

The Sign Gifts

I. History of the sign gifts.

1. Throughout history there have been seasons where God enabled men to do signs and wonders. Example: Moses and Elijah.
2. Israel was accustomed to seeing signs from a prophet to know that he was from God (**1Co 1:22; Joh 4:48**).
3. Moses used miraculous signs to prove that he was from God (**Exo 4:1-5**).
 - A. They were only given to him for a 40 year period of time (**Act 7:36**).
 - B. There were not always signs and wonders from God (**Psa 74:9**).
 - C. If there were always signs and wonders, why were there so many people for Jesus to heal?
 - D. Many had been debilitated for years or even for their whole lives and had never been healed at the time that Jesus came (**Joh 9:1; Mat 9:20**).
 - E. Why was there no use of sign gifts in churches from the end of the first century until approximately 200 years ago?
4. It is a wicked and adulterous generation that has to see a sign to believe the word of God (**Mat 16:4**).

II. The OT prophecy of the sign gifts in the days of the Messiah.

1. The prophet Micah prophesied of a time in the future when God would show marvellous things for a time that would be *according to the days* that Israel came out of the land of Egypt (**Mic 7:15**).
 - A. According - *adv.* According to. a. In a manner agreeing with, consistent with, or answering to; agreeably to.
 - B. These marvelous things would happen for a period of time that would be agreeing with, consistent with, and answering to the time that Israel took to come out of the land of Egypt (**Mic 7:15 c/w Lev 12:2 c/w Lev 15:19**).
 - C. Israel spent 40 years coming out of the land of Egypt (**Act 7:36; Act 13:17-19**), therefore these marvelous things would last 40 years as well.
2. The *marvellous things* that were prophesied to come would also be *according to* (In a manner agreeing with, consistent with, or answering to; agreeably to) what happened during the 40 years coming out of Egypt (**Mic 7:15**).
 - A. Marvellous - *A. adj.* Such as to excite wonder or astonishment; wonderful, astonishing, surprising.
 - B. Wonder - 1. A marvellous object; a marvel, prodigy 2. A deed performed or an event brought about by miraculous or supernatural power; a miracle (a reference to Moses and the apostles working wonders is cited for the secondary definition).
 - C. *Marvellous things, or signs and wonders*, were done when Israel came out of Egypt (**Psa 78:12 c/w Psa 78:43**).
 - D. The Hebrew word *pala* that is translated as *marvellous* is also translated as *miracles* in (**Jdg 6:13**) and *wonders* in (**Exo 3:20**).
3. The prophecy was made to *him*, who would be the Messiah (**Mic 7:18-20**).
 - A. Jesus Christ is our God who pardoned our iniquities and transgressions (**Mic 7:18 c/w Isa 53:5,11-12; Tit 2:14; Heb 9:15**).

- B. Jesus Christ is *him* who did cast our sins into the depths of the sea (**Heb 1:3; Rom 8:3; 2Co 5:21**).
- 4. Putting it all together: Micah prophesied of a time of signs and wonders that would begin in the days of the Messiah and last for 40 years, just as did the signs and wonders for 40 years when Israel came out of Egypt.
- 5. Some affirm that Micah was speaking of the return from the Babylonian captivity.
 - A. The return of Israel from the Babylonian captivity is likely a partial fulfillment of this prophesy.
 - B. But it is not a complete fulfillment of it because there were not signs and wonders recorded during that time, nor did the Messiah come at that time.
 - C. "...and that redemption by Christ, which both these [the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and Babylon - CEW] were typical of, was greater and more marvellous than either, being a deliverance from, and an abolition and destruction of sin, Satan, the law, hell, and death, and attended with things the most wonderful and surprising; as the birth of Christ of a virgin; the miracles done by him in life, and at death; the doctrines of the Gospel preached by him and his apostles, and the amazing success of them, especially in the Gentile world, being testified and confirmed by signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. This passage, both by ancient and modern Jews (k), is applied to the times of the Messiah. So in an ancient (l) book of theirs, speaking of the times of the Messiah, they say, "from that day all the signs and wonders, and mighty works, which the Lord did in Egypt, he will do for Israel, as it is said, "according to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt", &c." (John Gill, commenting on Mic 7:15, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*)

