying the power and spiritual gifts of God.

What is even more interesting about Simon Magus is that when he heard the Gospel, he believed and was baptized:

And even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip; and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed (Acts 8:13).

What Simon Magus most desired was supernatural power. He had been empowered by Satan to work many signs and wonders. Now he wanted the power of God, and he was willing to do whatever it took to obtain it:

Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostle's hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!" (Acts 8:18-20).

Beware of those whose focus is manifesting supernatural power, especially when this affords them material gain and position. They may use the name of Jesus, but are they ministers of the true Gospel and true Messiah?

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness... (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

...in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

Even casting out demons in the name of Jesus does not prove an individual is acting in accordance with the power of God:

But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." And seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. (Acts 19:13-16).

Here we see that there are individuals who perform exorcism (casting out of demons), but that this is not necessarily an act of God. In this particular (rather humorous) case, these Jewish exorcists attempt to use the name of Yeshua in their practice of exorcism, with dire consequences.

This brings up a key aspect of exorcism as practiced in the past and present. It might be assumed that the casting out of demons can only be done by the power of God, but this is not the case. For example, in Africa there are pagan tribes that have individuals who cast out demons. But this is certainly not an example of the power of God. Neither is this a situation of Satan being divided against himself, but rather an example of how Satan deceives individuals into following false spirits and false religions.

This same principle can be applied to Christian exorcism as well. The casting out of demons in and of itself does not prove the power of God. This type of spiritual phenomenon, like all others, must be discerned within the context in which it occurs from the perspective of Biblical truth. Even if someone casts out demons in the name of Jesus, remember what Yeshua said (emphasis added):

“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and *in Your name cast out demons*, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS’ ” (Matthew 7:22-23).

## A False Messiah and a False Gospel

Scripture repeatedly warns believers to discern the spirits:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the (spirit) of the antichrist, of which you have heard that is coming, and now it is already in the world (1 John 4:1-3).

According to the false teachings of Gnosticism, Yeshua did not appear in a real physical body, but only as a spirit. For this reason, John says that any teaching (spirit) that says Yeshua did not come in the flesh is a false teaching (spirit). In a broader sense, John’s instruction applies to any false teaching (false spirit) that is contrary to the Word of God regarding Messiah Yeshua and the Gospel. Likewise, Paul emphasizes that believers must follow the true Gospel of Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus), and not be

misled by a false gospel that presents a false Messiah:

But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed (Galatians 1:8).

For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear (this) beautifully (2 Corinthians 11:4).

Biblical truth is absolutely essential in order to test the spirit because without an understanding of truth, one is easily misled by error and deception. Christians may be aware of this in regard to religions and occult practices outside of Christianity, but the danger is just as great if not greater in dealing with Christian doctrines that are contrary to the Word of God.

An excellent example can be found in both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. According to Catholic/Orthodox doctrine, Messiah Yeshua's sacrifice for sin atonement was not sufficient and therefore a person must partake of the sacraments to be saved. The fundamental truth of salvation by grace alone is thus negated. Nevertheless, there are individuals in both churches who have a true spiritual relationship with the Lord and are indwelt by the Spirit of God, in spite of the fundamental doctrinal error regarding salvation.

But let the believer beware that just because someone speaks in the name of Jesus and claims to believe in Jesus, this in and of itself does not prove that he/she belongs to the Lord. Yeshua Himself says:

“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS’ ” (Matthew 7:22-23).

## The Doctrine of Balaam

The doctrine of Balaam refers to the corruption of God's people by leading them away from Biblical truth and into immorality and idolatry. If they could not be destroyed from the outside, then they could be destroyed from the inside by the introduction of false teachings and doctrines. Satan works both very subtly and effectively in this way to deceive and corrupt.

Balaam was a soothsayer, a person who foretells the future through the practice of divination (expressly forbidden by the Word of God; see Deuteronomy 18:10-12). The Moabite king Balak, who feared the advancing and victorious Israelites in the land of Canaan, summoned Balaam to curse his enemy. But Balaam was not allowed by God to speak forth a curse, but instead blessed Israel. This greatly angered Balak:

After the king's [Balak's] anger had cooled Balaam sent a plan of action to the frustrated monarch. His teaching involved the most contemptible action ever conceived in an unregenerate heart. *Corrupt a people you cannot curse and God will have to chasten them.* In short, this means to take a people under divine blessing and deliberately lead them into sin to strip them of the divine blessing.<sup>1</sup>

Since Balak could not destroy the Israelites from the outside, with the help of Balaam's advice, he joined them and corrupted them from the inside. The New Testament refers to the "teaching of Balaam" and "the way of Balaam":

'But I [the Lord] have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit (acts of) immorality' (Revelation 2:14).

forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the (son) of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness (2 Peter 2:15).

