

Bent Christiansen | 5.09.2026

From Miracles to Maturity

The Nature and Purpose of Spiritual Gifts





The Peak of God's Plan for the Church

- Canonically rooted
- Ethnically united (Jew and Gentile; one body)
- Masterfully endowed
- Christologically rich

From Miracles to Maturity

01

The Architecture of
Spiritual Gifts

02

Confirmatory and
Revelatory Gifts

03

A Closer Look at
Biblical Prophecy

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Revelatory Gifts as
Transitory

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A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 13:12 – Three Pictures: Mirror, Riddle, Face

01 The Architecture of Spiritual Gifts

PART 01 - The Architecture of the Spiritual Gifts

Differentiation in the gift lists

Passage	Catalog of Gifts	Differentiation
Rom. 12:6–8	Prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, mercy	Ordinary gifts predominate; prophecy heads list
1 Cor. 12:8–10	Wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, interpretation	Extraordinary gifts: unique, dense cluster in 1 Corinthians
Eph. 4:11	Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers	Foundational/structural offices defined; link between gifts and office
1 Cor. 12:28–30	Apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healing, helping, administrating, tongues	Priority of foundational/structural “first...second...third”; other gifts follow

PART 01 - The Architecture of the Spiritual Gifts

Ordinary gifts

Teaching, exhortation,
leadership, mercy,
helps, administration

“The Spirit’s gracious choice to empower all redeemed people – with their varied personalities, abilities, and inclinations – **to strengthen the body of Christ (apart from new revelation).**”

Confirmatory Gifts

Healings, miracles,
signs and wonders

“The Spirit’s time- and purpose-bound work of **authenticating the new revelation** of specially commissioned human messengers by supernatural means – until the Word was complete.”

Revelatory Gifts

Prophecy and tongues

“The Spirit’s progressive and now complete **disclosure of the full counsel of God** through the ages by means of **apostles and prophets.**”

02 Confirmatory and Revelatory Gifts

PART 02 - Confirmatory and Revelatory Gifts

“Signs all the time”
means...

“No signs at all”

- Signs must be:

Miraculous → Non-normative

- Cluster around major biblical epochs
- Verifiable
- Unambiguous
- Tied to and necessary for revelatory gifts



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PART 02 - Confirmatory and Revelatory Gifts

Sign gifts: Always bound to revelatory gifts

Hebrews 2:3-4 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness (συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος) by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Acts 14:3 So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness (μαρτυροῦντι) to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.



03 A Closer Look at Biblical Prophecy

PART 03 - A Closer Look at Biblical Prophecy

The Biblical contour:

- Miraculous act of intelligible communication
- Empowered by the Holy Spirit
- Resulting in words that can be attributed to the Godhead
- Therefore to be received as absolutely binding and true

PART 03 - A Closer Look at Biblical Prophecy

Dt 18:18–20 ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put (וְנָתַתִּי ... בְּפִיו) my words (דְּבָרַי) in his mouth, and he shall speak (וְדִבֶּר) to them all that I command him. ¹⁹ And whoever will not listen to my words (דְּבָרַי) that he shall speak (וְדִבֶּר) in my name, I myself will require it of him. ²⁰ But the prophet who presumes to speak a word (לְדַבֵּר דְּבָר) in my name that I have not commanded him to speak (לְדַבֵּר), or who speaks (יְדַבֵּר) in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.'

The Nature of OT Prophecy

- Divine words imparted to human messengers
- Verbal content implies precise thoughts
- “Capital accountability requires absolute clarity”

PART 03 - A Closer Look at Biblical Prophecy

Acts 2:16-18 ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ “ ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;

¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

The Nature of NT Prophecy

- **Explicitly linked to OT prophecy**
- Not mere inclination, vague prompting, or impression
- Not simply exhortation
- Revelatory link to tongues

PART 03 - A Closer Look at Biblical Prophecy

Challenges with a “fallible” view of NT prophecy:

1. Inconsistent with **NT view** of prophecy
2. Inconsistent with **NT effects** of prophecy (1 Cor 14:24-25, “secrets of the heart revealed”)
3. **No reliable basis** for **testing** and refutation
4. Becomes indistinguishable from Christian judgment, exhortation

The Nature of NT Prophecy

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PART 03 - A Closer Look at Biblical Prophecy

1 Corinthians 14:24-25 But if all prophecy, ... the secrets of his heart are disclosed ..."

1 Corinthians 12:28-29 — "And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second **prophets**, third **teachers** ...
Are all prophets? Are all teachers?"

Ephesians 4:11 — "And he gave the apostles, the **prophets**, the evangelists, the shepherds and **teachers**,"

Acts 13:1 — "Now there were in the church at Antioch **prophets** and **teachers**"

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PART 03 - A Closer Look at Biblical Prophecy

Acts 2:4,11,16-17 - ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other **tongues** (γλῶσσαι) ...

¹¹we hear them **telling** in our own **tongues** the **mighty works** of God.” ...

