

Prophecy¹ and the Gifts of the Spirit



SABBATH—JANUARY 10

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Acts 2:1–11; Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 1:6, 7; 1 Corinthians 13:9; Ephesians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10.

MEMORY VERSE: “There are different kinds of gifts. But they are all given by the same Spirit. There are different ways to serve. But they all come from the same Lord. There are different ways to work. But the same God makes it possible for all of us to have all those different things” (1 Corinthians 12:4–6, NIV).

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS BELIEVE in spiritual gifts.² And we are not alone. Many Pentecostal churches³ claim to have spiritual gifts. Some members of these churches also claim to receive “prophecies” from God. For example, someone prophesied⁴ that God blew up the space shuttle *Challenger* in order to teach America a lesson. According to this prophecy, God blew up the space shuttle because there was a public school teacher on board. (It seems that someone believed God does not like public school teachers.)

As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe in the gifts of the Spirit, including prophecy. But we also believe that everything should be tested⁵ by the Word of God (the Bible). This week, using the Bible, we will study some of the gifts of the Spirit.

THIS WEEK'S LESSON UP CLOSE: Why does God give spiritual gifts to the church? How are they used? Why has God given the church the gift of tongues?⁶ What does the Bible teach about counterfeit (false) gifts?

1. prophecy—a special message from God, often an explanation of what will happen in the future.

2. spiritual gifts—the gifts the Holy Spirit gives us when we become born again. These gifts are to be used to help serve Christ's church. First Corinthians 12:1–11 gives a list of what those gifts are: wisdom; knowledge; faith; healing; the working of miracles; prophecy (foretelling the future); speaking in different languages; interpreting (explaining) the meaning of other languages. Different people have different gifts. Some people may have more than one gift. But all gifts come from the Holy Spirit to help the church.

3. Pentecostal churches—churches that have a very lively or expressive style of worship. They believe in the importance of having spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues and faith healing. They also believe in bringing others to Jesus. And they also place importance on each believer's personal walk with the Lord.

4. prophesied—said what would happen in the future.

5. tested—to prove something to be true or false, good or bad.

6. (the) gift of tongues—the ability given by the Holy Spirit to speak in, or understand, a language that one does not know.

SUNDAY—JANUARY 11**SPIRITUAL GIFTS
(Ephesians 4:11)**

Our words for *spiritual gifts* come from the Greek word *charismata*. Spiritual gifts are *spiritual* because they come from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives them to each believer according to His will (plan) (1 Corinthians 12:11). And the Holy Spirit is given to Christians



Jesus gave His apostles the power to cast out demons, raise the dead, and heal the sick.

to help them understand and think highly of these gifts (1 Corinthians 2:10–13).

Paul gives four lists of spiritual gifts in Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 12:8–10; 1 Corinthians 12:28–30; and Ephesians 4:11, 12. Why were spiritual gifts given to the first Christian church? Why are they given to the church today?

The New Testament says that spiritual gifts are given to the church to finish its mission.⁷ The Holy Spirit gives the gifts to encourage the church and help it grow. The gifts are also given to help preach the gospel⁸ to the world. The gifts remind us always how completely we depend on Jesus. Without Him, we cannot do the work God has called us to do.

From the Gospels⁹ we know the apostles¹⁰ had spiritual gifts before Pentecost.¹¹ In Luke 9:1, Jesus “gave them power and authority¹² to drive out all demons and heal diseases” (NIV). In Matthew 10:8, Jesus gives them the ability to “‘heal the sick, cleanse the lepers,¹³ raise the dead, cast out demons’” (NKJV). Then at Pentecost the apostles are filled with the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues (Acts 2:1–4). Their experience teaches us we can receive more than one baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

7. mission—the special duty (work) for Jesus that a church sends a person or a group out to do.

8. gospel—the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins; the good news of salvation.

9. Gospels—the four books of the New Testament that tell the story of Jesus’ life and His teachings. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are called the Gospels.

10. apostles—the disciples (followers) of Jesus who preached and taught the gospel after Jesus rose from the dead and returned to heaven.

11. Pentecost—the time when Jesus’ followers received the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit after Jesus rose from the dead and went back to heaven (Acts 2:1–4).

12. authority—the ability to make someone obey; influence that creates respect and trust; power.

13. lepers—people who have leprosy, a disease that affects the skin and nerves. It also causes a loss of feeling in the body and leads to the body becoming deformed and unable to move certain parts.

