

DOCTRINE

THE CHURCH, PART THREE

LESSON #14

APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

I. APOSTLES

(1) Jesus' Gifts to the Church – Eph. 4:7-13 – To each one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. The purpose of this grace is that we also might minister, as did the Apostles, to the fullest of our ability in Christ. The Apostles were a transition team, given the responsibility of founding the church on Jesus Christ. Eph. 2:20 and I Cor. 2:9-15. These men were anointed by the Lord to accomplish this monumental task of founding the Church. The fact that Jesus Himself was going to die and return to heaven necessitated the involvement of others into this great work of preaching the gospel. In the Eph. reference, vs. 12, note the importance of the task given to the Apostles, that of perfecting the saints and the edifying of the body of Christ. Notice also that this great responsibility was passed on to us, who are not apostles. See I Cor. 2:10. We are to take heed how we build upon this foundation. Paul said in this same verse that he had laid the foundation for the church. The foundation is Jesus, and we continue the building program. See Col. 1:24. We are to continue the suffering that Jesus began, meaning that Jesus is not now on the earth to continue these things, therefore, the Apostles carried on from Him and we carry on from the Apostles.

(2) A Special Work - The Apostles were a special group of men because the work they had to accomplish was so important and their anointing was special. Acts 2:42-43. Many signs and wonders were done by the Apostles. Acts 4:33 – “And with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus...” Note what the Apostle Paul said on this subject. Eph. 3:8-10. Vs. 9 says he was given great grace to accomplish the task of "...make all men see..." Vs. 10, even “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.”

(3) Apostles had Great Authority – Acts 6:1-7 – The Apostles were responsible to see that all facets of the Church were properly cared for. In this case, there was need for more men to do the work, so the Apostles appointed the necessary ones to do the work. Acts 15:5-6. In matters of Doctrine, the Apostles were to establish the proper guidelines for the churches and see that they were implemented. Acts 16:4-5. As the Apostles made decisions, they were passed on to the churches in the outlying areas.

(4) Personal Conviction of the Apostles – Rom. 11:13 – These men knew their calling and office. Paul says, "...I magnify mine office." This conviction of heart was necessary to accomplish the work. I Cor. 9:1-2. Having seen the Lord seems to be important in the call of these Apostles. There were proofs of their apostleship, that is, “The work was accomplished.” **[PRESTON – WHERE QUOTE COME FROM?]** II Cor. 12:12 – The signs of an Apostle were special miracles, wonders, patience and mighty deeds.

(5) Summary – It appears to me after this study, that the office of Apostle has ceased. The foundation has not ceased, but the office work of these men has. We are continuing to build on their foundation, so in that way, their work is going on.

II. PROPHETS

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A prophet is one who speaks for God, whether of the Old Testament or New Testament. This speaking for God is in foretelling as well as exhortations, warnings, comfort and edification. See I Cor. 14:3. Prophecy is one of the gifts of the Spirit, showing that this gift is still functioning today. I Cor. 12:10. Moses was a prophet. Deut. 18:15-19. The importance of the office of the prophet is seen in this reference in that God wanted to raise up another prophet like Moses, this speaking of Jesus.

A Prophet is God's Spokesman – Ex. 4:16 and 7:1. At any given time, the one God chooses to speak for Him will be the only one who knows what God wants; they are God's witnesses. Acts 1:8 and 22:14-15. God's spokesmen can only know what to speak for Him:

- a. From or by the Spirit – I Cor. 12:6-7 and Neh. 9:30.
- b. From God making Himself known in a direct way – Num. 12:6, Eze. 3:17, Jer. 15:19.
- c. From God's written Word – II Tim. 3:16-17.

When Paul indicates that we should all prophecy (I Cor. 14:5), he is saying that we may all speak for God, and edify the body. When these practices are followed, the whole body will be greatly blessed. NOTE: Prophecy began early in the Old Testament, long before the Apostles were on the scene, and the Scripture specifically states there is a gift of prophecy today. Therefore, the conclusion is that while the office of Apostle has ceased, this is not true of the office and work of a prophet.

1. What is the meaning of the word "Apostle?"
2. What was the responsibility of the Apostles?
3. Who fulfills this ministry today?
4. Why was there a need for Apostles?
5. What is the foundation the Apostles built on?
6. Why was the anointing of the Apostles so special?
7. What was the scope of their authority?
8. Has the office of Apostle ceased? Why?
9. What is the meaning of the word "Prophet?"
10. What does his prophecy do for the people?
11. Is this office in order today? Give Scripture.
12. Jesus was made a Prophet like whom?
13. Explain the ministry of the prophet.
14. Give three ways prophets know what to speak for God.
15. Who should prophecy?
16. How does this differ from ministry of the prophets of old?