

Hope Builders Ministries

PASTOR TRAINING

Christ's Gift to the Local Church

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN BIBLICAL TITLES FOR CHURCH LEADERS

GIFTED MEN GIVEN TO THE CHURCH, EPHESIANS 4:11-15

I. Apostles

A. DEFINED:

1. apóstolos from the verb apostéllō meaning to commission, send forth is understood to be someone who is sent or commissioned by someone else and who functions under the authority of the one who sent/commissioned them.
2. "apostle" is used of the twelve men who Jesus sent for as His authorized spokesmen or witnesses of his life, death and resurrection. Peter makes special mention of this when witnessing to Cornelius, the first gentile convert.

"We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. "God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." (Act 10:39-43, NASB)

3. Concerning 2 Tim 4:5 M. Vincent states, "An apostle, as such, was also an evangelist (1 Cor 1:17), but every evangelist was not an apostle. In 'The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles' it is prescribed that an apostle shall not remain in one place longer than two days, and that when he departs he shall take nothing with him, except enough bread to last until his next station (ch xi)" (Word Studies, pg. 1068).

B. QUALIFICATIONS:

1. To be one of the TWELVE Apostles they had to have been with Jesus from His baptism by John until His ascension into heaven. Acts 1:21-22
2. They could be tested as to their authenticity, apostolic doctrine and the signs of an apostle. Revelations 2:2, Mark 16
3. To be an apostle a man had to be a witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They had to have personally seen and been called BY the resurrected Lord. The only exception was Paul who was called by the risen Lord whom He saw on the road to Damascus after Christ had ascended and other times. 1 Cor.9:1, 15:3-10.
4. Hebrews/Jews/descendant of Abraham only. 2 Corinthians 11:22
5. Servant of Christ who suffers for Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:23-29
6. Humble - Their boast is IN Christ, not themselves. 2 Corinthians 11:30-12:6
7. They could perform the "signs of an Apostle" at will and publicly. 2 Corinthians 12:11-12
8. They had authority but did not "lord it over" the churches. Acts 15; 1 Peter 5:1; 2 Cor. 12:13
9. Beginning with Paul they received the "mysteries" (revelation) of Christ, the Gospel, Church, the Rapture, and penned them down in the Scriptures and gave them to the churches. Ephesians 3:1-12

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- B. These men were Christ called preachers who laid the foundation of Christ's teaching on which the church was to be built. The Apostles penned the New Revelation through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit completing the Scriptures. Paul called himself a “master builder” because of his multi-faceted ministry. He was a competent workman in all phases of building the Church, from the foundation to completion. 1Corinthians 3:10-11

The foundation is the Word of God and Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone (Acts 2:20). There is NO NEW revelation outside the Bible, so there is no need for Apostles to continue to lay a foundation today. 1 Corinthians 13:8-12; Eph.2:20/1 Cor.3:10-11 (mirror referred to the mirror of God’s Word compare 2 Corinthians 3:12-18 and James 1:21-25)

- C. It is not hard to conclude that there are no apostles today, because no one can meet the very specific qualifications given to be a “true” apostle of Christ **and Paul specifically said he was the “last” apostle.** 1 Corinthians 15:8.
- D. Peter and Paul are the first and the last apostles called by the Lord Jesus Christ, to the Jews and to the Gentiles. They form the bookends to the Apostles and those who received revelation from God that was inscripturated in our Bibles today. There is no “new” revelation today. Any so called revelation cannot be true revelation because all will agree that it must not contradict what is already written. That means it cannot be called revelation or new. Revelation is revelation. By definition what God is revealing and He cannot lie. The final authority is Scripture. Anything else is not revelation and more of a “hunch” or opinion, even if a “good” one. Illumination is to understand what is written and is from the Holy Spirit.

NOTHING “received” by an individual is more than what has already been revealed in the written Word.

- E. There were over 500 apostles in the early days of the Church.
“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received,
that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
and that He was buried,
and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,
and that He appeared to Cephas,
then to the twelve.
After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time...;
then He appeared to James,
then to all the apostles;
and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.” (1Co 15:3-8, NASB)
- F. Today’s closest equivalent to an apostle is the missionary-evangelist and church planter who bring the Gospel to new areas and establish churches and then move to another place. These men are itinerant and live by faith for their sustenance.

