

The Church of the Servant King

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Survey of the Bible Series – Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians

(SB_1Cor12E_Temporary Spiritual Gifts - continued)

The following quote from Millard Erickson’s *Christian Theology* is instructive in regards to the subject of spiritual gifts – especially in regards to some of the spiritual “gifts” that are included in certain passages, but about which we have little instruction in Scripture as to their function.

The Spirit also bestows certain special gifts upon believers within the body of Christ. In Paul’s writings there are three different lists of such gifts; there is also a brief one in 1 Peter ... Certain observations need to be made regarding these lists. First, while all of them have reference to the gifts of the Spirit, their basic orientations differ.

Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Peter 4:11 actually catalogue several basic *functions* which are performed in the church. The list in 1 Corinthians is more a matter of *special abilities*. It is likely that when these passages speak of the “gifts of the Spirit,” they have different meanings in view. Hence no attempt should be made to reduce this expression to a unitary concept or definition. Second, it is not clear whether these gifts are endowments from birth, special enablements received at some later point, or a combination of the two. Third, some gifts, such as faith and service [ministry] are qualities or activities expected of every Christian; in such cases it is likely that the writer has in mind an unusual capability in that area. Fourth, since none of the four lists includes all of the gifts found in the other lists, it is quite conceivable that collectively they do not exhaust all possible gifts of the Spirit. These lists, then individually and collectively, are illustrative of the various gifts with which God has endowed the church.¹ [Italics, underlining and bracketed comments are my insertions and not a part of the original text].

Several points in response to Erickson’s comments will serve as an introduction to this second session on the topic of spiritual gifts.

- I appreciate Erickson’s observations that essentially the lists of “gifts” may not be all-comprehensive and in some cases may include within the various passages some “basic functions which are performed in the church.”
- However, it would be helpful if Erickson commented upon the following distinctions in his discussion of the subject of spiritual gifts:
 - The distinction between temporary and permanent or normative “gifts” or “functions.” [It would have been helpful if Erickson, and others, would clearly state which so-called “gifts” in the various lists they consider to be “spiritual gifts” and which they consider to be something else].
 - The distinction between a “talent” or “inclination and ability” (something related to one’s genetic, IQ and personality composition as a human) versus “spiritual gift” (something involving the Holy Spirit and only the believer). [This distinction would clarify the confusion Erickson leaves on the table with the statement “...it is not clear whether these gifts are endowments from birth, special enablements received at some later point, or a combination of the two”].
 - Paul seems to consider the list in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 to be gifts of the Spirit – not just “functions” in the church.

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1983, 1984, 1985), 875-876.

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Cor 12:4-7)

Erickson's comments are helpful nevertheless. They highlight some of the struggles that theologians have in addressing this topic. Scripture provides us with greater insight regarding some of these gifts such as we have observed to date with the analysis of the gift of "apostle" and "prophecy." Yet, for other so-called spiritual "gifts," Scripture is not so explicit in regard to their function. So, I caveat the information I'll be presenting on this subject with the statement that I am attempting to not go beyond what Scripture states and in any place that I do so, I will try to highlight it with statements to the effect that I am expressing an opinion or speculating.

WORD OF WISDOM

The "spiritual gift" of a "word of wisdom" is mentioned only once in the passages where we find spiritual gifts listed, i.e. 1 Corinthians 12:8.

- Speculation – It is possible that the gift of the "Word of Wisdom" was one of the several gifts that accompanied the gift of apostle and of prophet. It is also possible that the apostles and prophets were the only ones who ever possessed this gift.
- Consider the following quote from one writer:

It must be remembered that 1 Corinthians is one of the earlier epistles, written in all probability before A.D. 57. When it was penned there was practically no New Testament in existence, except the epistle of James addressed to Hebrew Christians and 1 and 2 Thessalonians. But there were no New Testament manuscripts to preach from. The Old Testament, of course, was available for study, but it did not cover the great distinctive teachings of the new age. The question may be asked, would the Corinthian assembly meet and have a teaching ministry? The answer is yes. God graciously endowed the early church with special revelatory gifts of prophecy, tongues (when interpreted), and knowledge. These special temporary gifts met an urgent need. They were designed to tide the church through the period of partial, piecemeal revelation until the complete and final thing would arrive (1 Cor.13:10).²
- Opinion – It appears to me that this gift may have served the purpose of providing supernatural understanding to and through a selected believer of previously revealed truth (either from Hebrew Scripture or Church Age Body of Christ "mystery" truth that had already been revealed) with an emphasis upon its practical applicability in a given circumstance and situation.
- Opinion – If true, then this gift was designed to fill a gap between existing revelation and the full extent of revelation to be provided once the content of what would eventually become the Canon of Scripture had been completed.