14. baptism of the Holy Spirit—a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. After Jesus’ followers receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4), they are able to preach in languages they never studied.

Which spiritual gifts do you have in your church? What have they been used for? What have been the fruits (results) of these gifts? What can you do to help encourage the growth of these gifts in your church group? Discuss your answers on Sabbath.

MONDAY—JANUARY 12

SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE CHURCH TODAY

Spiritual gifts can be divided into two groups: the edifying (for growth; teaching) gifts and the sign gifts. Christians today argue about which spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit continues to give the church. Some Christians believe that the *edifying gifts* are the only gifts still given to the church by the Holy Spirit. The edifying gifts are given to the church to teach it and help it to grow. Edifying gifts include the spiritual gifts of knowledge, wisdom, teaching, exhortation,¹⁵ faith, and mercy.¹⁶ But these Christians believe the *sign gifts* ended with the death of the apostles. Sign gifts include the spiritual gifts of prophecy, healing, tongues, and miracles.¹⁷ Those Christians who believe this way claim, “The sign gifts had a special purpose: to give the apostles the power to win souls to Christ. The sign gifts were to let the

people know that these men [apostles] all spoke the truth of God. Once the Word of God was written down the sign gifts were no longer needed. So the Holy Spirit stopped giving them to the church.”—Adapted from John F. MacArthur, Junior, *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1993), page 199. But other Christians do not agree. They believe that all the spiritual gifts will continue to be in the church until the Lord comes again.

According to 1 Corinthians 1:6, 7; 1 Corinthians 13:9; and Ephesians 4:11–13, which spiritual gifts will continue to be given to the church?

Paul writes that the *charismata*, the spiritual gifts, will be in the church until Jesus comes. But do Paul’s words mean that all the gifts will be present all the time?

The church father (leader) Irenaeus (A.D. 120–195) writes that spiritual gifts are found in the church even in his day. Irenaeus also writes that spiritual gifts are still found in the church at the end of the second century A.D.

But during the next two centuries things change. The church suffers a spiritual¹⁸ decline (a change to a lower level). And the spiritual gifts mostly disappear. Then the time of the Reformation¹⁹ begins with John Wycliffe in England. God uses

15. exhortation—warnings, encouragement, and advice.

16. mercy—kindness that a person does not deserve.

17. miracles—extraordinary (amazing; great) events believed to be a sign of the power of God. Examples of miracles include Peter walking on water and Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

18. spiritual—having to do with God.

19. the Reformation—the period of religious re-awakening during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when Bible students disagreed with the Roman Catholic Church. These students started new churches, such as the Lutheran Church. John Wycliffe and Martin Luther were leaders of the Reformation.

the Reformers²⁰ to restore (bring back) forgotten truth. The Reformers clearly have the gifts of knowledge, wisdom, and teaching. But none of the important Reformers claimed to have the prophetic gift.²¹ This special gift, according to Revelation 12:17, will be found in the end-time remnant²² church.

Paul says in Ephesians 4:12 that spiritual gifts are given “to build up the body of Christ [the church]” (NIRV, adapted). What kind of building up does Paul mean? In what way do you find this happening in the church today?

TUESDAY—JANUARY 13

COUNTERFEIT (FALSE) GIFTS (2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10)

What do Matthew 7:22, 23; 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10; and Revelation 16:13, 14 teach about counterfeit (false) gifts? Where do counterfeit gifts come from?

By the power of God, Moses and Aaron stand in front of Pharaoh and turn a staff into a snake (Exodus 7:10). God’s power turns the Nile River into blood (verse 20). Moses and Aaron also make frogs come out of the Nile to cover the land (Exodus 8:6). But by the power of Satan, the Egyptian magicians do the same. But from the third plague

onward, the Egyptian magicians are not able to “copy” God’s miracles.

This fact teaches us two things: (1) Satan can make miracles that seem like true miracles. (2) Satan can work only within the limits set by God.

Counterfeit gifts are not just copies of the true gifts of God. But they are “miracles” from Satan.



By God’s power, Aaron’s rod changes into a snake.

The verses teach us a few more important points about false spiritual gifts. First, these false miracles can be done by those who claim the name of Jesus. As Jesus says, many will claim to do miracles in His name. But, as Jesus also says, these miracles are not of Him.

Second, there will be miracles and wonderful signs. These signs and miracles will be enough to deceive (fool) many. So, we must be very careful not to be fooled by Satan’s miracles. Just because something is done in the name of Jesus and appears to be from

20. the Reformers—church leaders, such as Martin Luther, who tried to bring the church back to truth.

