
The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON LXXXV : UNITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE CONGREGATION OF BELIEVERS (4:1-16)

Ephesians 4:11 —

And the very same made some Apostles some prophetes some Evangelistes some Sheperdes some Teachers: (Tyndale's New Testament, 1524)

Hee therefore gaue some to be Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Euangelists, and some Pastours, and Teachers, (Geneva Bible, 1599)

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (King James Version, 1769)

and He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as proclaimers of good news, and some as shepherds and teachers, (Young's Literal Translation, 1898)

And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (Revised Version, 1885)

And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (American Standard Version, 1901)

And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, (Revised Standard Version, 1952)

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, (New King James Version, 1982)

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, (New American Standard Version, 1995)

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, (New International Version, 2011)

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, (English Standard Version, 2011)

καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους τοὺς δὲ προφήτας τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους (Stephanus Greek NT, 1550)

Καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους, (NA28 Greek New Testament)

APOSTLES

some to be apostles, (Geneva, RV, ASV, NKJV), some Apostles, (Tyndale, KJV, NASV), some as apostles, (YLT), And he gave the apostles, (NIV, ESV), And his gifts were that some should be apostles, (RSV) — τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, [tous men apostolous,] — USED BOTH IN A GENERAL SENSE AND IN A PARTICULAR SENSE — An 'apostle' was used in classical Greek primarily of ships being sent out for cargo or military expeditions and is only infrequently used to refer to an individual person as an envoy or emissary. It came to mean not only a messenger, but more importantly the authorization of the messenger. **The word 'apostle' therefore means 'to send, to send away on a commission, to dispatch.'** **The word could refer to anyone who is sent or by whom a message is sent; therefore an ambassador, envoy, messenger.** In later Judaism 'apostles' were envoys sent out to collect tribute from the Jews in the dispersion. In the NT it takes upon itself a distinctly religious sense. **In the widest sense it could refer to anyone sent on a spiritual mission** and is thus used of the following:

- both Paul and Barnabas: "*Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people*" (Acts 14:14 KJV)
- Epaphroditus: "*Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.*" (Phil 2:25 KJV)
- Titus and the brethren: "*Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.*" (2 Cor 8:23 KJV)
- even Jesus Himself was called an apostle: "*Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus*" (Heb 3:1 KJV)

But the word is commonly used in a stricter sense. It is used in such a manner 10x in the Gospels, almost 30x in Acts, more than 30x in Paul's epistles, and 8x in the rest of the NT to refer distinctly to Paul or the twelve disciples of Christ. ***"In that fullest, deepest sense a man is an apostle for life and wherever he goes. He is clothed with the authority of the One who sent him, and that authority concerns both doctrine and life.*** The idea, found in so much present-day religious literature, according to which an apostle has no real office, no authority, lacks scriptural support. Anyone can see this for himself by studying such passages as Matt 16:19; 18:18; 28:18,19; John 20:23; 1 Cor 5:3-5; 2 Cor 10:8; 1 Thes 2:6." [Hendriksen, *Romans*, 39] The characteristics of the apostles (the Twelve and Paul) are as follows:

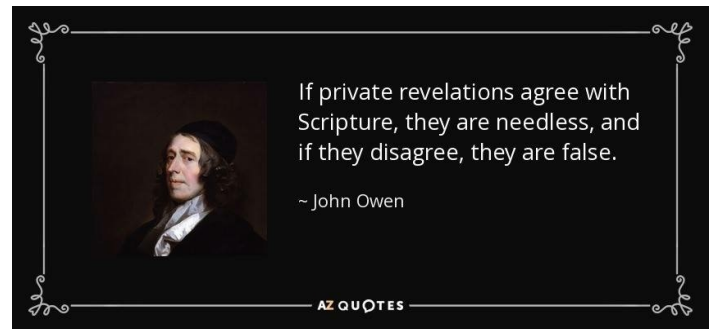
- ***they were chosen, called and sent forth by the Lord Jesus Himself, receiving their commission directly from him*** — John 6:70; 13:18; 15:16; Gal 1:6 (possible exception: Matthias, Judas' replacement in Acts 1:26)
- ***they were qualified for their tasks by Jesus, being an eye-witness to the resurrection*** — Acts 1:8,21,22; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; Gal 1:12; Eph 3:2-8; 1 John 1:1-3
- ***they were endowed in a special measure with the Holy Spirit, who led them into all the truth*** — Matt 10:20; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-14; 20:22; 1 Cor 10-13; 7:40; 1 Thes 4:8
- ***their work was blessed by God who confirmed their witness by signs and wonders*** — Matt 10:1,8; Acts 2:43; 3:2; 5:12-16; Rom 15:18,19; 1 Cor 9:2; 2 Cor 12:12; Gal 2:8; Heb 2:3,4
- ***their office was not restricted to a single local church and was a life-time appointment*** — Acts 26:16-18; 2 Tim 4:7,8