There are a multitude uses of "wisdom" in the New Testament. In all such cases, the "gift" is not the focus of these passages. The focus of these passages is the quality or characteristic of "wisdom". For example:

- In James 1:5, we are told to ask for wisdom. Note that James says "if anyone". Not every believer possesses the "gift" of wisdom.
- In 1 Corinthians 2:9-13, wisdom is related to the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

9 but just as it is written,
"THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD,

² Merrill F. Unger, *The Baptism & Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 141.

AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN,
ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."
10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, 13 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 Cor 2:9-13)

- Jesus is said to have grown in “wisdom” in Luke 2:40 and 52. His “wisdom” was manifest later in life as he continually amazed people with his insight into the Old Testament Scriptures. See Luke 2:47 as one example.

In the Scriptures, the gift of the “word of wisdom” was possibly manifested in three principle manners: 1) to assist the disciples in the midst of persecution; 2) interpreting God’s purposes in the transition period; and 3) communication to the early Church and the writing of Scripture by the Apostles. Examples follow:

- Examples of #1 include Luke 21:14-15 (Jesus promised wisdom to the disciples when they would be brought before courts for the cause of Christ), Acts 4:13 (Peter and John defend themselves before the council), and Acts 6:10 (Stephen’s opposition was not able to resist his spiritual logic). [Note that these all relate to the kingdom proximate period of God’s Jewish-centric program and preceded the inauguration of the intercalated, Gentile-centric dispensation].
- An example of #2 would include Acts 15:13-28 in which James used new insight into Old Testament Scripture to explain God’s purpose for the Gentiles to the Jerusalem Council. [Note that this is an example of where the progressive understanding of the progressive revelation regarding the new dispensation for which Paul was the conduit had not caught up with all that had been revealed to the Apostle Paul regarding this new intercalated dispensation].
- An example of #3 might include 2 Peter 3:15b-16 in which Peter writes regarding Paul’s manifestation of this gift through his writings.

... just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:15b-16)

- Another example of #3 is Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 2:7-8.

7 But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 8 the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (1 Cor 2:7-8)

Post Canon Distortions of the Gift:

Anyone who claims to have new “Revelation” from God today usually claims to possess the gift of a “word of wisdom” or a “word of knowledge”.

WORD OF KNOWLEDGE

Apparently, this gift provided needed knowledge on a subject before that knowledge was available in the completed Canon of Scripture.

- It is very likely that this gift (like the gift of a “word of wisdom”) was a companion gift to that of apostle or prophecy.
- This gift served the purpose of providing needed knowledge on a subject (where no previous revelation regarding the subject could be found) before that knowledge was available in what was to become the completed canon of Scripture. This is different from the word of wisdom gift in that the gift of the word of wisdom provided new revelation or understanding.

Clear examples of this gift in action in Scripture are non-existent. However, the following are possibilities even though there may be some overlap with other temporary gifts that were functioning since each example involves an apostle and apostles manifested the function of more than one spiritual gift.

- Peter probably manifested the gift of the word of knowledge in Acts 5:3-4 in relation to Ananias and his wife.

3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? 4 "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." (Acts 5:3-4)

- Another possible example of the use of this gift (although overlapping to some degree with the gift of prophecy) is found in Acts 27:21-24 in which Paul encourages the members of a ship's crew in the midst of a storm.

Other Points on Topic:

- We are encouraged in the Scriptures to grow in knowledge per 2 Tim. 2:15. The “gift” was never meant to replace knowledge acquired, but to augment it with knowledge not yet provided.
- The believer who possessed the gift could declare truth far beyond the normal and natural capabilities of the individual to assimilate knowledge through diligent study as is encouraged in 2 Tim. 2:15.