II. Prophets

- A. This gift is limited to those men called by God to give special revelation regarding future events and New Testament doctrine while the New Testament was being written. They were *forth-tellers and fore-tellers* as God called preachers. They were part of the local church like a pastor-teacher today and not itinerant.
- B. These men also laid the foundation of Christ's teaching. They were subject to one another

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and subordinated to the Apostles. Their word was not final. It had to agree with apostolic revelation and could be challenged by other prophets. 1 Corinthians 14:29-33

C. There are no prophets today because the written revelation of the Bible is complete. Compare 1 Cor. 13:8-10 with Rev.22:18 and Deut. 4:2, 12:32; 2 Peter 1:16-21

D. Examples of Prophets from the New Testament

1. OT Prophets were referenced in the New Testament most of the time:

Acts 2&3 – Peter refers to the Old Testament Prophets who declared the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with His death and resurrection.

Note that the authority for these prophecies is that they are written. They are Scripture. God spoke through the mouths of the prophets and then had the prophecies written down, inscripturated. They became written revelation. This is much better than oral tradition which can easily change from one hearing and telling to another.

Acts 10 is another example where Peter preaching to the first gentiles rested his argument on what the OT Prophets declared as the Scriptures testified.

Also note Paul's sermon to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:14-41) concerning the Gospel he quoted the Old Testament Prophets from Scripture over and over. This provided the authority for the prophecies of the "fathers." The Scriptures are the authority.

Romans 1:2 teaches us that the Gospel of God was "promised beforehand through the prophets IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES."

2. Church Age prophets are spoken of a few times.

Acts 11:27 reports that church age "prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch" and were predicting/foretelling that a great famine was about to occur. From this warning a collection was taken by the believers in Antioch for the believers in Jerusalem which was delivered by Barnabas and Saul/Paul to the ELDERS in Jerusalem.

Acts 13:1 teaches us that there were "prophets and teachers" in the Antioch church. It is easily presumed they were teaching the Old Testament Scriptures and Church Age new revelation. These men included Barnabas and Saul. Note Paul (Greek name), who was still called Saul (Jewish name) was not yet officially recognized as an "apostle" though he had seen the Lord and spent nearly 20 years in seclusion and training from the Lord (Galatians 1:18, 21; 2:1). We learn here that Paul's ministry did not happen "overnight." It took at least 17 years before Paul was recognized as an apostle of Christ to the Gentiles by the "chief" apostles (the big Three), even though it was declared by the Lord within days of his conversion (Acts 9). This reminds us of King David. He was the "anointed" King but did not become King until many years later. Just as Jesus is the "anointed King" but will not wear the crown until His return and the destruction of His enemies. Lesson: Do not be too quick to lay hands on someone as a "leader" and especially do not declare yourself a leader. Exercise your gift as a leader and let other recognized leaders and the church recognize you.

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In Paul's letter to the Corinthians we find the only place where New Testament prophets are seen in action. Paul emphasizes the greater benefit of prophesying in the assembly and corrects them for the wrongful exercise of the so-called gift of tongues/languages as a means of prophesying. The use of foreign languages in the assembly was limited to being understood by an interpreter and only 2 or at most 3 in a service and one at a time. The gift of prophecy is much preferred because it can be easily understood by all without translating to the known language of the assembly.

As referenced above, in 1 Corinthians 14:26 – 40 Paul makes clear that the prophets message was subject to examination by the other prophets. It was not a "thus saith the Lord." The other prophets judged whether or not the message was from the Lord. Even women, who may have been prophets, were not allowed to speak during the assembly. They had to speak to their own husbands at home if they questioned the message given (vs. 34-36).

Ephesians 2:20 and 4:11 teaches that the prophets were foundational to the Church and existed in the early Church alongside the other "gifted men" (apostles, evangelists and pastor-teachers).

1 Corinthians 12 teaches that the early church relied primarily upon the apostles and prophets and teachers for instruction and spiritual guidance (12:28). And Paul made clear that there are some who are gifted in these areas, not all (12:29), agreeing with the "some" designated in Ephesians 4:11.