"As a strict designation, the word *apostle* is confined to those men selected and commissioned by Christ himself to deliver in his name the message of salvation. It appears from Luke vi. 13, that the Saviour himself gave them this title. 'And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.' ... ***The apostles, then, were the immediate messengers of Christ, appointed to bear testimony to what they had seen and heard. 'Ye also shall bear witness,' said Christ, 'because ye have been with me from the beginning.'*** John xv. 27. ***This was their peculiar office; hence when Judas fell, one, said Peter, who has companioned with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, must be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. Acts i. 21. To be an apostle, therefore, it was necessary to have seen Christ after his resurrection, 1 Cor. ix. 1, and to have a knowledge of his life and doctrines derived immediately from himself. Without this no man could be a witness, he would only report what he had heard from others, he could bear no independent testimony to what he himself had seen and heard....*** We accordingly find, that whenever Paul was called upon to defend his apostleship, he strenuously asserted that he was appointed not of men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ; and as to his doctrines, that he neither received them of man, neither was he taught them, but by revelation of Jesus Christ." [Hodge, *Romans*, 15f] "Apostle" has a considerable range of meaning, At one extreme it indicates a member of the Twelve, among whom there was no place for Paul; Rev 21.12-14 with its twelve gates also understands it in this way. In Luke and Acts 'apostle' generally designates one of the Twelve, though in Acts 14.4, 14 Paul is termed an apostle, but Barnabas is described as an apostle at the same time. At the other extreme the word simply means 'messenger' (Jn 13.16; Phil 2.25; 2 Cor 8.23). Between these extremes Andronicus and Junia are counted as apostles (Rom 16.7) and Paul describes himself as an apostle but places alongside himself in the same category Silvanus and Timothy (1 Th 2.6). In Rom 1.1 and Gal 1.1 he terms himself an apostle and also in 1 Cor 1.1; 2 Cor 1.1 where, though associating others with himself, he does not apply the word to them. In Phil 1.1; 1 Th 1.1; 2 Th 1.1; Philem 1 he does not use the term at all. ***In what circumstances does he then use it? He may have used it in the first instance in 1 Th 2.6 because it indicated he had been sent by Christ; elsewhere he seems to use it whenever he feels his position is challenged by those who say he is inferior to other leaders, in particular inferior to the Twelve (1, 2 Corinthians, Galatians). He makes the same claim in Romans, but by the time he wrote this letter ... he was aware that there were those who challenged his position and he therefore needed to tell that he was in no way inferior to those who regularly used the term of themselves.*** It appears that he found it more and more necessary to apply the term to himself, yet at no point where he does so does he issue commands or directions to those he addresses. It is arguable that if he had been asked to choose a word to describe himself he would have preferred 'father' or 'parent' (1 Cor 4.14ff; Gal 4.19; 1 Th 2.7, 11; 2 Cor 6.13; 12.14; Phil 2.22; Philem 10) or a term from the word group *διακον* [*diakon*, 'servant, deacon'] (cf. Rom 15.25; 1 Cor 3.5; 2 Cor 3.6ff; 4.1; 5.18; 6.3f; 11.8, 23)." [Best, 96f] "This word is not to be limited to the Twelve, as Lightfoot has shown in detail in his excursus on Gal. i. 17. Besides St. Paul himself, Bamabas is certainly so called (Acts xiv. 4, 14); apparently also James the Lord's brother (I Cor. xv. 7; Gal. i. 19), and Silvanus (I Thess. ii. 6, 'we might have been burdensome to you, being apostles of Christ'). In Irenaeus and Tertullian the Seventy are called apostles. According to the Greek Fathers, followed by Lightfoot, Andronicus and Junia are called apostles in Rom. xvi 7. In 2 Cor. viii. 23 and Phil. ii. 25 the messengers of the Churches are called 'apostles of the Churches.' But to be an apostle of Christ it seems to have been a condition that he should have seen Christ, I Cor. ix. 1, 2, and have, moreover, been a witness of the resurrection (Acts i. 8, 21-23). Their office was not limited to any particular locality. Prophets are mentioned along with apostles in ii. 20, iii. 5. Chrysostom distinguishes them from 'teachers' by this, that he who prophesies utters everything from the spirit, while he who teaches sometimes discourses from his own understanding." [Abbott, 117; see also Salmond, 329; O'Brien, 298f; Hoehner, 541f; Thielman, 273; Snodgrass, 203f; Calvin, 279]

