Do the Gifts of Healing, Prophecy and Tongues Still Exist Today in the 21st Century?

Are the gifts of healing, prophecy and tongues still extant today? Or has God discontinued them? Do men still have the gift of healing, prophecy and tongues? What is the gift of tongues? These are all questions I hope to answer within this article.

First of all, let us look at the gift of healing. May I say to you that God does heal today! But the question is, does God still heal through men today.

The Lord Jesus Christ healed thousands upon thousands during His 1st Advent (Mt. 4:23; 8:3, 16; 9:35; 12:13, 22; 14:36; 15:30; 17:18; 19:2; 21:14; Mk. 1:31; 10:52; Lk. 7:21; 13:13; 17:14; 22:51; Jn. 4:50; 5:9; 9:6). He healed individuals with a touch (Mt. 8:3, 15; 9:29-30; Lk. 22:51).


But it is interesting and significant that Paul could not heal Epaphroditus according to Philippians 2:25-27.

Phil 2:25-27, “But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.”


2 Tim 4:20, “Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.”

Why does James have the sick call the elders and not one with the gift of healing (James 5:14-16)?

James 5:14-16, “Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to 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.”

Why do I not see miracles and healing? We will answer these questions.
First of all, in the case of our Lord, Jesus performed miracles of healing in order to fulfill the prophecies of the Messiah.

Matt 11:2-6, “Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to Him, ‘Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘God and report to John what you hear and see: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.’”

Isa 35:5-6, “Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness and streams in the Arabah.”

Remember that the Jews required signs and God gave them signs such as healing.

1 Cor 1:22, “For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom.”

The apostles had the gift of healing in order to establish their authority as being from God. Once that authority had been established, they no longer had need of the gift.

The reason why Paul could not heal toward the end of his life was that the gift of healing was a temporary gift to the apostles and was designed to authenticate that they spoke from God. Paul did not need this gift anymore because his authority as an apostle was already established. The miracles of healing that the apostles performed were signs to the Jews that the apostles spoke from God and were to be listened to and obeyed.

The temporary gift of healing was given to the apostles during the pre-canon period of the church age (Ac. 3:7; 5:16; 9:34; 14:10; 16:18; 19:12; 28:8). The gift of prophecy was also a temporary spiritual gift.

Today we have the completed canon of Scripture. We are not receiving any more revelation from God. We are told not to add or subtract from the Scriptures.

Rev 22:18-19, “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues, which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.”

The gift of prophecy was given before the canon of Scripture was closed. For instance, during the 1st century, believers could not turn to Ephesians 5:18 and read the command to be filled with the Spirit. Therefore, God would send prophets into a city to issue this command.
Today, we don’t need prophets since we have the completed canon of Scripture. Everything that God has to say to the human race has been set down in writing in the Bible.

Heb 1:1-2, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”

The teaching of the apostles and prophets during the 1st century is the foundation of the church and Jesus Christ is the corner stone.

Eph 2:18-22, “for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

Finally, we come to the gift of tongues. The gift of tongues was a temporary spiritual gift designed to evangelize the Jews in Gentile languages during the pre-canon period of the Church Age.

The gift of tongues was a temporary spiritual gift designed to evangelize the Jews in Gentile languages during the pre-canon period of the Church Age. Gentile languages that the evangelist himself did not know and was not trained in.

Isaiah 28:11-12, “Indeed, He (the Lord) will speak to this people (the Jews) 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.”

The gift of tongues was for the unbelieving Jews.

1 Corinthians 14:21-22a, "In the Law it is written, 'By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people (the Jews), 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.”

The Jews were to receive a sign and the gift of tongues was a sign from God to the Jews.

1 Corinthians 1:22a, "For indeed Jews ask for signs."

The gift of tongues first manifested itself in June of 32 A.D. on the Jewish feast of Pentecost. It is recorded in Acts 2.

Acts 2:1-4, “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. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested
on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.”

Now, we need to keep reading because “to speak with other tongues” is identified in the following verses.

Acts 2:5-8, “Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished, 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?’”

Notice that the crowd of Jews from around the Roman Empire is astonished that the apostles who were Galilean could speak in their own languages.

Acts 2:9-13, “Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs — we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God. And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others were mocking and saying, ‘They are full of sweet wine.’”

The term that is used to identify the tongues movement is “glossolalia,” made up of two Greek words, glossa (language or tongue) and lalia (speech). It therefore means speaking in languages or tongues.