Post Canon Distortions of the Gift:

Anyone who claims to have new “Revelation” from God today usually claims to possess the gift of a “Word of Wisdom” or a “Word of Knowledge”.

DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

This gift provided the ability to know whether the person who professed to be a spokesperson for God was a true spokesperson or a false spokesperson. This gift was not related to an ability to discern “evil spirits” from “good spirits” – as in supernatural beings. Rather, this gift pertained to the ability to perceive the inner motivation of a human spokesperson. 1 John 4:2 is one of the tests that such a person who possessed the gift would apply and the word “spirit” in this verse is a reference to humans, not non-human creatures.

2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. (1 Jn 4:2)

This gift would have been used in the early Church to fulfill the command found in 1 Corinthians 14:32 where the spirits of the prophets were to be subject to the prophets and their utterances evaluated carefully per such passages as 1 Corinthians 14:29 and 1 Thessalonians 5:20.

32 And the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. (1 Cor 14:32)

29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. (1 Cor 14:29)

20 Do not despise prophetic utterances. (1 Thess 5:20)

Other Points on Topic:

- An example of the type of person who might prophesy falsely, but who was detected as one who possessed a false spirit is found in Acts 8:4-25 (the story of Simon the Sorcerer and Philip's ministry in Samaria). This passage does not illustrate the use of the gift, however it illustrates the type of person who would have been discerned as possessing a false spirit had he been allowed to continue and if Peter had not called his hand.
- As is true of most spiritual gifts, there is a measure to which every believer is responsible in his/her priesthood or ambassadorship to implement activities similar to the person who possesses the gift. For instance, I'm sure that every believer in the Berean Church did not possess the gift of the discerning of spirits; however, Acts 17:11 notes that the Bereans "...were more noble minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily..."
- Every believer is commanded to try the spirits per 1 John 4:1.
- The believer with this gift served as a check and balance mechanism against those believers (and unbelievers possibly) who might arise in the 1st Century church and claim to be speaking an utterance from God.
- Most likely those who arose claimed to be speaking with the gift of prophecy, the gift of a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge.
- However, in some cases, the lust pattern of the sin nature might be the motivation for such activity so that they were pushing their own agenda rather than simply being a vehicle that God could use.

Post Canon Distortions of the Gift:

Today, there are those who claim to be able to discern "evil spirits" in regard to bodily ailments. They claim that the afflicted person has a demon related to whatever the affliction might be, e.g. an eye demon, a joint demon, etc. This alleged use of the gift is non-Biblical.

FAITH

This gift was a supernatural ability to trust God during a period of intense persecution and was manifested in select believer's lives who had steeped themselves in Truth.

In the formative days of the Church, there was persecution from every angle. The gift of faith gave supernatural confidence in the midst of the persecution that God's Truth would prevail and allowed the person possessing the gift to encourage others. Such was the case with Stephen, Paul, Peter, James, John, and others. This "gift" would not have functioned in a believer who had not steeped themselves in Truth and were thus prepared.

Other Points on Topic:

- The primary reason that I believe that this gift is no longer functional in the Church is that I cannot see how it might be exercised today as separate and distinct from the growth in knowledge and application that is required from every believer.

- As the believer grows in Christian character (one of the seven manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the life of the yielded believer), he/she will manifest the fruit of the Spirit, one of which is faithfulness (Gal 5:22).
- If every Church Age believer is given the same spiritual assets at salvation (with the exception of a different spiritual gift for service) and has a completed Canon of Scripture, what could the person with the gift of faith do that is different than the person who is totally yielded to the Holy Spirit and manifesting Christ like character in his/her life?
- To claim that this gift still functions in the post-Canon period of the Church Age seems to me to only give us an illegitimate reason to excuse our lack of Christian growth. (Remember that a believer can be legitimately immature or a believer can be illegitimately immature. I'm referring to the believer who is illegitimately immature in knowledge and/or application and who is searching for an excuse for his/her failures. We all fail, but there is no legitimate excuse on the part of the illegitimately immature believer. Just be honest with yourself and God. Don't deceive yourself or allow yourself to be deceived about your spiritual status).