21. prophetic gift—the ability to receive special messages from God and/or foretell future events.

22. remnant—a small group of God’s faithful people. Seventh-day Adventists believe that they are members of God’s remnant church.

God does not mean that it is a true gift of the Spirit.

Finally, Satan is working to deceive (fool) as many people as possible. So, when “miracles” happen, we always must test them by the Bible. If they do not follow the Word of God, we have our answer. It does not matter how impressive (great; amazing) the miracles may be. The Bible must be our final test of what is true or false.



Satan can make “miracles” that look like true miracles (read Exodus 7:11, 12).

With these thoughts in mind, what are we to make of those ministries that claim to show all kinds of prophecies, healing, and “miracles”? Without wanting to judge anyone, why should we be on guard against them? What kind of questions should we ask about them, and why?

WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 14

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY (1 Corinthians 12:8–10)

All through history, there have been people who claim to know what will happen in the future. The French doctor Michel de Notredame (1503–1566) is one of them. He is also known as Nostradamus. He foretold the Great Fire of London of 1666. He wrote, “The blood of the just²³ will be required in the city of London, burnt by the fire in the year 66.”—Adapted from <http://www.armageddononline.org/nostradamus.php>. Accessed January 29, 2007. The Irish “prophet” Cheiro is another person who claimed to know the future. He warned newspaper writer W. T. Stead in 1894 and again in 1911 that Stead would drown in April 1912. Stead died in April 1912 when the *Titanic* sank.

In 1956, Jean Dixon published a vision.²⁴ She claimed this vision showed that a Democrat²⁵ would be elected president in 1960. But she saw that he would be assassinated (murdered) while he was president. John F. Kennedy, a Democrat, was elected president in 1960. He was assassinated in 1963 while he was in office.

These people had no connection with the Bible prophets.²⁶ So how can we explain why their “prophecies”

23. (the) just—people who are not guilty of doing wrong; those who are innocent.

24. vision—something seen in a dream or in a trance that makes known what will happen in the future.

25. Democrat—a member of the Democratic Party of the United States. The Democratic Party is a major group of the ruling body of the United States. The Democratic Party believes in helping the poor, in fair treatment for all people, and in encouraging different countries to get along with one another.

26. prophets—men or women who are spokespersons for God; God gives His prophets special messages to give to His people. Prophets also speak to God on behalf of His people. God may also give prophets warnings about what will happen in the future.

came true? Read Isaiah 8:19; Acts 16:16; 2 Corinthians 11:14.

Satan uses the snake in the Garden of Eden to deceive Eve. Since then he has used different human²⁷ “prophets” to deceive men and women. They often have given prophecies that have come true. But just because a prophecy comes true does not mean it comes from God.

Even so, prophets and prophecies play an important part in the plan of salvation.²⁸ This point is made clear in the Bible.



Satan uses the snake to deceive Eve. Ever since that time, Satan has used false prophets to deceive men and women.

First Corinthians 12:8–10 lists prophecy as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Prophecy appears first on the list of gifts in Romans 12:6. And it appears in both 1 Corinthians 12:28–30 and Ephesians 4:11. What makes the prophetic gift so important? Why is prophecy the only gift named in all four lists of spiritual gifts?

The gift of prophecy²⁹ is a way for God and His people to speak to each other. Prophecies in the Bible make known the future (Daniel 2). They counsel and warn kings (Isaiah 7:3, 4). They warn of coming judgments³⁰ (Jeremiah 1:14–16). They call for revival³¹ (Joel 2:12, 13). And they encourage and comfort God’s people (Isaiah 40:1, 2).

Prophets are men and women who speak the word of God to people of their time. The focus of the prophetic gift is not foretelling the future. (But telling what will happen in the future is one of the signs of a true prophet.) Instead, the prophetic gift focuses on what God wants His people to know.

THURSDAY—JANUARY 15

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND 1 CORINTHIANS 14 (1 Corinthians 14:1–25)

The Bible teaches us that the church in Corinth³² has many problems. Church members are quarreling and falling back into sin. There are court cases among believers and marriage problems. Also, the church does not observe (take part in) the Lord’s Supper³³ in the right way. Another problem is spiritual gifts. One of the problems with spiritual gifts in Corinth is the use of the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 14:1–5). The church in

27. human—having to do with men, women, or children.

28. plan of salvation—what God has done and is doing to save us from sin.

29. gift of prophecy—the ability to receive special messages from God and/or foretell future events.