III. The fulfillment of Micah's prophecy

- 1. The *beginning* of the 40 year period of signs and wonders (miracles) was when Jesus turned the water into wine at the marriage in Cana (**Joh 2:11**).
- 2. Jesus began the signs and wonders in perfect fulfillment of Micah's prophecy (**Mic 7:15 c/w Psa 78:12 c/w Psa 78:43 c/w Act 7:36 c/w Joh 2:11 c/w Act 2:22**).
- 3. At the *beginning of miracles*, Jesus was about 30 years old (**Luk 3:23**) which was approximately 30AD.
- 4. The 40 year period of signs and wonders would therefore run until approximately 70AD.

IV. The purpose for the sign gifts

- 1. Sign gifts were given to the early NT church for two primary purposes:
 - A. To convince the Jews, who were accustomed to seeing a prophet proven by signs, that the Messiah had come (**1Co 1:22; Joh 4:48; Joh 6:14; Joh 7:31; Joh 10:38; Joh 14:11**).
 - B. To confirm the Word of God spoken by Jesus and the Apostles (**Mar 16:15-20; Heb 2:3-4; Act 14:1-3; Act 2:43; Act 5:12**).
 - i. The great commission and the signs following which confirmed the Word of God were fulfilled in the days of the apostles (**Mar 16:15-20**).
 - ii. The great commission was fulfilled to the letter by the apostles (**Mar 16:20; Col 1:6; Col 1:23; Rom 1:8, 10:18**).
 - iii. The signs were fulfilled also, such as:
 - a. Casting out devils (**Act 16:16-18**).

- b. Speaking in tongues (**Act 2:4; Act 10:46; Act 19:6**).
 - c. Taking up serpents (**Act 28:3-5 c/w Mat 4:7**).
 - d. Healing the sick (**Act 3:6-8; Act 4:22; Act 5:16; Act 8:7; Act 28:8**).
- 2. Once Jerusalem was destroyed in 70AD and all the Jews were either killed or carried away captive, there was no longer a reason for God to give signs and wonders to convince them.
- 3. Once the New Testament was complete (perfect) and confirmed, there was no longer a reason for the signs and wonders to continue and the prophesied 40 year period ended and they ceased (**1Co 13:8-10** - more on these verses later; **Heb 2:3-4** - *was confirmed*).
 - A. Toward the end of Paul's life, he couldn't even heal himself (**2Co 12:7-10**) or others (**Phi 2:25-27; 1Ti 5:23**).
 - B. The signs and wonders were the signs of an apostle (**2Co 12:12**).
 - i. The office of an apostle was a gift from God like the ability to perform signs was a gift (**1Co 12:28; Eph 4:8,11**).
 - ii. Both gifts passed out of existence in the end of the first century.

V. What sign gifts did/do not necessarily prove

- 1. Sign gifts do not prove:
 - A. Spirituality (**1Co 1:4-7 c/w 1Co 3:1**) and (**Mat 10:1 c/w Joh 6:70-71**).
 - B. Charity (**1Co 13:1**).
 - C. Regeneration (**Mat 7:21-23**).
- 2. There are *lying* signs and wonders that are performed by men by the power of Satan (**2Th 2:9; Act 16:16-18; Rev 13:13-14; Rev 16:14**).
- 3. Satan and his ministers can be transformed into ministers of righteousness (**2Co 11:13-15**).
- 4. Satan has always had His counterfeit miracles (**Exo 7:8-12**).
- 5. There will be many people who have done miracles in Jesus' name that were never children of God and will spend eternity in hell (**Mat 7:21-23**).