Technical Usage for the Gift of Faith:

- As a general rule, it is possible that in the case of the Apostles, the gift of faith was also a companion gift to the gift of apostle in the same manner that the gifts of prophecy, word of wisdom and word of knowledge were possibly companion gifts to the gift of apostle. Consider Romans 12:6. (An alternative way of understanding the gift of Apostle is that the men who possessed the gift of Apostle, in the technical sense of the term, manifested capabilities in association with the gift of Apostle that were similar to these other spiritual gifts. In other words, inherent to the gift of Apostle were various supernatural capabilities similar to these other gifts).
- Stephen possibly had the gift of faith based upon the testimony of Scripture in Acts 6:5-8.
- Paul exhorts believers not to focus upon the pursuit of spiritual gifts to the exclusion of the development of Christian character in 1 Corinthians 13. In verse 2, he states that even though the believer might have the gift of faith so as to remove mountains, if he didn't have love (a fruit of the Spirit resulting from Christian character), it was useless.

Non-technical Uses:

The believer is encouraged to maintain and grow in the faith in such passages as Romans 10:17; 1 Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:16; Col. 2:5; 1 Thess. 5:8; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:7; and James 1:3. These passages do not refer to the "gift" of faith, but are references to the responsibility of every believer.

Post Canon Distortions of the Gift:

I believe that in most if not all cases where a person believes that the gift of faith is one of the gifts given to believers today, that person interprets Ephesians 2:8-9 to mean that **saving faith** is a **gift** of God. If this is true, then many distortions are the natural consequence. For instance, there is a general tendency by those who hold such a position to overemphasize the Sovereignty of God when discussing the free will of man.

***Healings**

This spiritual gift was the supernatural ability to restore a diseased body to full health (terminated by at least A.D. 96 and perhaps at least by A.D. 70). Most of the examples in the Bible where the gifts of healings are manifest involve the Apostles. The healings served the purpose of confirming the messenger and his message.

In 1 Corinthians 12:9, 28, and 30, the Greek word or phrase used for this gift is *chrismata iamaton*. Both of these Greek words are in the plural and are properly translated in the NASV as "gifts of healings". Since there are different kinds of sicknesses, there are different kinds of healings.

Other Points on Topic:

- The exercise of the “*gifts of healings*” did not require faith on the part of the person to be healed. For instance, consider the case of Peter’s healing of the lame man in Acts 3:1-11. The lame man neither expected to be healed nor did he ask to be healed. His faith is not mentioned. His healing was a discretionary act of the Apostle Peter.
- The purpose of this gift was to confirm the message of the messenger. See Hebrews 2:3-4.

2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, 3 how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, 4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. (Heb 2:3-4)

- The gifts of healings were among the “signs and wonders and mighty deeds which Paul indicated were the “sign” of an apostle in 2 Corinthians 12:12. Paul authenticates his claim to the office of Apostle by the “signs” done by him.

12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. (1 Cor 12:12)

- The fact that the gifts of healings were temporary is confirmed by the following comparison of passages.
 - At one point in Paul’s ministry, special miracles were performed by his hands per Acts 19:12 during his third missionary journey (ca. A.D. 54-55).

12 So that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. (Acts 12:12)

- Yet, in 1 Timothy 5:23 (written about A.D. 63), Paul writes to Timothy that he should take a little wine for his stomach ailment.

23 No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments. (1 Tim 5:23)

- In 2 Timothy 4:20 (written about A.D. 66), Paul notes that he had to leave Trophimus ill at Miletus.

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

Technical Usage for the Gift of Healings:

- Examples of the use of this gift include the following:
 - Acts 3:1-11 - Peter heals a lame man at the gate of the temple.
 - Acts 5:12-16 - multitudes came out into the streets of Jerusalem to be healed by Peter.
 - Acts 8:5-7 - Philip exercised the gift in Samaria.
 - Acts 19:11-12 - Paul exhibits the gift.

Non-technical Uses:

To my knowledge, there are no “non-technical” uses of this gift in the Bible which can be confused with the “technical” use of the gift of healing. Of course, there is a general sense in which God still (as He always has) heals those whom He desires to heal in response to their prayers or the prayers of other believers on their behalf.

Post Canon Distortions of the Gift:

Those who claim to have the gifts of healings today are deceived individuals and they can only be pushing their own agenda apart from what is taught in the Scripture regarding this gift. The “healings” which do occur are either the result of the natural healing process, God’s intervention apart from human agency, or they are Satanic in origin. (If Satan can do what Jesus said he did in Luke 13:10-17, then Satan could certainly undo it). There is a third possibility that the “healing” is only a temporary psychosomatic cure that allows the afflicted individual some temporary relief.

