

PNEUMATOLOGY

The Study (Doctrine) of the Holy Spirit Study Outline – Lesson 6

Cessationism VS Continuism

Defining Cessationism

Cessationism is the view that the miracle gifts of tongues and healing have ceased. Many believe that, while God can and still does perform miracles today, the Holy Spirit no longer uses individuals to accomplish miraculous signs. With in this belief there is a wide spectrum of ideas.

Most truthful cessationists acknowledge that there's no conclusive verses in the Bible that the gifts have ceased.

Defining Continuism

Continuationists believe that the sign gifts of the Spirit continue and have not ceased as the Spirit still works through gifts such as prophecy, knowledge, tongues, and healings in various ways.

Thought to Remember

Are those that hold to cessationism not Christian? No. Are those that hold to continuationism not Christian? Not at all. Though this debate is important, the Great commission and reaching souls for Christ is so much greater. We may disagree but we are not enemies.

What We Have In Common

- Everything must be tested against Scripture.
- Salvation by grace through faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.
- Preaching the Gospel and making Disciples of Christ should be principal.

Cessationism and Continuism Compared

A Foundational Verse to Cessationism

1 Corinthians 13:8-10 - 8 Love never fails. But if there are prophecies, they shall fail; if there are tongues, they shall cease; and if there is knowledge, it shall vanish. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect comes, then that which is imperfect shall pass away.

THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

Paul says the church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets”

Ephesians 2:19-22 - Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the entire building, tightly framed together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God through the Spirit.

Cessationists say we don't have apostles like Paul and Peter and John anymore. These apostles gave us the teaching through which the church continues to live to this day, and that is the only teaching we will need until Jesus returns.

Was Paul the last apostle?

1 Corinthians 15:7-8 - 7 Then He was seen by James and then by all the apostles. 8 Last of all, He was seen by me also, as by one born at the wrong time.

Cessationists say that the Apostles were restricted to those who have seen the risen Saviour and have been commissioned by Christ. The apostles were to establish doctrine. There is no need for apostles today. So, if the gift of apostleship has ended, then other gifts may have ceased as well, since the foundation has been laid by the apostles and prophets.

Back to **1 Corinthians 13:10 - But when that which is perfect comes, then that which is imperfect shall pass away.**

Some – say that this refers to the formation of the canon of scripture. The time when the Bible was completed and put together.

Most, even most cessationists, conclude that this refers to the return of Jesus.

SIX EVIDENCES THAT ARE USED TO SUPPORT CESSATIONISM

First - The apostles, through whom tongues came, were unique in the history of the church. Once their ministry was completed, the need for confirming signs ceased to exist.

Second - The miracle (or sign) gifts are only mentioned in the earliest epistles. The later books, such as Ephesians and Romans, contain detailed passages on the gifts of the Spirit, but the miracle gifts are not really mentioned.

Third - The gift of tongues was a sign to unbelieving Israel that God's salvation was now offered to other nations.

1 Corinthians 14:21-22 – in the law it is written: “With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; but even then they will not hear Me,” says the Lord. So tongues are for a sign, not to believers, but to unbelievers. But prophesying does not serve unbelievers, but believers.

Fourth - Tongues was an inferior gift to prophecy (which is preaching). Preaching the Word of God edifies believers, however tongues does not. Believers are instructed to pursue prophesying over speaking in tongues.

1 Corinthians 14:1-3 - Follow after love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For he who speaks in an unknown tongue does not speak to men, but to God. For no one understands him, although in the spirit, he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks to men for their edification and exhortation and comfort.

Fifth - History indicates that tongues did cease. Tongues are not mentioned at all by the Post-Apostolic Fathers.

Sixth - There are indications that the miracle of tongues has ceased. If the gift were still available today, there would be no need for missionaries to attend language school. Missionaries would be able to travel to any country and speak any language fluently, just as the apostles were able to speak in **Acts 2**.

As for the miracle gift of healing, we see in Scripture that healing was associated with the ministry of Jesus and the apostles. And we see that as the era of the apostles drew to a close, healing, like tongues, became less frequent.

A Foundational Verse to Continuism

Acts 2:14-21 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all you who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to my words. 15 For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is the third hour of the day. 16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 ‘In the last days it shall be,’ says God, ‘that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. 18 Even on My menservants and maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. 19 And I will show wonders in heaven above and signs on the earth below: blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and glorious day of the Lord comes. 21 And whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

OPENING

One reason people (pastors) look to cessationism is because of the abuses and problems that “Pentecostals” have created. We have self-afflicted wounds. Abuses, Fake Prophecies, Fake Healings, Lack of scripture, Lack of Integrity in Leaders. But things were not perfect in the early church.

1 Corinthians 5:1 - It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles, that a man has his father’s wife.

The problems that occurred in the church at Corinth were not due to spiritual gifts, but immature carnal people.

THE EXTENSIVE EVIDENCE OF SCRIPTURE

Starting at Pentecost and continuing throughout the book of Acts, we see the Holy Spirit poured out on new believers, who experience His power and ability. There is nothing to show these signs and wonders were restricted to them and then.