30. judgments—the punishments received for doing wrong.

31. revival—the time when people become interested in God again and want to make their lives better.

32. Corinth—one of the Greek city-states during Paul’s time.

33. the Lord’s Supper—the name given to Jesus’ last meal with His 12 disciples (followers) before His death on the cross. Today, Christians still honor Jesus by taking part in the Lord’s Supper. The practice involves eating bread without yeast and drinking pure wine (grape juice). The bread and wine represent the broken body and spilled blood of Jesus. By taking part in the Lord’s Supper, we remember what Jesus did for us on the cross.

Corinth feels that the gift of tongues is better than all the other gifts of the Spirit. But Paul makes it clear that the gift of prophecy is more useful to the church than the gift of tongues.

According to Acts 2:1–11, what is the gift of tongues? What kind of languages are being spoken?

According to 1 Corinthians 14:1–25, what are the tongues spoken in the church in Corinth?

To study the Bible, we follow the principle (rule) that scripture (verse) interprets (explains) scripture (verse). This means unclear verses are explained by clear ones. Using this rule, we guess that the tongues in 1 Corinthians 14 are the same as the tongues in the book of Acts. The word *glossa* is the same Greek word used for tongues in both books. The tongues in both places are the God-given ability to speak in foreign languages. Some people also believe that the gift of tongues means that a person can speak in one language but be understood or heard in another language. For example, a French-speaking person who listens to a sermon preached in Swedish would hear or understand the sermon in French. Either way, the true gift of tongues is not the meaningless speech spoken in many churches today. This meaningless speech is the false “gift” of tongues.

Also, God works through our ability to reason. He warns us against foolish speaking (Matthew 6:7, NEB). So would this same Lord then encourage us to speak in unknown noises? Of course

not! In 1 Corinthians 14:22, tongues are meant to be a sign to unbelievers just as they are a sign for unbelievers at Pentecost. How could someone speaking noises that no one understands be a sign to unbelievers? Acts 2 says that tongues are real languages given to the church to help it grow. Spiritual gifts are given for the good of the people (1 Corinthians 12:7). The gifts are not to be used for selfish or personal reasons.

“Modern” tongues do not make much sense today. Modern tongues-speaking is called *glossolalia*. It is not the same as the gift of languages in the Bible. The Bible teaches that the gift of tongues is speaking or hearing human languages, nothing more.

Think about the words you speak daily. How much of what you say is meaningful, purposeful talk? And how much of it makes no sense or is foolish joking?

FRIDAY—JANUARY 16

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “Pentecost,” pages 35–46, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

“The special gifts of the Spirit include all our gifts, both the gifts we are born with and the ones we learn. All our gifts and talents are to be used in Christ’s service. In becoming His disciples [followers], we surrender [give] ourselves to Him with all that we are and have. And He returns our gifts to us made pure and noble. We are to use them to give Him honor and praise. Our gifts are meant to be a blessing to others.”

—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*,³⁴ page 328.

“The person who makes miracles the test [proof] of his faith will find that Satan can do tricks that will appear to be miracles.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, page 52.

“Some persons have false talents which they call gifts. They say that the Lord has placed them in the church. But they talk in meaningless speech, which they call the unknown tongue. This meaningless speech is unknown to human beings [people], to the Lord, and to all heaven. Such gifts are invented [created] by men and women, with Satan's help. Many people think that false excitement, false talking in tongues, and foolish actions have been gifts which God has put in the church. But they have been deceived [fooled] here.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*³⁵ for the Church, volume 1, page 412.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ As a class, go over your answers to Sunday's study. What kind of gifts are found in your local church? How can you make better use of the gifts you have? Most important, how are your gifts being used?
- ❷ Pentecostal Christians believe that speaking in tongues is proof that a person is filled with the Holy Spirit. But what does Galatians 5:22, 23 say about the true proof of a Spirit-filled life?
- ❸ What are some of the heavenly miracles in your culture³⁶ and in your part of the world? What seems to be the fruit (results; good effects) of these miracles? What are ways that you, as a church, can protect other church members from being deceived (fooled)? How can you help others outside the church know about the dangers of false miracles?

34. object lessons—lessons that use an object to teach a spiritual (holy) truth. Most often the object comes from nature, such as a flower, an animal, tree, or seashell. But the object used to teach the lesson might be man-made instead.

35. *Testimonies*—the writings of Ellen G. White.

36. culture—the way people live, dress, think, eat, and socialize with one another.