Glossology is that department of anthropology, which has to do with the study and classification of languages and dialects. The word glossa appears in the Greek New Testament not less than fifty times. It is used to refer to the physical organ of the tongue as in James 3:5; once in reference to the flames of fire shaped like tongues (Acts 2:3); at least once in a metaphorical sense when referring to speech as in the statement, “my tongue (speech) was glad (joyous)” (Acts 2:26).

The word refers to languages in Acts 10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1, 8; 14:2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27, 39; Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15.

When our Lord predicted the gift of tongues (the only mention of tongues in the four Gospel records) He said, “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues” (Mark 16:17).

The adjective “new” (Gr. kainos) can only mean they were going to speak in languages new to them, that is, languages they had not learned or used until that time.

Acts 2:4, “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.”
In Acts 2:4 Luke uses a different adjective when he says, “they began to speak with other tongues.” The word “other” (Gr. heteros) simply means that they spoke in languages different from the normal language they were used to. The context substantiates this.

Notice the surprised reaction on the part of the hearers:

Acts 2:7-8, “They were amazed and astonished, 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?’”

Every man heard them speak in his own language (Acts 2:6). Here the word “language” is the translation of dialektō from which our word “dialect” comes. The two words glossa (tongue) and dialektos (language) are used synonymously, making it obvious that the disciples were speaking in known languages other than the language native to them.

Glossa is used from the perspective of the believer for the supernatural ability to speak in a foreign language even though one has not been trained in that foreign language. Dialektos is used in relation to unbeliever and the language he speaks in.

In verses 9-11 the languages are then identified.

Acts 2:9-11, “Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs -- we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.”

It was a miraculous phenomenon, which enabled the disciples to speak in languages, which they had never learned.

Here in Acts 2 passage we have tongues-speaking in its pure and unperverted form as God gave it.

The following verses in the Book of the Revelation should be examined carefully (Revelation 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15).

Rev 7:9, “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands.”

Rev 14:6, “And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.”

In each passage where the word “tongue” is mentioned it means one of the languages associated with the various nationalities and races. I see no reason why anyone should raise a question as to the tongues in those passages in Mark, Acts and Revelation meaning languages. But the more serious problems arise in the
interpretation of the twenty-one references to tongues in First Corinthians chapter’s 12-14.

There are those who tell us that the tongues in First Corinthians are ecstatic utterances not known in any country on earth. They base their conclusion on the term “unknown” in the KJV, which appears in I Corinthians 14:2, 4, 13, 14, 19, and 27. But the reader of this chapter in God’s Word must not fail to observe that the word “unknown” in every place where it appears is in italicized letters, which means that it does not occur in any Greek manuscript but was inserted by translators. In fact, the NAS, NASU, and NIV to not insert the word “unknown” in their translations but simply translate glossa, “tongue.”

The Holy Spirit did not direct Paul to write that the tongue is unknown. I find no warrant for changing the meaning of tongues in First Corinthians. In every other place where the word is used it means languages. Why then should the meaning be changed in First Corinthians? I know of no textual license that will warrant changing the meaning of the word. All the usages of tongues in Paul’s treatment of the subject refer to foreign languages.

1 Cor 14:9, “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.”

There is no reason for anyone to speak except to converse intelligibly. The Greek word laleo means “I speak.” The word is never used for mere sound or noise. Nor is it used for a mere mumbling or muttering of unintelligible gibberish.

The tongues speaking in the New Testament was in the native languages of hearing people. The supernatural phenomenon, which took place at Pentecost, was the exercise of a gift whereby many people from many countries, gathered at Jerusalem, heard God’s message in their own language. This was indeed a miracle of God. It would be an arbitrary and strange interpretation of Scripture that would make tongues-speaking in the New Testament anything other than known languages.

There is no trace of Scriptural evidence that tongues were ever heard by anyone as incoherent, incomprehensible babbling. So the gift of tongues was the supernatural ability given by God to certain individuals to speak in a foreign language that they were not trained in.

This is why Paul says that there was to be someone to explain or interpret what this person was saying in the Gentile language (1 Cor. 12:10, 30).

1 Cor 12:10, “and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.”

1 Cor 12:30, “All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?”
If there was no one to explain or to interpret what the person was saying in the foreign language that person with the gift was to keep silent.

1 Corinthians 14:27-28, "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."

To operate in the love of God is far more important than speaking in tongues.