MIRACLES

This was evidently the supernatural ability to change the very nature of something (probably terminated by at least A.D. 70, but perhaps as late as A.D. 96). The fact that miraculous events occurred at the hands of the Apostles is attested in 2 Corinthians 12:12. However, specific examples of the function of the gift separate and apart from healings are probably non-existent in Scripture.

Other Comments:

- Some believe that when the Apostle Paul referred to miracles, he was referring in a general way to other gifts such as healings, tongues, and the gift of the interpretation of tongues. (See J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter*, 180). However, even though it may be true that we don’t see many, if any, examples of this gift being exhibited separate and apart from other “miraculous” gifts by an individual, it may have been a separate gift by virtue of the fact that it is mentioned separately. It may be that it was held in common with other spiritual gifts.
- The Bible contains many instances of miracles that occurred; however, miracles are not indiscriminately strewn over every page of Scripture. Rather, we find miracles generally grouped into three great periods of history each of which lasted about 70 years:
 - The period of Moses and Joshua.
 - The period of Elijah and Elisha when Baal worship was at its peak in Israel.
 - The period of Christ and the Apostles (i.e. the Twelve Apostles to the Jews plus Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles).
- In each instance, God was using the miracles to authenticate the message and the messenger and the period marked a transition point in human history. For instance:
 - Moses and Joshua - God was forming a nation.
 - Elijah and Elisha - God was appealing to the Jews to forsake idol worship and return to Him and shortly thereafter, the Northern Kingdom went into Assyrian captivity.
 - Christ and the Apostles - the Kingdom of God was being presented and rejected by Israel and a new dispensation was being intercalated.
- This doesn’t mean that there were no miracles apart from these periods of history, e.g. Daniel delivered in the lion’s den and the period of the Judges of Israel.
- In most cases, the purpose of the miracle was to confirm the message of the messenger.
- Also, we must distinguish between God performing a miracle that involves a believer versus God working through an individual to effect a miracle.

Non-technical Usages:

- I am not aware of any “non-technical” uses of the gift of miracles even though there are a number of instances in which miracles occurred apart from the gift. Examples (all of which do not involve the function of the gift) could include the following:
 - The movement of Philip to Azotus after baptizing the eunuch (Acts 8:38-40).

38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea. (Acts 8:38-40) [Note: *this is not an example of the “gift of miracles being possessed by an individual. Rather, it is an example of the Holy Spirit performing a miracle involving a believer.*]

- The release of Peter from prison (Acts 5:19; 12:6ff).
- An earthquake which accomplished the release of Paul and Silas from prison (Acts 16:26)

Distortions of the Gift:

Jesus categorized those who continually sought after a sign during His public ministry as being part of an evil and adulterous generation (Matt. 12:39). The same could be said of those in the present dispensation of the Body of Christ (past, present, and future) who seek such external evidence as a basis for their belief.

Miracles are not the ultimate proof of truth. In His teaching regarding the entrance into the Kingdom, Jesus indicated that there would be many who would perform miracles in His name, but He would reject their works as a basis for entering the Kingdom (see Matthew 7:21-23).

21 "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 will enter.

22 "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?'

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' (Matt 7:21-23)

Of course, this implies that there will be miracles performed, but the source of these miracles will not be God. Other passages attest to the same (e.g. Matt 24:24; 2 Thess 2:8-12; and Rev 13:13-15).

If the primary reason that God allowed certain individuals to perform miracles in the Bible was to confirm their message and the messenger and no new Scripture is being added today, then for one to claim he has miraculous powers is tantamount to claiming he has the gift of Apostle.