There is also wide-ranging evidence of so-called miraculous gifts among Christians who are not apostles.

Stephen ministered in the power of signs and wonders. **Acts 6:8 - Now Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.**

Acts 2 – 120 in the upper room were ALL filled and spoke in tongues

Luke 10 – 70 commissioned by Christ as workers (harvesters)

Acts 9 – Ananias healing of Paul

Four girls who prophesied - **Acts 21:8-9 - The next day we who were Paul's companions departed, and arrived at Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. He had four virgin daughters who prophesied.**

Previously in **1 Corinthians 13:8-12** we saw that Paul declares that spiritual gifts (prophecy) will not “pass away” until the coming of the “perfect.” If the “perfect” is end of the time (return of Jesus) when God’s redemptive purposes comes to a close, and since that hasn’t happened yet should we not expect God to continue blessing and empowering his church with the gifts until that then.

Ephesians 4:11-13 - 11 He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, and for the building up of the body of Christ, 13 until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, into a complete man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Here Paul speaks of the various offices in the church and in particular the gifts of prophecy, evangelism, pastor, and teacher—as building up of the church “**until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, into a complete man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.**”

First – there is no scripture that says the office of apostle/prophet has ceased. It can only be assumed these offices have ceased.

Second - we know that this is still a work in progress (the church is still coming into the fullness of Christ) therefore these 5 offices are still needed and relevant for God to use to equip and build up His church.

SPEAKING TO THE SIX EVIDENCES THAT ARE USED TO SUPPORT CESSATIONISM

First - The apostles, through whom tongues came, were unique in the history of the church. Once their ministry was completed, the need for confirming signs ceased to exist.

Why they say the gifts were needed then.

- The miraculous gifts were needed only to confirm/prove the initial establishing of the gospel and the church.
- Jesus' ministry was also marked by miracles, which the Apostle John calls "signs". Prove Christ.

No biblical text ever says signs and wonders or spiritual gifts of a particular sort validated the apostles.

The miraculous, in whatever form, served several other distinct purposes:

- to glorify God: **John 2:11; 9:3; 11:4; 11:40; and Matthew 15:29-31**
- evangelistic: **Acts 9:32-43**
- pastoral - as an expression of compassion and care for the sheep: **Matthew 14:14; Mark 1:40-41**
- edifying - to build up and strengthen believers: **1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:3-5; 14:26**

Second - The miracle (or sign) gifts are only mentioned in the earliest epistles. The later books, such as Ephesians and Romans, contain detailed passages on the gifts of the Spirit, but the miracle gifts are not really mentioned.

1-2 Corinthians/Romans written around the same time.

Paul wrote over about a 15 year period. 52AD to 67AD Mostly addressed doctrinal teachings/correction.

If you follow the life of Paul in **Acts 28** (when **Ephesians** was written) - He shook off the snake. **Acts 28:7-8 - In that area was an estate of the chief man of the island, named Publius, who had welcomed us and courteously housed us for three days. It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with a fever and dysentery. Paul visited him and, placing his hands on him, prayed and healed him. When this happened, the rest on the island who had diseases also came and were healed.** The gifts were very evident in Paul's life in his later ministry.

Third - The gift of tongues was a sign to unbelieving Israel that God's salvation was now offered to other nations.¹

Corinthians 14:21-22 – in the law it is written: “With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; but even then they will not hear Me,” says the Lord. So tongues are for a sign, not to believers, but to unbelievers.

The Corinthian church was mainly a gentile church (some Jews) – **1 Corinthians 7:18-19; 6:9-11**

Context is clear – **Verses 23-25 - Therefore if the whole church assembles in one place and all speak with tongues, and those who are unlearned or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if all prophesy and there comes in one who does not believe or one unlearned, he is convinced by all and judged by all. Thus the secrets of his heart are revealed. And so falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.**

Fourth - Tongues was an inferior gift to prophecy (which is preaching). Preaching the Word of God edifies believers, however tongues does not. Believers are instructed to pursue prophesying over speaking in tongues.

1 Corinthians 14:1-3 - Follow after love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For he who speaks in an unknown tongue does not speak to men, but to God. For no one understands him, although in the spirit, he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks to men for their edification and exhortation and comfort.

Understanding of what it means to prophecy is wrong. It is not talking preaching. Chapters 12-14

Scripture never claims to supply us with all possible information necessary to make every conceivable decision.

Acts 27:9-10 - Paul advised them, saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also of our lives."

Acts 27:21-26 - 21 After they had long abstained from food, Paul stood in their midst and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete, incurring this injury and loss. 22 But now I advise you to take courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God to whom I belong and whom I serve, 24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand before Caesar. And, look! God has given you all those who sail with you.' 25 Therefore, men, take courage, for I believe God that it will be exactly as it was told to me. 26 Nevertheless, we must be shipwrecked on a certain island."

Fifth - History indicates that tongues did cease. Tongues are not mentioned at all by the Post-Apostolic Fathers.

Not true. History does record it.

Sixth - There are indications that the miracle of tongues has ceased. Healing was only associated with the ministry of Jesus and the apostles and not for today.

False - many have experienced these very things.