VI. Checking the legitimacy of a sign gift

- 1. The supposed modern day sign gifts need to be checked against the scripture (**Isa 8:20; 1Co 11:2**).
 - A. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good (**1Th 5:21**).
 - B. Like the old saying goes: "Believe nothing you hear and only half of what you see."
 - C. Try the spirits, whether they are of God (**1Jo 4:1**).
 - D. Put them to the test.
 - i. For example: if a person claims to be speaking in tongues or prophesying by the Spirit of God, ask him if God hates anyone.
 - ii. If he says no, you automatically know that he is a false prophet who is speaking by the devil because he has contradicted the word of God (**Rom 9:13**).
- 2. The gifts of tongues
 - A. Modern day charismatics put a large emphasis on the gift of tongues, but the Bible ranks it the lowest of all the gifts (**1Co 12:8-10; 1Co 12:28**).
 - B. Everyone was not given the gift (**1Co 12:4-11; 1Co 12:30**).
 - C. There are charismatics that say that if you don't speak in tongues you don't have the Spirit of God.
 - D. The gift of tongues was given to the church (**Act 2:1,4**).
 - E. The tongues spoken were always known languages (**Act 2:6,8,11**).

- i. The Bible knows of no “angelic language”; every example of an angel speaking in the Bible is in a human language.
 - ii. Paul was using hyperbole in **1Co 13:1**.
 - a. He no more actually spoke with the tongues of angels than he did give his body to be burned (**1Co 13:3**).
 - b. The Bible elsewhere uses hyperbolic speech (**Ecc 6:6**).
 - F. The gift of tongues would cease (**1Co 13:8**).
 - G. Speaking in an unknown tongue must be done unto edifying (**1Co 14:12,14-17,26**).
 - i. It must be done to give revelation, knowledge, prophesy, or doctrine (**1Co 14:6**).
 - ii. The gift was not given just to show off by babbling or gobbling like a turkey.
 - H. The tongue must be in understandable speech (**1Co 14:7-11**).
 - I. There must be an interpreter (**1Co 14:13-17,27**).
 - i. If there is no interpreter, the person must keep quiet (**1Co 14:28**).
 - ii. How often does this happen in Pentecostal churches?
 - J. Tongues are a sign for unbelievers, not for believers (**1Co 14:22**).
 - K. There can only be two or at most three people speaking in tongues in a church service (**1Co 14:27**).
 - L. They must speak only one at a time (**1Co 14:27,23**).
 - i. The tongue-speakers must speak "by course".
 - ii. Course - III. Of time, events, or action. 16. The continuous process (of time), succession (of events); progress onward or through successive stages.
 - M. It must be done decently and in order (**1Co 14:40**).
 - N. Women can't speak in tongues (or at all) in the church (**1Co 14:34-35**).
 - O. If ALL of these qualifications are not met when people speak in tongues in modern-day churches, then the practice is not according to the Bible.
 - i. If it's not according to the Bible, it's not Biblical.
 - ii. If it's not Biblical, then it's not in keeping with the teachings of Christ and the apostles.
 - iii. If it's not in keeping with the teachings of Christ and the apostles, it's not Christian.
 - iv. Virtually all charismatic and Pentecostal churches break at least one or more of these Biblical qualifications when they practice the gift of tongues.
- 3. The gift of prophecy
 - A. The Biblical qualifications for true prophets and prophecy
 - i. Prophecy *n.* - 1. The action, function, or faculty of a prophet; divinely inspired utterance or discourse; spec. in Christian theology, utterance flowing from the revelation and impulse of the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. Prophecy *v.* - 1. *intr.* To speak by (or as by) divine inspiration, or in the name of a deity; to speak as a prophet.
 - iii. A season of prophecy was prophesied by Joel and it began on the day of Pentecost (**Act 2:16-18**).
 - iv. The Spirit gave the gift of prophecy (**1Co 12:8-11**).
 - v. Not everyone had the gift (**1Co 12:29**).
 - vi. The gift of prophecy came second only to the gift of apostleship (**1Co 12:28; Eph 4:11; 1Co 14:1,5**).
 - vii. Prophecy was a sign for believers (**1Co 14:22**).