PROPHETS

some prophets, — τούς δὲ προφήτας [tous de prophētas,] — A prophet is one who speaks for another, a spokesman, as Aaron was the prophet of Moses. The Lexicons define it as ‘one who speaks forth, one who speaks for God, proclaiming what God wants to make known; used of Old Testament prophetic personalities (Matt 2:23), of John the Baptist (Matt 14:5), of Jesus (Matt 21:11), of believers endowed with the gift of prophecy (Acts 15:32; Eph 4:11), and once of a pagan prophet (Titus 1:12).’ [Friberg’s Lexicon, Thayer’s Lexicon] Referred along with the Apostles in Eph 2:20; 3:5; 4:11 and 1 Cor 12:28.

‘FORTH-TELLING’ AND ‘FORE-TELLING’ — This ‘speaking for God’ may be distinguished between **‘forth-telling’** for God = speaking in front of others, publically proclaiming the Word of God, or **‘fore-telling’** with a special knowledge of the future. “The second gifted person, the prophet, is also listed among the gifts in 1 Cor 12:28 and Rom 12:6. In the study of this word in 2:20 and 3:5 we concluded that the prophet was one who was endowed by the Holy Spirit with the gift of prophecy for the purposes of edification, comfort, encouragement (1 Cor 14:3,31), and further, to understand and communicate the mysteries and revelation of God to the church (12:10; 13:2; 14:23, 30-31). The prophetic gift may include a predictive element (1 Thess 3:4; 4:6, 14-18; Gal 5:21). However, *the prophet is not one who is overcome by some uncontrolled ecstatic force, but rather one who has self-control when receiving the revelation* (1 Cor 14:30-32; Rev 1:9-10).” [Hoehner, 542]



THESE WERE NEW TESTAMENT PROPHETS — Used here in Eph 4:11 to refer to NT prophets, those proclaiming the Word of God by special revelation from the Lord Himself in the interim time between the Old Testament and the completion of the New Testament writings.

‘And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.’ (Acts 11:27,28 NKJV)

‘On the next day we who were Paul’s companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul’s belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus says the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’ (Acts 21:8-11 NKJV)

A NECESSARY BUT TRANSITORY MINISTRY — *“In light of an incomplete canon, initially the prophets may well have received revelation to complete what was needed so that every person could be presented perfect before God (Eph 4:12; Col 1:28). In the present context the prophet is a NT prophet because he is listed after the apostles, as in 2:20 and 3:5.”* [Hoehner, 542] Ernest Best comments that Paul left no place for continuing prophetic activity in the congregations [Best, 390] while Stewart Salmond (‘The Expositor’s Greek Testament’) maintains this order of prophets continued to have a place in the Church for a considerable period, with large mention is made of it in the Didache, and in Eusebius, Hist. Eccles., v., 17. [Salmond, 329f]

MODERN DAY PREACHERS — *“The function of the prophet has its modern parallel in that of the Christian preacher, who discourses ‘to edification, exhortation, and comfort’ to those who are already members of the Church. ‘Preaching,’ in the English Version of the N.T., means proclaiming the gospel to those who have not yet known it.”* [Abbott, 117f]

MacARTHUR ON ‘APOSTLES AND PROPHETS’ — “In 1 Corinthians 12:28, Paul says, ‘God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers’ That statement adds weight not only to the idea of divine calling but also to the chronological significance (‘first, . . . second, . . . third’) in the giving of these gifted men to the church.