Chapter 2 of 2 Peter warns of the rise of false prophets and false teachers to lead the people astray from the truth of the Word of God. The greed of Balaam for material gain is one of the motivators for their false teachings and false prophecies. In their greed and arrogance, they lead the people into spiritual error and corruption, even as they themselves are deceived into believing they are following the ways of God. If their teachings are in error, then associated spiritual manifestations cannot be attributable to God. And if their focus is on the material things of this world, this is an indicator that they are building their own kingdom, not the kingdom of God.

...for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order, if possible, to lead the elect astray (Mark 13:22).

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1).

Let us pay particular attention to what 1 Timothy 4:1 says because this is a clear statement in the New Testament that a believer can fall away from the true faith. The doctrine of “once saved, always saved” cannot be correct if the Spirit of God warns believers that some *will* fall away from the faith. There are other scriptures that confirm that it is possible to lose one’s salvation, and that is why we are continually warned in the Word of God not to be deceived and fall away (apostate) from Biblical truth:

Let no one in any way deceive you, for (it will not come) unless the apostasy comes first (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

## Holy Laughter, or Unholy Laughter?

Some proponents of “holy laughter” say this phenomenon is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit that has its Biblical precedent in the events at Pentecost as described in Acts 2. Other proponents admit there is no Biblical precedent, but believe it is a move of the Holy Spirit nevertheless. But an examination of this phenomenon in light of Biblical truth exposes the error and the deception of either position.

For an excellent and thorough study on the subject of holy laughter, we refer our readers to the article “Holy Laughter: Rodney Howard-Browne and the Toronto Blessing” by Albert James Dager.<sup>2</sup> For a study available on the internet, see “Holy Laughter, or Strong Delusion?” by Warren Smith.<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this study, an overview of this phenomenon is presented and evaluated from the Biblical perspective.

Rodney Howard-Browne, a charismatic preacher from South Africa, has popularized “holy laughter” all over the world. The first experience he had followed his challenge to God as he prayed for a deeper spiritual experience:

“Either You come down here and touch me, or I will come up there and touch You,” he prayed in desperation. Suddenly his whole body felt like it was on fire. He began to laugh uncontrollably. Then he wept and began to speak in tongues. “I was plugged into heaven’s electrical supply,” he later wrote in his book, *The Touch of God*. “And since then my desire has been to go and plug other people in.”<sup>4</sup>

There is no Biblical precedent for a man or woman of God to demand a spiritual experience from God and have that demand answered by God. Dager comments:

The arrogance to demand anything of God reveals an attitude of self-love. This is common among charismatics who place more stock in alleged signs and wonders than they do in God’s written Word. This is reflected in



Howard-Browne's demand that if God didn't do something for him he would ascend into heaven and touch God. Sound familiar?<sup>5</sup>

Yes, it does sound familiar. The prophet Isaiah describes the prideful arrogance and desire of the king of Babylon, whose spiritual counterpart is Satan, to ascend to heaven (Isaiah 14:4, 12, 13).

Transference of this experience is made when Howard-Browne lays hands on people. Various manifestations include: laughing, uncontrollable weeping, groaning, inability or difficulty in speaking, shaking, falling down into ecstatic trances, making animal noises such as barking like a dog, roaring like a lion, or cackling like a chicken.

Nowhere in the Bible is there any example of this type of activity by God's people. It did not occur at Pentecost among Yeshua's disciples or during any other manifestation of the Spirit of God. And one can rightly ask, "How does this type of manifestation glorify God?" In fact, it makes a mockery of God.

Those who accept holy laughter as a move of the Holy Spirit claim that it is bringing great revival to the church. But the Bible warns against apostasy and nowhere proclaims a "Great Revival" prior to the Second Coming:

Let no one in any way deceive you, for (it will not come) unless the apostasy comes first (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

"...However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).