APPENDIX – ONE’S UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRANSITION PERIOD AFFECTS ONE’S UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION OF THE SUBJECT OF “SPIRITUAL GIFTS” IN SCRIPTURE

As discussed in more detail in a prior session (see “*Temporary Versus Permanent Spiritual Gifts*” – session SB_12B), I believe that the “*transition*” period that we observe when reading the book of Acts reflects a *progressive understanding* on the part of believers (led by new revelation given to the Apostle Paul) of the Truths associated with the new dispensation.³ The

³ See the chart below that illustrates this principle.

temporary suspension of God's Jewish-centric program through the nation of Israel occurred at a definite point even though Jewish people who accepted Jesus as the Messiah continued to practice Jewish tradition and even if, on occasion, we see Paul observing a Jewish ritual such as circumcision or the keeping of a Nazarite vow – acts that Paul certainly did not see as required for salvation nor as being demanded by God as a part of the spiritual walk of the believer. Paul viewed them rightly as a non-essential.

The “Jewish Apostles” did not receive the truths relevant to the present intercalated age – except indirectly as Paul's teaching and writings eventually circulated back to Jerusalem and to other areas where these Jewish Apostles ministered as well. Even then, Peter who might have spoken representatively for all twelve of the Jewish Apostles, states – “...*just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction*” (2 Pet 3:15b-16). (Notice that among other things, Peter indicates that Paul's writings are on a par with the “*rest of the Scriptures*” and Peter admits that some of Paul's teaching contains instruction that is “*hard to understand*”).

So, the position of ***The Church of the Servant King*** (as best as I understand the issues at present) in regards to the relationship between the “Jewish Apostles” and the intercalated Church Age Body of Christ is that these Twelve continued in their ministry based upon a Jewish-centric paradigm of understanding. Accordingly, they were boldly proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah Who had been crucified, but Who would be returning soon to establish His Messianic reign. That message was equally applicable to Gentiles since the Gentiles will be a part of the future, literal kingdom of God on earth. This explains the ministry of some of these men (e.g. Peter) among the Gentiles in a manner that was consistent with the so-called “Great Commission” (Matt 28:18). (The so-called “Great Commission” was specifically communicated to the Twelve by Jesus and had the anticipated Messianic Kingdom in view). As Paul continued his ministry and writing, then gradually, these Twelve became more and more exposed to the progressive unfolding of the new truths relevant to the present age. However, it is questionable, based upon the content of the non-Pauline epistles, that they ever fully grasped all of the content of Paul's teaching (e.g. 2 Pet 3:15b-16). Their letters reflect a commonality to principles true of the intercalated Church Age Body of Christ due largely to the fact that there is a commonality between the relationship and ministry of the Holy Spirit to believers of the intercalated age and the kingdom age.

Accordingly, there was a period immediately after the death, burial, resurrection of our Lord Jesus during which miraculous events and manifestations in and through certain believers occurred. Certain “sign gifts” accompanied the proclamation of the “gospel” during this period prior to the calling of the Apostle Paul – a gospel that identified Jesus as the Messiah of Israel Who had been crucified as a propitiatory sacrifice and resurrected and ascended as God the Father's validation of His person, His work, and His claims.

The signs and miracles documented in the book of Acts were designed to attend the presentation of the kingdom gospel during Israel's “last days” as prophesied in Scripture (Joel 2:28-32 cf. Acts 2:14-43). Eventually, as the rejection by Israel became full (the major theme of the book of Acts) and the gospel of grace was received with gladness by Gentiles, the transition to the new dispensation was completed and the signs and miracles associated with the kingdom-centric gospel ceased.

Paul documents this fact in such passages as 1 Corinthians 13:8. Eventually, during this Transition period, even Gentiles who accepted the grace gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ spoke in tongues (foreign languages) which served as a testimony to Jews that God was going directly to the Gentiles with a message of salvation and hope – a message that a repentant Israel should have been the agents to disseminate. Early in the Transition period, the conversion of the Samaritans by Philip (Acts 8: 8:5-7, 13-17) and the conversion of the Gentile Roman Centurion,

Cornelius, by Peter (Acts 10: 3, 10-21, 43-48) would have been (and was) interpreted by the Jews as consistent with Gentile participation in the coming kingdom. Later, during the Transition period as the Jewish rejection was becoming fully realized, the sign gifts began to wane based upon Paul's testimony. So, the continuance of some of the spiritual "gifts" (mentioned by Paul in the passages we have noted) among the Gentiles during the course of his ministry among them would, according to my present understanding, have been for the purpose of using these "gifts" as a means to validate God's working amongst the Gentiles and as a means of conviction for the Jews.