“The first two classes of gifted men, apostles and prophets, were given three basic responsibilities:

- (1) to lay the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20);
- (2) to receive and declare the revelation of God’s Word (Acts 11:28; 21:10-11; Eph. 3:5); and
- (3) to give confirmation of that Word through ‘signs and wonders and miracles’ (2 Cor. 12:12; cf. Acts 8:6-7; Heb. 2:3-4).

“The first of the gifted men in the New Testament church were the apostles, of whom Jesus Christ Himself is foremost (Heb- 3:1). The basic meaning of apostle (apostolos) is simply that of one sent on a mission. In its primary and most technical sense apostle is used in the New Testament only of the twelve, including Matthias, who replaced Judas (Acts 1:26), and of Paul, who was uniquely set apart as apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-17; cf. 1 Cor. 15:7-9; 2 Cor. 11:5). The qualifications for that apostleship were having been chosen directly by Christ and having witnessed the resurrected Christ (Mark 3:13; Acts 1:22-24). Paul was the last to meet those qualifications (Rom. 1:1; etc.). It is not possible therefore, as some claim, for there to be apostles in the church today.

Some have observed that the apostles were like delegates to a constitutional convention. When the convention is over, the position ceases. When the New Testament was completed, the office of apostle ceased.

“The term apostle is used in a more general sense of other men in the early church, such as Barnabas (Acts 14:4), Silas and Timothy (1 Thess. 2:6), and a few other outstanding leaders (Rom. 16:7; 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). The false apostles spoken of in 2 Cor. 11:13 no doubt counterfeited this class of apostleship, since the others were limited to thirteen and were well known. The true apostles in the second group were called ‘messengers (apostoloi) of the churches’ (2 Cor. 8:23), whereas the thirteen were apostles of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1; etc.).

“Apostles in both groups were authenticated “by signs and wonders and miracles” (2 Cor. 12:12), but neither group was self-perpetuating. In neither sense is the term apostle used in the book of Acts after 16:4. Nor is there any New Testament record of an apostle in either group being replaced when he died....

“Prophets were also appointed by God as specially gifted men, and differ from those believers who have the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 12:10). Not all such believers could be called prophets. It seems that the office of prophet was exclusively for work within a local congregation, whereas that of apostleship was a much broader ministry, not confined to any area, as implied in the word apostolos (‘one who is sent on a mission’). Paul, for example, is referred to as a prophet when he ministered locally in the Antioch church (Acts 13:1), but elsewhere is always called an apostle.

“The prophets sometimes spoke revelation from God (Acts 11:21-28) and sometimes simply expounded revelation already given (as implied in Acts 13:1, where they are connected with teachers). They always spoke for God but did not always give a newly revealed message from God. The prophets were second to the apostles, and their message was to be judged by that of the apostles (1 Cor. 14:37). Another distinction between the two offices may have been that the apostolic message was more general and doctrinal, whereas that of the prophets was more personal and practical.

“Like the apostles, however, their office ceased with the completion of the New Testament, just as the Old Testament prophets disappeared when that testament was completed, some 400 years before Christ. The church was established ‘upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone’ (Eph. 2:20). Once the foundation was laid, the work of the apostles and prophets was finished. (First Corinthians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary [Chicago: Moody, 1984], pp. 322-24)

“There is no mention of the latter two gifted offices replacing the first two, because in New Testament times all were operative. But the fact is that, as they continued to serve the church, the evangelists and pastors and teachers did pick up the baton from the first generation apostles and prophets.

“From its inception at Pentecost the church has been indebted to the apostles, through whom Christ established the fullness of New Testament doctrine (see Acts 2:42). Those uniquely called and empowered men recorded God’s final revelation as He revealed it to them.

“The prophets, though they did not usually receive direct revelation from God, nevertheless were greatly instrumental in building up and strengthening the early church. Both apostles and prophets have passed from the scene (Eph. 2:20), but the foundation they laid is that on which all of Christ’s church has been built.” [MacArthur, 141f]