

ACBC Theology – Question 3

3. Describe your position on the nature of continuing revelation (i.e., prophecy, tongues, words of knowledge). In particular, explain whether you believe prophecy is a present gift in today's church. Explain the relationship between your understanding of the gift of prophecy and the sufficiency of Scripture.

I. Describe your position on the nature of continuing revelation.

- A. The Revelation of God's Word is Complete and Final. We should not expect continuing revelation today. Thus, prophecy, tongues, and words of knowledge have ceased to be a part of God's way of communicating his truth to Christians.
- B. "Once the NT began to function as God's Word in the church, the OT was no longer sufficient in itself, but it continued to function as part of the canon that was, as a whole, sufficient. That consideration raises the question whether God will add still more revelation to the canon. Sufficiency in itself, what I am calling *general sufficiency*, does not preclude divine additions to Scripture, though it does preclude mere human additions. But there is an additional principle that should lead us not to expect any more divine words until the return of Christ. That is the finality of Christ's redemption, which implies what I call the *particular sufficiency* of Scripture. When redemption is final, revelation is also final."¹
1. Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:1-4; 2 Peter 1:3-11
- C. "The final court of appeals determining the identity of the voice of God, if it is such, must be the direct instructions or at least the examples found in Scripture. The Scriptures claim to be the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21). They are inspired, once for all, by the Holy Spirit, enabling prophets and apostles, using their own personalities, to write God's words as he intended (Heb. 1:1, 2:3, 4; Acts 5:12; 2 Cor. 12:12). I believe ***with the closure of Scripture, direct infallible authoritative revelation from God has ceased for this age*** (Rev. 22:18, 19; Eph. 2:20; 3:5; Jude 3, 4; 2 Peter 3:2). It is instructive to note when Paul wrote his last epistle to pastor/friend Timothy about leading the church of God, he did not encourage Timothy to focus on new revelations, impressions, feelings or hunches. Rather, he ***continually turned him to the Word of God and the doctrines contained therein*** (2 Tim. 2:2-14, 15; 3:15-17; 4:2-4)."²

¹ John Frame, Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christians Belief, 623.

² Gary E. Gilley, Is That You Lord?, 26-27.

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- D. Because of the finality of the canon and sufficiency of Scripture, we should not expect further “*direct infallible authoritative revelation from God.*”³
- E. The time of Jesus and the Apostolic Age was the time of final revelation from God. The following texts teach us to focus on the revealed Word of God now that the Apostolic Age is passed:
1. James 4:13-16
 - a. “James does not admonish these believers for neglecting to first seek the specific will of God in the matter; he simply is saying that our plans must always be subject to the sovereign will of God. The Lord is at liberty to adjust or cancel any of our plans and the believer must live in recognition of this fact. The implication is that, since none of us can know God’s will in advance, we must humbly accept his sovereign will when it becomes evident. This is the pattern found throughout the New Testament.”⁴
 2. Deut. 29:29
 - a. “This verse adds a lot of insight into how God wants us to live. The ‘things revealed,’ the Scriptures, have been given to us in order that we might live according to God’s revealed (sometimes called moral) will. But what about the secret things—the things hidden, the things not made known in the Word? Those things belong to God—they are God’s plan, concealed from us. The point is, rather than attempting to penetrate the heavens to search out the hidden mysteries of God, we should concentrate on what God has disclosed to us. It is the revealed things that enable us to live in conformity to the ways of God.”⁵

³ Gary E. Gilley, *Is That You Lord?*, 26-27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

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II. Explain whether you believe prophecy is a present gift in today's church.

- A. I do not believe that prophecy is a present-day gift in today's church because all that God superintended to be revealed to us, in this present day and time, has been revealed in His canon of Scripture.
- B. **Definition of Prophecy:** "It is important to the question of the manifestation of the gift of prophecy that we have a common understanding of this gift. Scholarly studies on this subject have traditionally viewed all biblical prophecy as 'inspired utterances' that came through direct revelation from God, and I see no reason to change this definition. The attempt to see prophecy as having different levels, ranging from that which is totally God's Word and therefore inerrant to that which is mixed with varying degrees of human thought including error, is difficult to support biblically."⁶
- C. "When God did speak in Scripture, whether directly or through his prophets, he did so with audible words. You will search in vain for some inner voice from God speaking to the heart of his people. Nor will you find God communicating through prompting or hunches. No one said, 'I feel the Lord leading me to do such and such.' No one said, 'I have the peace of God in this decision.' In other words, God's people today have created a means of divine communication not found in the Bible."⁷

III. Explain the relationship between your understanding of the gift of prophecy and the sufficiency of Scripture.

- A. Since the Scriptures are inspired by God, inerrant, and completely sufficient for salvation and godliness, there is no need for further prophecy.
- B. Do not go beyond what the Scriptures say, hold fast to what is written.
 - 1. 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6; 1 Timothy 6:20 (*Guard the Deposit entrusted to you*); 2 Timothy 1:12-14; 2:2 (*Who are those that are faithful? Sounds a lot like Counselors, entrusted to teach others*); 4:1-5.

⁶ Robert L. Saucy, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* Four Views, 127.

⁷ Gary E. Gilley, *Is That You Lord?*, 32.

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a. “Not all the gifts have ceased. To assert that may seem to involve arbitrarily picking and choosing what continues. But the New Testament, as I have tried to show, provides guidelines. Some gifts, such as the prophetic gifts, functioned as part of the ‘canonical’ principle for the church during the foundational time in which the New Testament documents were being written. With its completion, the closing of the canon, such gifts have ceased. The same conclusion may be reached for the sign-gifts tied to the apostolic founding of the church. For the rest, the gifts continue more or less as we find them in the New Testament.’ ‘Furthermore, within the overall profile of the New Testament, the Pastoral Letters as a whole can be seen as making apostolic provision for the post-apostolic future of the church, so that they aid in identifying continuities and discontinuities. Specifically, as to revelation, God’s word for the church today, the only provision they make is for teaching and preaching (e.g., 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2), under the oversight of the elders (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Tit. 1:19) and focused on the apostolic ‘deposit’ (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14; cf. Jude 3: ‘the faith . . . once for all entrusted to the saints’).”⁸

D. Rather than praying for continuing revelations, we should pray for a deeper illumination of the already established Holy Scriptures.

1. Ephesians 1:16-19

C. “. . . the sufficiency of Scripture means that the Bible contains all that we need to know God’s will and live a life pleasing to him.”⁹

D. “The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is a promise that God himself will give you something from him to say in those sacred moments (such as when you are providing counsel to another). It is a great comfort to me to know that I do not have to make up my own ‘wisdom’ and I do not have to rip off the ‘wisdom’ of secular therapy. I can go to Scripture and find something to say to people . . . that will be God’s sufficient word for them.”¹⁰

⁸ Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, 61.

⁹ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry*, 37.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 38.

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Recommended Reading:

John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2013), 925-932.

Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry*. (Ch. 2 & 6)

Gary E. Gilley, *Is That You Lord?* (pgs. 9-92).

Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Perspectives on Pentecost*, pgs. 89-122. (Specifically, 109-116.)

Wayne Grudem (editor), *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, pgs. 16-20, 25-71, 97-155. (The whole book would be beneficial, but these are the important pages for the cessationist argument).

Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986), 367-374.

John MacArthur, ed., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), 379-386.

Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 798-803.

Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 269-278.