- viii. Prophecy should edify the church (**1Co 14:4**).
 - ix. Only two or three prophets could prophesy in a church service (**1Co 14:29**).
 - a. The prophets were to prophesy one by one (**1Co 14:30-31**).
 - b. The spirits of the prophets were to be subject to the prophets (**1Co 14:32**).
 - c. Subject - 1. *trans.* To make (persons, a nation or country) subject to a conquering or sovereign power; to bring into subjection to a superior; to subjugate.
 - d. There were to be no involuntary utterances in which a prophet would not be in control of the words coming out of his mouth.
 - e. It was to be done without confusion (**1Co 14:33**) and decently and in order (**1Co 14:40**).
 - x. Women were not to prophesy in the church (**1Co 14:34**).
 - xi. Whatever a prophet says must agree with the scriptures (**1Co 14:37**).
 - a. Prophets must prophesy according to the proportion of faith (**Rom 12:6**).
 - b. If they don't, there is no light in them (**Isa 8:20**).
 - c. Such prophets must be rejected (**Jer 23:16**).
 - xii. If a prophet doesn't confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, he is speaking by the spirit of antichrist (**1Jo 4:1-3**).
 - a. They are false apostles and prophets who preach another Jesus, another Spirit, or another gospel (**2Co 11:4,13-15**).
 - b. If a prophet preaches another gospel which is not the gospel of grace, he is accursed (**Gal 1:8-9**).
 - xiii. If a prophet errors even once on a revelation, he is a false prophet and must be rejected (**Deu 18:20-22**).
- B. All prophets are not God's prophets.
- i. There are plenty of false prophets in the world pretending to speak in God's name which He has not sent (**Jer 23:21; Jer 27:15; Jer 29:9**).
 - ii. They tell lies that people love to hear and they love them (**Jer 5:31; Isa 30:10; 1Ki 22:13**).
 - iii. God will even send lying prophets to people who want to believe a lie (**1Ki 22:20-23; 2Th 2:8-12**).
 - iv. People generally hate true prophets which tell them the truth (**1Ki 22:8; Jer 38:3-4**).
- C. The gift of prophecy ended when the word of God was complete.
- i. Prophecies would fail, tongues would cease, and knowledge would vanish away (**1Co 13:8**).
 - a. Fail v.- I. To be or become deficient. 1. a. *intr.* To be absent or wanting. 2. a. To become exhausted, come to an end, run short. b. To become extinct; to die out, lose vitality, pass away. c. Of a period of time or anything that has a finite duration: To come to an end, expire.
 - b. Cease v. - II. Transitive. To put a stop to (the action of others, a state or condition of things), to stop.
 - c. Vanish v. - To disappear by decaying, coming to an end, or ceasing to exist: a. With *away*.

