



C E S S A T I O N I S M

A G F C D I S T I N C T I V E



CESSATIONISM TEACHES THAT THE SIGN GIFTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT HAVE ENDED. WHILE MANY GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ARE STILL IN OPERATION TODAY, SOME GIFTS SUCH AS PROPHECY AND TONGUES ARE NOT. THEY SERVED THEIR PURPOSE IN THE FIRST CENTURY BUT STOPPED SOON AFTERWARDS AND HERE ARE THREE REASONS WHY:

I. THE BIBLE IS CLOSED

The first reason why the sign gifts have ceased is because the Bible is closed and it is no longer being written today. In the First Century, when the New Testament was being created, these gifts were necessary because they helped the church to identify a prophet of God. The early Christians had to be able to tell who was truly speaking for the Lord and who was not.

However, when the New Testament was finally written, these gifts ceased because they were not needed anymore. Revelation 22:18-19 says:

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.

To explain the context for that, since the church was open to prophecy in the First Century, there was a tendency to abuse the office.

Many false prophets took advantage of the situation so the Apostle John gave them a warning here at the end of Revelation. He said that there should be no more prophecies after him. John said that God will punish anyone who continued to prophecy falsely and add to His Word because he will be the last prophet. After John, the gift will cease.

Jude 1:3 also says:

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Jude, which is the second-to-last book in the Bible, says that "the faith" or the content of our faith has been "once for all handed down." This means that it is not continually being handed down from one prophet to another because it was passed down once for all in the Bible. The process is over now

II. GOD'S FULL REVELATION IS HERE

Another reason why the sign gifts have ceased is because God's full revelation is here. As mentioned before, the sign gifts were used to show that God was revealing Himself. They demonstrated that a prophet was truly speaking for the Lord. Once the Bible was written, however, there was no more need for that so the sign gifts came to a halt.

Interestingly enough, the Bible talks about this in First Corinthians 13:8-10 when it says:

Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; If there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

In verse 8, Paul mentions three spiritual gifts: prophecy, tongues, and knowledge. Prophecy refers to a word from the Lord. Tongues refers to the ability to speak a new language and knowledge refers to new information that has been supernaturally imparted to us. The point in this passage is that all of these gifts will cease when "the perfect comes."

The Greek word for "perfect" in this verse is teleios. It is the same word Jesus used on the cross when He said, "It is finished!" It means that something is complete or has come to an end. In other words, these gifts will cease when the complete Word of God comes. Prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will come to an end when we have the New Testament.

This also coincides with what Paul says later in verses 11-12. Here he explains “the perfect” by giving us an illustration from childhood:

When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.

Paul says that when he was a child, he did away with childish things. What childish things is he referring to? Verse 11 gives us three actions that coincide with the sign gifts. “Speak like a child” refers to tongues. “Think like a child” refers to prophecy. “Reason like a child” refers to knowledge.

Paul uses these expressions here to show us that when the complete information of the Bible comes, the childish or partial information of those gifts will be finished. They will disappear because we have the Bible now and that is all we need.

III. THE SIGN GIFTS DID CEASE AFTER THE FIRST CENTURY

A final reason why the sign gifts have ceased is because, historically-speaking, they did cease after the First Century. After the church was established and the Bible was written, they disappeared from record. For example, the last time that the gift of tongues is mentioned chronologically is in Acts 19:1-6 where some Ephesians spoke in tongues. It does not appear in the Book of Acts after that. The only other passage to mention it is First Corinthians 12-14 which was written before Acts 19. It is not found in any other book of the Bible that proceeds from that point or in the annals of church history with a few exceptions.

This is strange because Christians claimed to perform all sorts of miracles after the First Century. During the Middle Ages, for instance, they claimed to receive visions, perform healings, and hear the audible voice of God. Almost no one, however, claimed to speak in tongues until a man named Charles Parham appeared in the 1900's claiming that he had received the gift. He said that it returned to him when he laid hands on some Bible students in the town of Topeka, Kansas.

From there, Parham gave the gift to a man named William Seymour who took it to the Asuza Street Mission in Los Angeles, California where the modern-day charismatic movement was born. Under Seymour's influence, the gift of tongues spread all across the United States and around the world. Soon people from every major denomination began practicing it.

The alarming thing about these two events, however, is that Charles Parham believed that the Anglo Saxons were God's chosen race and he died a member of the KKK. William Seymour's Asuza Street Mission was also criticized by the people of its day for its wild and bizarre behaviour that included the use of divination during its services.

Apparently, members of the occult began attending its meetings and holding seances there. In other words, this was not a movement of God. It did not look like the gift of tongues that we see in the Bible because it was not. The gift had not returned. It stopped along with the other sign gifts in the First Century. In the words of John Napier, "When one adds up the total testimony of Scripture . . . there is ample evidence to show that biblical tongues, sign gifts, and revelatory gifts have ceased . . . Any who claim to speak new revelation today stands against [this evidence.]"[1]

CONCLUSION

Does God still speak to us today? The answer is "yes." He most certainly does but He does it through the Bible as it is read and heard. He also speaks through nature and the work of the Holy Spirit as He convicts the world in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8).

However, He no longer speaks to us through the sign gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge. He did that once when His people did not have the written Word of God but He no longer does it today which is why this is a distinctive of our church.

If you have any questions about cessationism or anything else in this pamphlet, please let us know.

[1] John Napier, *Charismatic Challenge: Four Key Questions* (Franklin, Tenn.: Providence House Publishers, 1995) 75.



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