Apostasy refers to a falling away from Biblical truth:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest (Hosea 4:6).

Believers of the New Covenant are the New Priesthood of God. The Word of God provides the knowledge believers need to separate truth from error. But if believers are more interested in a spiritual experience than in learning the Word of God, how can they exercise discernment?

Discernment is more often recognizing error based upon knowledge and understanding of God's Word. It is not merely some mystical sensory perception of demonic spirits. In any case, one's discernment must be based upon rightly dividing the Word of Truth. God's Word is still the bottom line for judging all beliefs and practices.<sup>6</sup>

But discernment is not encouraged by those who lead, promote, or follow the holy laughter experience. In fact, discernment is actually discouraged, while the experience itself is the focus and main attraction.

This type of experience does not only occur among leaders and followers of this movement. The equivalent of holy laughter is also found among followers of New Age/Eastern mysticism:

Indian Guru Bhagwhan Shree Rajneesh was affectionately known by his followers as the ‘divine drunkard’ because he was reputed to have drunk so deeply from the well of the ‘Divine.’ As a former follower of Rajneesh I met hundreds of Sannyasins who had flown to India ‘to drink’ from ‘Bhagwan’s wine.’ When followers were physically touched by Rajneesh, or even if they were merely in his presence, they would often experience feelings of great exhilaration and joy. Disciples of Swami Baba Muk tandana would often manifest uncontrollable laughter after receiving shaktipat (physical contact) from the guru.<sup>7</sup>

Can we compare Guru Rajneesh, the “divine drunkard,” with Howard-Browne, who calls himself a “Holy Ghost bartender” dispensing the “new wine” of charismatic fervor?<sup>8</sup>

There are other examples of “holy laughter” in various religions, which are listed and described in Smith’s article “Holy Laughter, or Strong Delusion?” For example, the African Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari experience altered states of consciousness, shaking, inability to stand, dancing, and ecstatic rapture. Yan xin promotes the ancient Chinese practice of *Qigong*, which is accompanied by strong physical sensations, laughing and crying. Eastern Mysticism and New Age cults promote the concept of *kundalini* energy, which is said to affect great physical and spiritual healings. Activation of *kundalini* energy manifests in uncontrollable laughter, crying, talking in tongues, roaring, barking, hissing, becoming mute or unconscious. Many feel great joy, peace, and love. At times, the sensation of the “fire” of *kundalini* is very overpowering.

In regard to feeling a sensation of “fire,” it is interesting to note that Howard-Browne experienced a sensation in which his “whole body felt like it was on fire,” after praying for and demanding a deeper spiritual experience:

Suddenly, his whole body felt like it was on fire. He began to laugh uncontrollably. Then he wept and began to speak in tongues.”<sup>9</sup>

Nowhere does the Bible describe such an experience for those who are touched by the Spirit of God.

Albert James Dager, in his article “Holy Laughter: Rodney Howard-Browne and the Toronto Blessing,” sees a definite connection between the Charismatic and New Age holy laughter phenomenon:

I don’t believe it is a mere coincidence that holy laughter has found its place among the mystically inclined whose beliefs lean toward New Age

philosophy. ...Leanne Payne blends New Age mysticism, Jungian psychology and Christian philosophy. ... Is it merely coincidental that her disciple, Karen Mains, wrote of this holy laughter experience in 1993, essentially the same time Rodney Howard-Brown's notoriety and the Toronto blessing began? And is it merely coincidental that a phenomenon similar to holy laughter is found in the New Age movement at exactly the same time?<sup>10</sup>

## Mouthpiece of God or Mouthpiece of Satan?

In October of 2002, Peter Michas was asked to listen to a video clip of a Kenneth Copeland meeting in which Howard-Browne was speaking on stage. The purpose of the question was to verify something Howard-Browne had said "in tongues" that was apparently in the Greek language.<sup>11</sup>

In December of 2004, we verified that the video clip could still be accessed on the internet (<http://www.bible.ca/tongues-audio-video-documentation.htm#copeland>). The title of the video clip is "Copeland and Browne joke together in tongues" and is listed under "The Kenneth Copeland Video Collection" section of the web site. The following description of this approximately two-and-one-half-minute video clip is given as follows:

Kenneth Copeland and Rodney Howard-Browne joke together in tongues for several minutes. Nothing miraculous here! In fact they violate the Bible (1 Corinthians 14:28) by speaking in tongues in the assembly without an interpreter. Further we ask, what edification has taken place?