III. Evangelists-Missionaries

A. Definition:

These men are God called preachers who specialize in presenting the gospel in areas where the foundation of Christ's teachings through the apostles and prophets in the New Testament have not been laid. These are pioneer church planters or what we call today missionaries.

Euaggelistēs, pronounced: yoo-ang-ghel-is-tace, an evangelist, a "goodnewser," one who brings good news.

"An evangelist boldly and continuously travels from place to place preaching the gospel and establishing new believers into an organized assembly with elders and deacons." WV

- B. These men are itinerant, moving from place to place with the Gospel and organizing Churches. In Paul's last letter Timothy is instructed to continue to do the work of an evangelist as he instructs the believers how the local church is to function. Note the qualifications of elders and deacons to be given to the Ephesian church through Timothy in the first letter and Paul's instructions to "not lay hands of any man too quickly." Scriptures: Acts 21:8 and 2 Timothy 4:5 and 1 Corinthians 1:17
- C. These are men who disciple the new believers, organize them into fellowship and identify and appoint elders in the new churches. Phillip was an evangelist. Acts 21:8
- D. These men help build the local church by their preaching on the foundation already laid for them in the New Testament by the apostles and prophets.

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- E. These are men who should be supported by local churches as missionaries. 3 John 1:5-8

IV. Pastors-Teachers

- A. These men are God called preachers who specialize in teaching the Biblical truths for spiritual growth and maturity in the local church
- B. These men serve in the office of elder along with other elders as “one among equals” guarding and feeding the flock of God. Acts 20:17 – 38. See “Paul’s view of the ministry and the minister, Acts 20.”
- C. Pastors are not one man “Popes” in the local church. They are subject to the other elders.
- D. While an evangelist/missionary concentrates on reaching the lost and bringing a person to new birth in Christ and basic discipleship, the pastor-teacher along with the other elders focuses on teaching the Word of God and bringing the congregation to maturity in Christ.
- E. These men build on the foundation already laid in the New Testament by the apostles and prophets. The pastor/teacher is like the prophet of the early church, speaking and teaching the Word of God day to day, but from the pages of Scripture and not a direct word from God. God has spoken finally and completely in His Son, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:2).

LAY THE FOUNDATION (The New Testament Revelation) Jesus Christ the Chief Cornerstone

By the
APOSTLES and PROPHETS
Ephesians 2:20

EVANGELISTS/CHURCH PLANTERS/MISSIONARIES
and
PASTORS/TEACHERS

BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION (Teach/Preach the Written Word)
Ephesians 4:11-16

A Biblical View of Church Leadership Cont.

Ephesians 4:7 reinforces that God gives “grace gifts” to all according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Jesus gave the Holy Spirit who gifts every believer according to His will (1 Corinthians 12:11). These foundational, brick laying gifts are the main building blocks of the local church. The Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ is the “cornerstone.”

Preachers no longer function as Apostles and Prophets because the foundation has been laid (Ephesians 2:20, 1 Corinthians 3). The Bible, the written Word of God (the foundation) is complete (1 Corinthians 3:10-11). Jesus Christ the “chief cornerstone” has been fully revealed, the Living Word of God.

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.” (Heb 1:1-4, NASB)

The pastor-teacher and evangelist/missionary are gifts from the Lord Jesus Christ to the local church by divine calling for the building up of the church.

Learn to “distinguish” the gift from the office. It is important that the local church recognize a man who is qualified in his character and gifted by God to preach and teach the Word of God.

The Church planting missionary or his associate will ideally ordain the first elders of a new assembly. After that the “board” of elders will identify and ordain other elders to serve in the oversight with them of the local church with the consent of the church body.

Men who are gifted as “pastor-teachers” should serve as an equal alongside the other elders to lead the church. A pastor-teacher serves in the office of elder in the church and elders function as pastors, bishops/overseers of the local church. The Elders “rule” by consensus (agreeing with one another) and not as “individual” rulers.

SEE the lesson on Acts 20, “Paul’s View of the Ministry and the Minister”

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Sources used in Bible study:

*E-Sword, the Sword of the LORD with an electronic edge, <https://e-sword.net>
The HELPS Discovery Bible, <https://thediscoverybible.com>*