

LESSON 3 Apostles and Prophets

In the past two lessons we have been building a base for understanding the spiritual gifts. We have seen the importance of knowledge and faith in relation to the gifts. We have also noted that our knowledge and faith determine and govern our experience. Now that we have gained this understanding and have become somewhat acquainted with the classification of the gifts, we are ready to begin our study of the first group—the gifts of ministry.

As we progress through this lesson we will learn the range and function of each of these gifts. We will learn how each gift plays a large part in developing the body of believers.

You, as a Christian, will soon develop the ability to recognize the various gifts of ministry. Beyond that, as your knowledge grows, you may be able to sense God's hand upon your own life.

lesson outline

He Gave Some Apostles

The Giver Identified

The Receiver Revealed

The Function Expounded

The Development Explained

He Gave Some Prophets

The Giver Identified

The Receiver Revealed

The Function Expounded

The Development Explained

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

- Name the giver of all spiritual gifts, and explain the function of the gift of the apostles.
- Explain the function of a prophet.

learning activities

1. Before beginning to study this lesson read Ephesians 4:1-16 carefully three times.
2. In your notebook copy Ephesians 4:11 and underline each of the five gifts of ministry.
3. Refer to the list of word definitions at the end of your study guide for the meaning of the words in the key words list.
4. Complete each study question as you come to it.
5. Complete the self-test at the end of the lesson. If you find you did not give a correct answer, do not go on to the next lesson until you can answer every question correctly. Refer back to the lesson for the help you need.

key words

expounded
identified

inspiration
revealed

etched

lesson development

HE GAVE SOME APOSTLES

Objective 1. *Name the giver of all spiritual gifts, and explain the function of the gift of the apostles.*

The Giver Identified

Giver	Gift	Receiver
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When a gift is given, it involves two parties: (1) a giver, and (2) a receiver. The importance of a gift depends on *who* gave it and *what* it is. When the queen of England visited the United States during the time Dwight D. Eisenhower was president he gave her a most beautiful hand-etched glass vase. He paid a glass company in New York State a big price for it. We can be sure it found an important place among the queen's treasured possessions. There are two reasons: (1) it was the gift from an important man, and (2) it was a beautiful, valuable gift.

The gift of apostles is important for similar reasons. First, it is important for *who* gave it, and second, it is important for *what* it is. This last reason will be considered later. Now we want to learn who "gave some to be apostles."

In Ephesians 4:11, the giver is simply identified as "he." We will need to discover who "he" refers to. Verse 8 in the same chapter lets us know that the quotation is from Psalm 68:18. Then in verse 7 we come upon a clear explanation, "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it." We therefore conclude that Christ is the Giver of the gifts of ministry. We will learn more about Him as the Giver as we study this chapter.

- 1 Circle the letter before each TRUE statement below.
 - a A gift involves only one party.
 - b The importance of a gift is understood by who gave it and what it is.
 - c In Romans 12 we learn who gave the gifts of ministry.
 - d Christ "gave some to be apostles."

The Receiver Revealed

Earlier in the lesson we learned that in every gift two parties are involved, (1) a *giver* and (2) a *receiver*. We have already discovered that Christ is the Giver of the gifts of ministry. In this section we will find out who the receiver is.

The answer is twofold. If we were to look only at Ephesians 4:8 we would decide that the gifts of ministry are given to men. “When he went up to the very heights, he took many captives with him; he gave gifts to mankind.” However, we must look beyond a single verse to discover the whole truth. This is a good lesson to remember for understanding what the Bible teaches. A single verse may give only part of the truth as in this case. By reading the whole passage (Ephesians 4:1-16) we discover that Paul has in mind the whole church, the whole body. In verse 4 he says, “there is *one* body.” In verse 12, he speaks of *the whole body*. This helps us understand that the gifts of ministry are given to individuals in the body and are for the whole body.

CHRIST	gifts of ministry	to individuals in the body for the good of the whole body
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To the individual is given the calling and special ability to be an apostle. To the body is given the apostle himself, for the purpose of fulfilling his office. Read Ephesians 2:10 and 3:5.

- 2** To discover the correct meaning of a verse it is best to study
- a)** the verse alone.
 - b)** an entire passage.
 - c)** at least two verses.
- 3** Apostles are
- a)** certain books of the Bible.
 - b)** special men in the body.
 - c)** everybody in the body.

- 4** The gift of ministry as an apostle
- a)** is given to an individual for his own edification.
 - b)** was meant for the original twelve apostles alone.
 - c)** is given to an individual to edify the church.