1 Cor 13:1, “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that the gift of tongues will discontinued.

1 Corinthians 13:8b, "If there are tongues, they (tongues) will cease,” thus they were temporary.

When the nation of Israel went out under the 5th cycle of discipline in 70 A.D., the gift of tongues ceased to exist. The gift of tongues was no longer needed. The gift of tongues was used to give unbelieving Jews the gospel in a Gentile language. God gave the Jews a 40-year period of grace before they were judged for the rejection of their Messiah.

The nation failed to take advantage of this period and consequently went out under the 5th cycle of discipline in 70 A.D. when the Roman general Titus sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. In fact, Paul 1 Corinthians 14 criticizes the Corinthians churches for placing too much emphasis upon this gift!

1 Cor 14:1-19, “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying. But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching? Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? 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. There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a
barbarian to me. So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church. Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the ‘Amen’ at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified. I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.”

It is a mistake to assume that speaking in tongues is synonymous with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is unscriptural teaching, which says that all who are baptized by the Holy Spirit will speak in tongues.

The Scriptures state emphatically that all saved persons have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . .” (I Corinthians 12:13). All the believers at Corinth received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, however all did not speak in tongues.

1 Cor 12:30, “All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?”

The question asked in verse 30, “Do all speak with tongues?” is so phrased so as to convey the expected answer, “No.” The baptizing work of the Spirit is not an experience in the believer subsequent to salvation. Rather it is that act of the Holy Spirit, which joins the believing sinner to the Body of Christ.

More emphatically, there is no other means whereby one can become a member of the Church, which is Christ’s Body. All saved persons have been baptized by the Holy Spirit, but not all saved persons speak in tongues.

The baptizing work of the Spirit places the believer in the Body positionally. Be careful that you do not confuse the baptism of the Spirit with the command to be “filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). All believers share equally in this position in Christ and thus share equally in union with Him.

There is only one experience of baptism by the Holy Spirit but there can be many experiences of being filled with Spirit. Paul said that not all of the Corinthian Christians spoke in tongues (I Corinthians 14: 5), and yet he stated clearly that all had been baptized with the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13). It is a mistake to assume that speaking in tongues is an evidence of being filled with the Spirit.

All believers are commanded to “be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18), but nowhere in Scripture are believers commanded to speak in
tongues. A Christian can be under the influence and control of the Holy Spirit and not speak in tongues.

There are numerous instances when the disciples were filled with the Spirit but did not speak in tongues. See Acts 4:31 and 13:9-11.

To be Spirit-filled is to be Spirit-influenced or controlled. Are we to believe that the thousands of mightily used men and women of God who were among the world’s best missionaries of Christ’s Gospel and Bible teachers were never filled with the Holy Spirit because they never spoke in tongues? Perish the thought! Can one know if he is filled with the Spirit?

Look at one verse in the Bible where the command to be filled with the Spirit is recorded. “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Ephesians 5:18-21).

Three things are mentioned as evidence of being Spirit-filled; a joyful heart, a thankful heart and a submissive heart. Nothing is said about speaking in tongues.

To sum it up in one word, Christlikeness is the manifestation of being filled with the Spirit, and the Scriptures do not tell us that our Lord ever spoke in tongues. It is a mistake to assume that the sign-gifts are given to believers today.

Now I am not arbitrarily closing the door on miracles. God does intervene in supernatural ways performing miracles when and wherever He pleases to do so. The matter before us now is whether or not the Bible teaches that certain gifts were temporarily given. The evidence of God’s Word must be the final source of authority.

I am stressing this because there are many persons who are not students of the Bible, therefore their only source of knowledge and understanding is subjective, namely, reason or experience. Whatever appeals to their reason, or whatever experiences they have had, settle a matter for them once and for all time. It is not uncommon to hear someone say something like this: “I cannot believe in Hell because I cannot conceive a loving God sending anyone to such a place of torment.”

Such persons might listen to clear and sound expositions on the biblical doctrine of Hell, and yet they will reject what the Bible teaches because of their inner feelings and rationale. And so their rationalization becomes their final authority.

Now I am not suggesting that there is no validity in experience or reason. I am quite sure that there are times when one’s reason and experience are correct and therefore reliable. But neither reason nor experience can be accepted as final authority.
Someone will argue: “I have had the experience of speaking in tongues; I find this experience in the New Testament; therefore my experience is true.” This argument is not valid because it makes experience the basis of truth, so if one does not experience all of the experiences he does not have all of the truth.

Biblical fellowship is the application of truth, which in turn produce experience, therefore any valid Christian experience must be determined by the right interpretation of Holy Scripture. Experience, which is related to our emotions, can be deceptive, but a correct interpretation of God’s Word can never deceive.