1 Corinthians 14:26-28 When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, *it should be* by two or at the most three, and *each* in turn, and let one interpret; but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church.

As you watch the video, look for Copeland to call Howard-Browne on stage. As soon as Browne comes on stage, he begins to speak, first in English, saying: "Rise up this day and be filled with the new wine of the Holy Ghost." Immediately after this, he begins to speak in tongues. The first two words he speaks sound like: *Satana manama* (or *manoma*).

The sender of the email to Peter Michas was told by someone apparently fluent in Greek that what Browne said translated into English as “Satan speaks insanity upon you.” Peter was asked to confirm if indeed the “tongue” spoken was Greek, and if so, to establish its meaning.

Let us examine each Greek word for a better understanding of the possible meaning. The first word, *Satana*, very closely resembles *Satanas*, the Greek word meaning Satan. In Hebrew, the word is *Satan*, or *HaSatan*, meaning “The Satan,” referring to “The Adversary.” According to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*:

Satanas (Satanaß), a Greek form derived from the Aramaic (Heb., *Satan*), an adversary, is used ... (c) of Satan, the Devil, some seventeen or eighteen times in the O.T.; in Zech. 3:1, where the name receives its interpretation, “to be (his) adversary...”

In the N.T. the word is always used of Satan, the adversary (a) of God and Christ, e.g. Matt. 4:10; 12:26; Mark 1:13; 3:23, 26; 4:15; Luke 4:8 (in some mss.); 11:18; 22:3; John 13:27; (b) of His people, e.g., Luke 22:31; Acts 5:3; Rom. 16:20; 1 Cor. 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Thess. 2:18; 1 Tim. 1:20; 5:15; Rev. 2:9, 13 (twice), 24; 3:9 (c) of mankind, Luke 13:16; Acts 26:18; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 12:9; 20:7.<sup>12</sup>

The next word, which sounds like *manama* or *manoma*, closely resembles the Greek word *mainomai*. (Note: The Greek-letter combination of *alpha* and *yiota* {*ai*} is pronounced like a short “e,” as in “met.” We believe that Howard-Browne’s heavy accent results in the short “a” sound, as in “father,” being pronounced instead of the short “e” sound.) Liddell and Scott’s *A Greek-English Lexicon* gives the following meanings, which are very relevant to our study:

Mainomai: *rage, be furious; to be mad with wine; of Bacchic frenzy; of madness of animals; rage, riot, especially of fire.*<sup>13</sup>

*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* confirms:

Mainomai: *be mad, be out of one’s mind ... and as a result of it have no control over oneself.*<sup>14</sup>

Liddell and Scott *A Greek-English Lexicon* lists another Greek word, *mainolhß* (*mainoles*), that is related to *mainomai* (*mainomai*). Its meaning provides additional information that is very significant:

*mainoles: raving, frenzied; a name of Dionysius; maddening, of wine.*<sup>15</sup>

The reference to Dionysius is of particular interest since Dionysius was the Greek god of wine. The Romans knew him as Bacchus. The reference to “Bacchic frenzy,” under the meaning of *mainomai*, relates to the religious frenzy of those who celebrated the Bacchic rites in ancient Rome. By the 5th century B.C.E., the cult of Dionysius was widespread and popular in the ancient Greek world. During the Hellenistic-Roman age, his cult was widely accepted and promoted by kings and emperors. The god was honored with dancing and singing as participants celebrated the new wine. The popularity of Bacchus continued through the 4th century C.E., during which time he was considered the god of wine and of joy.<sup>16</sup>

Is there a pattern of similarity between the Bacchic rites celebrating the new wine and the phenomena associated with “Holy Laughter”? Howard-Browne calls himself “the Holy Ghost bartender” and he’s passing out the “new wine.” He calls on his audience to “rise up this day and be filled with the *new wine* of the Holy Ghost” (emphasis added). What is this *new wine*?