The Function Expounded

The gift of ministry known as apostles is one of the most important offices in the body. By office we mean place of responsibility, or duty. This gift is listed first, perhaps because it has to do with founding and overseeing.

We understand there are two kinds of apostles. First, there was a very special group of believers bearing this title. There were only twelve of them. When one of them, Judas, betrayed his Lord and lost his place as an apostle, he was replaced by another. “Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:26).

To qualify for this first position, as an apostle, each man had to meet a certain condition. Luke, the writer of Acts, states this in Acts 1:21-22, “Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us.” However, we are not certain that the Lord made that requirement. It could have been an idea agreed upon by the eleven.

We are now faced with a hard question. Was Paul an apostle like the twelve? Some questions are not easy to answer. As Bible students we have to learn that some of our questions may not be answered until we get to heaven. However, we must not let this stop us from searching for the answers. Searching sharpens our minds. It makes us better servants of our Lord.

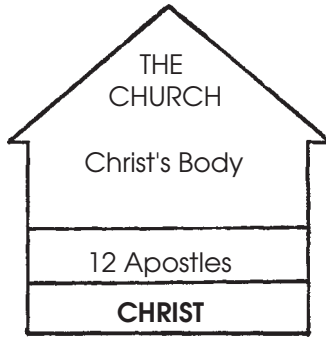
Now, back to the apostle Paul. By his own testimony we judge he thought of himself as such an apostle. Here are some of the references where Paul clearly places himself among them.

1. “For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession” (1 Corinthians 4:9). By using the term *us* Paul seems to consider himself as one of them.
2. “Don’t we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the *other* apostles?” (1 Corinthians 9:5). Here the word “other” indicates he was of the group.
3. “For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle” (1 Corinthians 15:9). The key word here is “least” which plainly places him among them. He could not have been the least of them unless he had been one of them.

Some Bible students feel the group, meeting in the upper room, made a mistake in appointing Matthias. They believe that Paul was the Lord’s choice to take Judas’ place. We cannot say for sure. Many wonder whose name will appear on the twelfth foundation-stone in the new Jerusalem. Will it be Matthias or Paul? “The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” (Revelation 21:14). We shall see when we get there.

The twelve apostles had a function which no other member in the body of Christ will ever have. They had a part in the founding of His church in the world. Also several of them wrote books found in our New Testament.

While the twelve apostles have very special functions as apostles, there is also the gift of ministry known as apostle. We must not feel the two are the same, though they are somewhat alike. The place of the twelve in the body was very special. It was never to be repeated. But the gift of ministry called “apostles” was to be a gift through the whole period of building the church, or body.



The apostles are given by Christ to His body to do a special work. Men do not decide to be apostles any more than a chunk of clay decides to be a piece of pottery. Those who are true apostles may not even think of themselves in that way. What they do makes others able to recognize them as apostles. Those who call themselves apostles, or who are appointed to be apostles by men, may not be apostles at all. “You have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.” (Revelation 2:2). (See also 2 Corinthians 11:13).

The meaning of the word *apostle* will help us understand who are apostles and what their function really is. The word *apostle* means “to send away,” or “to send forth.” Both Matthew and Mark use the word *apostle* only once each (Matthew 10:2; Mark 6:30). In each case the word points to a special kind of work—the work of a missionary. In this way both the twelve apostles and the gift of apostles are alike.

An apostle, therefore, is one who is sent forth by the Lord to carry the gospel into new places. His work is to lay the foundation for a new part of the body. Also included in his task is building up the body and overseeing the body. He did this “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:12).

For example, Ken Gates went as a missionary to the Northwest Territories in Northern Canada. Before he went some people tried to discourage him. Some of his teachers told him he would never be a preacher. They would never have thought

of him as material for an apostle. The people to whom he went to minister did not welcome him. They tried to make him leave. But Ken knew God had sent him. So he stayed. Today there are many wonderful believers in that country, and many churches. Ken Gates planted the church there. He has helped the believers grow and develop. He has also watched over the work of the Lord like a father. He would never think of calling himself an apostle. Yet those who know him and his work know that he is truly an apostle.

5 The original twelve apostles are different from modern day apostles in this way: The original twelve

- a)** made themselves apostles.
- b)** only engaged in missionary work.
- c)** wrote books of the New Testament.

6 The function of apostles today is to

- a)** write more books for the New Testament.
- b)** carry the gospel to new places and oversee the development of God's work there.
- c)** study hard to be good preachers.

The Development Explained

Apostles are not ready-made. They are first believers. They may sense God's call strongly upon their lives, but they usually have no idea they are going to be Christ's special gifts to the church.