- d. The gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge would all come to an end.
- ii. The gift of prophecy was given to the apostles and prophets "in part" while the NT was being written, but once "that which is perfect is come" the prophecy was done away (**1Co 13:9-10**).
 - a. The NT scripture was being given by the apostles *in part* (**1Co 13:9**).
 - b. Part *n.* - I. Portion or division of a whole. 1. a. That which together with another or others makes up a whole (whether really separate from the rest, or more often only separated in thought); a certain amount, but not all, of any thing or number of things (material or immaterial); any one of the smaller things into which a thing is or may be divided (in reality or in idea); a portion, division, section, element, constituent, fraction, fragment, piece.
 - c. *That which is perfect* is the New Testament, the *perfect law of liberty* (**Jam 1:25**), as opposed to the OT which made nothing perfect (**Heb 7:19**).
 - d. Perfect - 1. Thoroughly made, formed, done, performed, carried out, accomplished. Obs. a. Of a legal act: Duly completed.
 - e. Once the NT word of God was completed (perfect) there was no need for prophesying and it was done away with (**1Co 13:10**).
 - f. Why prophesy when the word of God is complete? All one could say is what had already been written.
- iii. Some say that the perfection spoken of in **1Co 13:10** is the resurrection (**Phi 3:11-12**).
 - a. It would be a bit redundant and obvious to say that tongues and prophesy would cease at the resurrection.
 - b. **1Co 13:8-10** is speaking of the perfection of the *revelation* to which prophecy, tongues, and knowledge were all tied.
 - 1) Prophecy and knowledge which were *in part* are contrasted with *that which is perfect*.
 - 2) Prophecy and knowledge were *a portion* (part) of the whole (perfect) of the revelation, which was the New Testament.
 - 3) The NT is a more sure *word of prophecy* (**2Pe 1:19**).
 - 4) Once the *whole* NT was complete (perfect), the means which were used (prophecy and knowledge) to construct its parts were done away with because they were no longer needed.
 - c. **1Co 13:11-13** are speaking of the perfection of the person which will happen at the resurrection (**Phi 3:11-12; 1Jo 3:2**).
 - d. Just as the sign gifts were temporary until the perfection of the revelation, the gifts of faith and hope are temporary until the perfection of the person in glory, at which time they will no longer be needed (**Rom 8:23-25**).
- iv. Paul used similar terms to show that prophecy would be done away with as he also did to describe how the OT would *vanish away* (**Heb 8:13**), be *abolished* (**2Co 3:13**), and be *done away* with (**2Co 3:7,11**).

- a. Done - 1. a. Performed, executed, accomplished, finished, ended, settled; also, used up, worn out:
 - b. Abolished - Put an end to, done away with, suppressed.
 - c. The OT and the gift of prophecy were both put to an end when the NT was complete.
 - d. Whereas God spoke in times past to the prophets by divers manners, he *hath spoken* unto us in these last days by Jesus Christ (**Heb 1:1-2**).
 - 1) The last days began with the coming of Christ (**1Jo 2:18; 1Pe 1:20**).
 - 2) *Hath spoken* is present perfect tense denoting that the revelation of the NT is complete.
 - 3) The faith was *once delivered* to the saints (**Jud 1:3**).
 - 4) God speaks to us today through His word (*saith* is present tense) (**Act 7:49-50; Act 13:35; Act 15:17; Rom 9:15; Heb 3:7, etc.**).
4. The gifts of healing and casting out devils
- A. Jesus was prophesied to heal people at His coming (**Luk 4:18-21**).
 - i. Jesus healed many during His earthly ministry (**Mat 15:30; Act 10:38**).
 - ii. Healing the sick was often associated with casting devils out of people whom they possessed (**Mat 4:23-24**).
 - B. Jesus instructed His disciples to heal the sick and cast out devils (**Mat 10:8; Luk 9:6**).
 - C. The apostles and some ministers continued to heal the sick and cast out devils during the apostolic times in the book of Acts (**Acts 3:2-8; Act 8:6-7; Act 16:16-18**).
 - D. The early churches had the gift of healing (**1Co 12:9,28**).
 - i. James gave instruction to a church that if a person was sick the elders of the church were to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord (**Jam 5:14**).
 - ii. Notice the guaranteed result: "And the prayer of faith *shall save the sick*, and the Lord *shall raise him up*; and if he have committed sins, they *shall be forgiven him*" (**Jam 5:15**).
 - iii. If this ritual is repeated in modern churches, healing and raising up the sick MUST happen EVERY time it is done, or it is not of God.
 - iv. The only other place in the NT where the anointing of oil is mentioned is in connection with the miraculous gifts of healing and casting out devils (**Mar 6:7,13**).
 - v. It therefore must be concluded that elders anointing people with oil in the church was a practice that was only to be exercised for the 40 year period of signs and wonders.
 - E. As has been already proven, the miraculous sign gifts, including the gift of healing ceased at the end of the prophesied 40 year period in approximately 70 AD.
 - F. This is evident since toward the end of Paul's life, he couldn't even heal himself (**2Co 12:7-10**) or others (**Phi 2:25-27; 1Ti 5:23**).
 - G. This does not mean that God cannot still heal people when He chooses to.