The cult of Dionysius/Bacchus also celebrated the new wine, and Satan was the deceiver who led people to celebrate the Bacchic frenzies. Those who partake of Satan’s “new wine” exhibit behaviors described by the Greek word *mainomai*: to be mad, be out of one’s mind, and as a result have no control over oneself; to be mad with wine, as of a Bacchic frenzy; exhibiting the mad behavior of animals, emitting animal sounds such as barking like dogs, roaring like lions, and cackling like chickens. These same manifestations are exhibited by those who partake of the “new wine” of the “Holy Laughter” phenomenon.

Mr. Howard-Browne desires to bring “the fire of God” to others, having experienced the burning fire himself. The Greek word *mainomai* refers to raging or rioting, especially of fire. But what spirit is this that manifests such “fire” and speaks out of the mouth of Howard-Browne?

## “Holy Laughter” Is Not Biblical Joy

A thorough study of the word “laughter” as it occurs in the Bible does not support the manifestations seen in the holy laughter phenomenon. The word “joy,” as in “the joy of the Lord,” cannot be equated with the word “laughter.” Neither the Old nor the New Testament connect laughter to the presence or move of the Spirit of the Lord.

This is not to say that there is anything wrong with laughter in appropriate circumstances. But true joy of the Lord is experienced no matter what the circumstances when a person totally trusts in the Lord. Certainly, it is not exhibited by laughing or crying uncontrollably, acting as if in a drunken stupor, emitting animal sounds, or moving the body in odd and uncontrollable ways.

The very lack of control that is encouraged and displayed during holy laughter meetings is totally contrary to Biblical instruction regarding order:

But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner (1 Corinthians 14:40).

for God is not (a God) of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints (1 Corinthians 14:33).

## Counterfeit Tongues

All historical events of speaking in tongues as recorded in the Bible follow the Biblical pattern: the tongue is intelligible language spoken by someone who has never learned the language, by the power of the Spirit of God, as a sign to unbelievers. It is significant that much of what is called “the gift of tongues,” as practiced in Christianity, fails to follow the Biblical pattern.

It is also true that speaking “in tongues” is a phenomenon that manifests in various religions and religious cults (ancient through contemporary). Therefore, it is absolutely essential to understand and apply Biblical truth in order to discern whether or not the manifestation of “tongues” has as its source God’s Holy Spirit.

Let us consider the three possible sources:

1. God, via the Biblical gift of tongues, which is the speaking of an intelligible language by a believer who has never learned the language, the purpose of which is to be a sign to unbelievers.
2. Satan and his demons, who can speak real languages through a person who has not learned the language, and who has become a conduit for the demon or Satan to speak, i.e., the person is “possessed” by the spirit,

thereby controlled by the spirit in such a way as to manifest supernatural abilities.\*\*

3. Self, which can unconsciously (even with good intentions) generate sounds that come naturally or can be learned or mimicked, especially in an environment in which it is emphasized, encouraged, and expected.

First, let us consider the possibility that speaking “in a tongue” can be unconsciously self-generated. There have been scientific studies of this phenomenon that show it can be a type of regressive speech. There are sounds, and combinations of sounds, but no grammar (forms and structure of words), no syntax (sentence structure), and no vocabulary (words having meanings). Therefore, this cannot be real language.

All languages have certain things in common. These include (1) a sound-pattern, (2) words, and (3) grammatical structure.

A sound-pattern is a group of sounds that the human speech organs can utter. Most languages have from 20 to 60 of these sounds.

Words are sounds or sound-patterns that have a meaning. ... Grammatical structure is the manner in which words are combined to form larger, meaningful units such as sentences.<sup>17</sup>

Several very interesting scholarly studies of the phenomenon of glossolalia, as practiced by Pentecostals and other charismatics, provide substantial evidence that its origins are more psychological than spiritual. ...most contemporary psychologists consider it merely a form of learned behavior. One study of several Pentecostal and charismatic groups has shown that members of the same group tend to display the same basic linguistic patterns when speaking in tongues. John P. Kildahl, a clinical psychologist, has confirmed the research of others and has shown that glossolalia is a form of learned behavior. He has discovered that persons who speak in tongues receive the ability following a stress-filled situation that leads them to seek an emotional release of their feelings. They show a tendency to be easily hypnotized that makes them susceptible to suggestions from a charismatic leader, and of a group that encourages them to seek the ability to speak in tongues. Although glossolalia can provide a release from tension and a sense of well-being, it can also lead to despondency. Finally, Kildahl’s research has concluded that glossolalia

is not a real human language, known or unknown, and that the person who speaks in tongues has always learned the method of glossolalia from another person.<sup>18</sup>

