

Apostles and Prophets Today
Do we have Apostles and Prophets today?
(Modified 31 Dec 2011)

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. Also, who can honestly say that they have the mark of an Apostle which is signs, wonders and miracles (2 Cor. 12:12)? Today, these criteria are ignored and people turn to Ephesians 4 for support of their Apostleship.

Eph. 4:11-15 mention Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. Apostles and Prophets were particularly special because God gave them great power and knowledge to establish the early church. Eph. 2:19-20 tell us that the church is built on the foundation of these Apostles and Prophets and, in 1 Cor. 3:10-11, Paul said that *"no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ"*. The Apostles and Prophets laid the foundation and established the first church and passed their God-given knowledge on to us through letters to the churches. These letters are contained in the New Testament and are the foundation used to build the church today. The completed Bible has replaced the need for Apostles and Prophets but of course Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers are still needed. A close look at Eph. 4:11-15 shows this.

Eph. 4:11-12 *"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"*. From these verses we see that God used these men to build the church up. During those times there was no New Testament, however, the Apostles and Prophets were 'living New Testaments' who taught the infant church and put their God-given knowledge and prophecy into letters which circulated throughout the churches and eventually became part of the Bible. These men taught with the knowledge they had received directly from God. The next verse starts puts a time limit on the work of the fivefold ministry.

Eph. 4:13 *"UNTIL we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ"*. The words *"until we all reach unity ... and become mature"* tell us that the fivefold ministry of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers had a time limit and would only be needed *until* the church was united and mature. The next verse gives the result of the church coming to maturity.

Eph. 4:14 *"THEN we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming"*. The word *"Then"* continues the argument and tells us that when the church was established and mature *then* they would no longer be tossed back and forth by false doctrines but would be solid in their faith. The next verse continues to speak of the mature church.

Eph. 4:15 *"INSTEAD, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ"*. This verse continues on to say that *instead* of being tossed around by various false doctrines, the church would become solid and mature in Christ as they *"grow up into him"*.

So, the foundation for the first church was laid by the Apostles and Prophets and they led the church to maturity and unity in Christ. They also passed on their inspired prophecy and knowledge through letters which form much of the New Testament. A foundation that cannot be changed has been laid and that foundation is contained in the Bible so we no longer have a need for Apostles and Prophets.

It is sometimes argued that we will need Apostles and Prophets until Jesus returns because the church has not yet reached maturity and unity. However, this passage in Ephesians is referring to the early church and not to the denominational chaos we have today. If the early church never matured under the leadership of the men who were inspired to write much of the New Testament then how could we 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, they 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 and we can also mature today through the Word.

Also, if "*until we all reach unity*" refers to the time of Jesus' return then the passage will not make sense as it would be saying: "We will have the fivefold ministry UNTIL Jesus returns when we will all unite and be mature and THEN we will no longer be tossed back and forth by false doctrines. INSTEAD (when Jesus returns) we will speak the truth in love and grow up into Him". The fact is, we mature and speak the truth in love as we walk with Jesus but when He returns, rather than slowly "*grow up into Him*", we will be immediately changed into His likeness. Maturing in Christ is a long process whereas Jesus' return will bring about our immediate transformation into His perfect likeness.

Eph. 2:19-20 tell us that the church was built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets and the Bible doesn't mention successors for these ministries. Since the foundation has already been laid, their special ministry is no longer needed. The knowledge and prophecy they received from God has been passed on to us in the New Testament letters and now believers come to maturity through the Bible, Pastors, Teachers and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There simply is no need to have a continuing line of these unique men. God gave them special powers to establish the church initially and now the Bible contains all the knowledge and prophecy needed to bring us to maturity. The passage 1 Cor. 13:8-13 confirms that the completed Bible would be the end of prophecy and knowledge. In 1 Cor. 13:11 Paul talks about putting away the 'childish' gifts of tongues, prophecy and knowledge and this is because they were only needed in the 'infant' church of his time, before we had the completed scripture.

This article can be downloaded from -
<http://www.christianissues.biz/miscellaneous.html#apostlesandprophetstoday>

...ooo000ooo...

A very good article on the cessation of tongues is at
http://www.christianissues.biz/pdf-bin/tongues/tongues_solascriptura.pdf

A good book on speaking in tongues by Fernand LeGrand is free to download from
<http://www.christianissues.biz/pdf-bin/tongues/allaboutspeakingintongues.pdf>

A short tract on tongues is at
<http://www.christianissues.biz/pdf-bin/tongues/tongueschart.pdf>

Also, there are many other free articles and books on speaking in tongues at
<http://www.christianissues.biz/tongues.html>

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