¹⁷your sons and your daughters shall **prophecy**:

Prophecy and Tongues in 1 Corinthians 14

	Tongues*	Prophecy
Purpose	Revelatory (v. 13)	Revelatory (v. 30)
Nature	Intelligible to church	Intelligible to church
Expression	Corporate gathering	Corporate gathering
Limitations	2-3 at a time	2-3 at a time

**with interpretation*

The Nature of NT Prophecy

- Placed with OT prophecy
- Not a vague “impression”
- Not merely exhortation

- Revelatory link to tongues

04 Revelatory Gifts as Transitory

PART 04 - Revelatory Gifts as Transitory

Ephesians 2:19-21 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but

you are (ἐστὲ)

fellow citizens (συμπολίται) with the saints and members of the household of God (οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ),

built (ἐποικοδομηθέντες)

on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

**Foundation
image implies a
terminus**

PART 04 - Revelatory Gifts as Transitory

When do revelatory gifts cease?

1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a **child** (νήπιος), I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a **man** (ἄνθρωπος), I gave up (κατήργηκα) childish ways.

From νήπιος to ἄνθρωπος: The logic of growth

Fitting—Endearing and proper in its own season

Essential—Growth is healthy, necessary, and normative

Aspirational—Manhood fuller and more complete

Intentional—Manhood both experienced and embraced

Maturational—End state is recognizable, not metamorphic



05 A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 13:12 – Three Pictures: Mirror, Riddle, Face

PART 05 - A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 13:12

Critical Questions

- What was a 1st century “mirror” like?
- The meaning of αἴνιγμα
- The meaning of πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον).
- The meaning of ἐπιγινώσκω

¹² For now we see in a mirror (ἔσοπτρον) dimly (ἐν αἴνιγματι; αἴνιγμα → English “enigma”), but then face to face (πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον). **Now I know in part; then I shall know fully** (ἐπιγινώσκω), **even as I have been fully known.**







PART 05 - A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 13:12

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“For now we see in a mirror darkly...” ἐν αἴνιγματι — not literal dimness, but riddling or indirect apprehension

- English translations skew to “dark/dim” language
- **Greek:** Concealment with a presumed solution.
Example: Sphinx riddle
- **Hebrew:** αἴνιγμα in LXX often translates רִמְזָה (“riddle” or “puzzle”). *Example: Queen of Sheba’s “hard questions” to Solomon*

Key idea: not dark or unclear, but an an enigma awaiting a solution

PART 05 - A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 13:12

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- **The meaning of πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον**
- The meaning of ἐπιγινώσκω

“For now we see in a mirror dimly (ἐν αἰνίγματι), but then **face to face** (**πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον**)”

- **Not a natural Greek idiom for “in person”**
- Rare Semitic / LXX expression
- Context of OT theophany and revelatory encounter
- Contrast: **enigma** vs. **dialogical divine address**

PART 05 - A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 13:12

	Genesis 32:30	Exodus 33:11	Numbers 12:8	Deuteronomy 5:4
LXX	πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον	ἐνώπιος ἐνωπίῳ	στόμα κατὰ στόμα	πρόσωπον κατὰ πρόσωπον
Hebrew	פְּנִים אֶל־פְּנִים	פְּנִים אֶל־פְּנִים	פֶּה אֶל־פֶּה ... וְלֹא בְּחֵידָת	פְּנִים בְּפְנִים
Lexical	Exact phrase Paul uses	“Face” idiom rendered as presence-language	<u>Speech idiom</u> , not sight-language	close face-to-face variant
Context	Nocturnal struggle; divine presence; but <u>survival, not beatific vision</u>	Intimate: “as a man speaks to his friend”; <u>not literal sight of God’s face</u>	Contrast with dreams/visions; <u>not in riddling speech; conversational</u>	<u>Direct, personal, divine address</u> (though still mediated through Moses)
Implication	Points to <u>direct, personal, often dialogical</u> encounter—not merely to clarity of vision			

PART 05 - A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 13:12

	Examples	What the verb does	Why it matters
Lexicons and extra-biblical	BDAG, LSJ, Mounce, Hellenistic, classical	Recognize, discern, acknowledge, come to understand	The lexical range does not require “know fully.”
LXX	Gen 27:23; Gen 38:26	Failed recognition; acknowledgment of truth	Scriptural usage often concerns acknowledgment upon encounter/evidence.
NT narrative	Luke 24:16, 31; Acts 3:10	Non-recognition → recognition	The verb often marks arrival at apprehension , not more information.
NT conceptual	1 Cor 14:37; 2 Tim 3:7	Acknowledge; arrive at understanding	Paul can use the word for recognition of what stands before one as true
1 Cor 13:12	—	Arrival at direct, non-enigmatic understanding	The verb itself does not prove exhaustive knowledge; “ come to understand ” is better English than “know fully.”

- 1 Cor 13:12b
 “...then I shall
know fully
(ἐπιγνώσομαι),
 even as I have
 been fully
 known”

PART 05 - A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 13:12

ἐπιγινώσκω: Arrival at Understanding

Example	Force
Luke 24:16, 31	Emmaus: not more data, but recognition of who stood before them
2 Tim 3:7	Always learning, never arriving at ἐπίγνωσις of the truth

Telic, not intensive: not “know more completely,” but “**come to true understanding**”.

- “Then I shall know fully...”?
- ἐπιγνώσσομαι does not require an intensive sense: “know fully.”
- Usage often points to **recognition, acknowledgment, or coming to understanding.**

PART 05 - A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 13:12

Full translation: 1 Cor 13:12

“For now we see in a mirror, in an enigma, but then—the enigma resolved—with intimately spoken clarity. Now I know in measure, but then I will truly come to understand even as I truly have been understood.”