Interestingly, the word “language” comes from the Latin word *lingua*, meaning tongue, and language is still often referred to as a tongue.<sup>19</sup> This has come over to us in the English translation of the Bible in reference to the spiritual gift of tongues. Since Paul is very clear that speaking in an unknown language without interpretation or understanding does not edify the body of believers, it is not to be practiced in the Church (1 Corinthians 14). And because every historical example given in the New Testament regarding the gift of tongues as a sign to unbelievers refers to intelligible language, without real understandable language, there can be no manifestation of the Biblical gift of tongues.

## Mind and Crowd Control

The technique of mind control (brainwashing) is also very relevant to our understanding of certain manifestations that have nothing to do with the Spirit of God. Mind control necessarily operates in a manner in which those whose minds are being manipulated are totally unaware of the process. It is even possible for those using mind control techniques to be unaware that they are using them because they unconsciously learn them by watching others who use them. Techniques of mind control can be successfully applied to large numbers of people assembled together, such as in mass meetings. The techniques of mind and crowd control can also be deliberately taught and learned for whatever agenda is desired. In this regard, many years ago we learned from a reliable source close to one of the main leaders of the Word-Faith/Charismatic movement that several of the leading charismatic teachers and preachers attended a New Age center to learn techniques that are very successful in gaining converts and followers.

The first step in manipulating minds is to present information that is true, and gain the trust of the listeners. An example is the presentation of obvious Biblical truth. The next step is to present information that can be debated, but is not necessarily untrue. The final step is presentation of the suggestion that the speaker wants the audience to accept as truth.<sup>20</sup>

The process of conversion of thinking to accept the suggestion of the speaker also involves the emotional state of the listeners. Working up the emotions increases suggestibility and interferes with mental functioning and judgment. In the case of those



coming with a sense of expectancy and belief in the “anointing” of a preacher, the receptivity of suggestibility is further enhanced.

## Notes

\* Demons communicate with living individuals through occult practices and spiritual experiences that open up a spiritual channel, such as the use of the ouija board; spirit medium; Roman Catholic rosary; past-life regression via hypnosis; altered states of consciousness induced by fasting or drugs; near-death experiences; UFO/alien experiences; etc. Demons may manifest in many ways, from ghosts, to UFOs and aliens, to religious apparitions such as the so-called “Virgin Mary,” to impersonating human beings either dead or alive.

\*\* The documentary “In the Grip of Evil” first telecast on the Discovery Channel in 1997 (produced by Henninger Media Development; Brian Kelly, producer). It concerns the real story of the possessed boy (not girl) whose story inspired the movie “The Exorcist.” He was supernaturally enabled to speak Latin while possessed by a demon. During the program, it was also stated by a Roman Catholic priest from Africa that he had seen numerous cases of people speaking intelligible languages they did not know while under demonic influence.

<sup>1</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 454.

<sup>2</sup> Albert James Dager, *Media Spotlight: A Biblical Analysis of Religious & Secular Media*, P.O. Box 290, Redmond, WA 98073, © 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Warren Smith’s article accessed at the web site of Straight Path Ministries (Web Site: [http://www.laverdad.org/laughter\\_smith.htm](http://www.laverdad.org/laughter_smith.htm)).

<sup>4</sup> Dager, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Dager, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Dager, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, [www.laverdad.org/laughter\\_smith.htm](http://www.laverdad.org/laughter_smith.htm) “Holy Laughter, or Strong Delusion,” #13.

<sup>8</sup> Dager, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> Dager, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Dager, p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> Thanks to Beth and Lori (last names unknown), whose e-mails brought this matter to our attention.

<sup>12</sup> W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Vol. 3, p.

320.

<sup>13</sup> Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1073.

<sup>14</sup> William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (translators), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, p. 486.

<sup>15</sup> Liddell and Scott, p. 1073.

<sup>16</sup> Antonia Tripolitis, *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age*, pp. 22-25.

<sup>17</sup> *The World Book Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12, p. 63.

<sup>18</sup> John Warren Morris, *The Charismatic Movement: An Orthodox Evaluation*, p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> *The World Book Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12, p. 62.

<sup>20</sup> Dager, p. 12-13.

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