

Apostles and Prophets Today **Do we have Apostles and Prophets today?**

(Modified 26 Apr 2014)

Apostles

Some believers claim to be apostles even though they don't meet the criteria set out in Acts 1:15-22. In these verses Peter said that the apostle to replace Judas had to be one of the men who was with them from the time of John's baptism to Jesus' ascension. No one can meet that criteria today. Paul's appointment as an apostle was an exception. Jesus personally appeared to him and gave him direct revelation (Gal. 1:11-12). Another point is, who can honestly say that they have the mark of an apostle (signs, wonders and miracles) which were used to confirm their message? (2 Cor. 12:12, Heb. 2:4).

Prophets

1 Cor. 13:9-10 tell us that prophecy and knowledge will cease when the perfect comes: *"For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part will be done away"* (KJV). What is the *"perfect"*? Some say it is Jesus but the word is neuter (sexless, neither male nor female) so it cannot be referring to Him. Others believe that it is the coming kingdom of God but the following will show that these two verses clearly point to the Bible.

First, notice that tongues is not included in verses 9-10. This is because speaking in tongues has nothing to do with the formation of the Bible. Tongues ceased at another point in time. The coming of the perfect did away with only prophecy and knowledge because the *"perfect"* is the Bible, as the following shows -

1. The Bible is made up entirely of prophecy and knowledge. It starts with the knowledge of creation in Genesis and ends with the prophecy of Revelation and, in between, it is all prophecy and knowledge.
2. The word 'perfect' can be translated as 'complete'.
3. The Bible was incomplete when 1 Corinthians was written (about 55AD).
4. The Bible was completed with the writing of Revelation (about 95AD).
5. Prophecy and knowledge are said to be in part because, at that time, the Bible was incomplete, it was also in part.

Each of the above five points clearly point to the *"perfect"* being the completed Bible. When 1 Corinthians was written, prophecy and knowledge were in part because the Bible was incomplete. After the book of Revelation was written, the Bible was complete. Then, because God had given all the prophecy and knowledge He intended us to have, prophecy and knowledge ceased with the writing of Revelation - the perfect, complete Bible had come. For this reason, God has no need for prophets today and Deu. 4:2, Pro. 30:6 and Rev. 22:18-19 warn against adding to or taking away from the Bible.

What else but the Bible could fit these verses so perfectly? It makes no sense to say that the coming millennial kingdom will be perfect as death will still exist. Nor does it make sense to say that the new heaven and new earth will do away with only prophecy and knowledge. Nothing but the Bible fits.

The five ministries in Eph. 4:11-15

When the church first started in Jerusalem, the Bible was incomplete because there was no New Testament. However, the apostles and prophets were 'living New Testaments' who taught the infant church and brought it to maturity. In time, they put their God-inspired knowledge and prophecy into letters which circulated throughout the churches and eventually became the New Testament. These men taught with the knowledge they had received directly from God. Once their knowledge and prophecy were recorded in written form, their ministry was no longer needed but of course the need for evangelists, pastors and teachers remained. Eph. 4:11-15 (NIV) say,

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ..."

- *until we all reach unity in the faith ... and become mature ...*
- *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth ... by every wind of teaching ...*
- *Instead, speaking the truth in love ... we will in all things grow up into him ..."*

In these verses, the word "until" put a time limit on the existence of all five ministries. If God intended us to always have the five ministries then He would not have used the time-limiting word "until". Instead, the text would say something like, "God gave the five ministries to bring us to maturity etc." However, the text says that God gave the five ministries "until" maturity was reached and "then" they would no longer be infants etc. There can be no doubt that the early church reached maturity. If they never matured under the leadership of the men who were inspired to write the New Testament then how could anyone else ever expect to? If we say that the early church never reached maturity then we are saying that, even under the powerful and deeply committed leadership of the apostles, the early believers remained immature infants in Christ, tossed back and forth by every wind of doctrine. That just does not add up. We can be sure that the first church became very mature. Today, without the need of apostles and prophets, we reach maturity through the written Word of God. Apostles and prophets were given great power, knowledge and authority to form the early church, to bring it to maturity and to write the New Testament. Once the New Testament was available, only pastors and teachers were needed to continue the work.

Finally

The Bible contains all we need for life and salvation and Jude 1:3 confirms the sufficiency of the written Word where it tells us to "*contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.*" The Bible has been given to us once, for all time, so there is absolutely no need for apostles and prophets to give us further instruction or revelation. In Eph. 2:19-20 Paul tells us that the church was "*built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.*" Then, in 1 Cor. 3-4, he talks about building on this foundation and warns against following men and laying another foundation. The written Word is all we need and in 1 Cor. 4:6 Paul warns us, "*Do not go beyond what is written.*" Amen.

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Mick Alexander
 leeandmick@gmail.com
 www.ChristianIssues.biz