When God chooses a person to be an apostle, He gives time for the person to grow and get ready for the task. Paul did not fill the office of an apostle when he was first saved. However, God did put it in his heart that he had a special work to do. "Then he said: 'The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard'" (Acts 22:14-15).

It is true, Paul was a special kind of apostle. Yet the way in which he was prepared to be an apostle is much the same as the way a believer is prepared today.

There are several steps in this preparation.

1. *Suffering.* Some believers are not able to become apostles. They are not willing to suffer, as may be necessary in an apostle's preparation. Paul had a word about this long before he became an apostle. "I will show him how much he must suffer for my name" (Acts 9:16). Suffering prepares people in a special way to be leaders in Christ's body. Those who have not suffered cannot minister to others as those who have suffered. Those who are unwilling to suffer are not prepared to go with the gospel into new places where they may have to suffer much. Suffering prepares people for more suffering.

2. *Increasing.* Even Jesus while He was being prepared for His ministry increased. "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). When we say His ministry *increased*, we mean it grew or was added to. Thus Jesus grew in wisdom and stature. He added to His wisdom and stature. If this was necessary for Him, how much more is it necessary to the apostle's preparation? Paul was prepared by increasing. "Yet Saul (another name for Paul) grew more and more powerful" (Acts 9:22). The word *strength* used here seems to especially mean "spiritual strength." He must know the mighty power of God in a very real way. Again, if Paul the great apostle needed this kind of preparation, we can be sure all other apostles will also need it.

3. *Learning.* Learning is important to every believer. It is more important to apostles because they are leaders in Christ's body. Again let's think about Paul. He is a good example. Before he became an apostle, he had to spend a period of time in the desert learning (See Galatians 1:16-18). At the end of that time, Paul was ready to begin a more effective witness for the Lord.

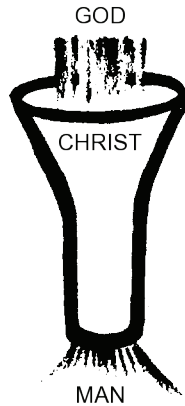
- 7** Circle the letter before each TRUE statement below.
- a** Men are born apostles.
 - b** Those who become apostles need preparation beforehand.
 - c** Paul was an apostle as soon as he was converted.
 - d** Suffering may be necessary in the preparation of an apostle.

HE GAVE SOME PROPHETS

Objective 2. *Explain the function of a prophet.*

The Giver Inspiration

We have already learned that Christ is the giver of all gifts of ministry. For this reason every gift is important. What is true of the gift of apostles is also true of the gift of prophets, and of each of the other gifts of ministry. Each gift is given by Christ to His body. The ability and the calling to be such a gift is given by Christ to certain members of His body. We can say He gives ministers to His body.



Not everyone is to be an apostle or a prophet. The Bible says, He gave *some* apostles and *some* prophets. The word *some* makes it clear that not *all* are apostles and not *all* are prophets. He gives some to fill each office. This reminds us of Paul's question, "If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?" (1 Corinthians 12:17).

Think about the giver. We read in 1 Corinthians 12:28, "And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets." In Ephesians the giver is said to be God. Later in Ephesians, the giver is said to be Christ. How are we to understand this? There really is no problem. Christ is God, since He is one of the three persons in the Trinity. Trinity means

three in one—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Second, all gifts which God gives, He gives through Christ. Read James 1:17 and Ephesians 4:1-11.

8 Write **T** in the blank before each true statement below and **F** if it is false.

- . . . **a** Every member in the body is to be a prophet.
- . . . **b** Only some members of the body are called to be prophets.
- . . . **c** God gives the gifts of ministry through Christ.

The Receiver Revealed

In one way the receiver of this gift—the gift of ministry called prophet—is the body of Christ. In another way the person who is called a prophet is the receiver. The prophet is both called and prepared to become Christ’s gift to the body.

Does a person have anything to do with becoming a prophet? Does God pick certain people for this high office or place of service without a reason? We understand God has a right to do this. “Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” (Romans 9:20). But there is a difference between a believer and a clay pot. The believer has a will of his own. That is, he has the power of choice. What happens to a believer is at least partly his own choice. His attitude of heart is also related to God’s choice. A clay pot does not have an attitude. People do. *Attitude* means “ways of thinking, acting, or feeling.” God knows our wills. He also knows our way of thinking, acting, or feeling. He considers these things when He chooses prophets.

David was an Old Testament king. He was also a prophet. Old Testament prophets were somewhat different from New Testament prophets. Yet, we can learn much by thinking about why God chose David to be a special gift to His people, Israel. By reading the Old Testament account, we find David was not chosen for his age, his place in his family, his experience, or his outward appearance. In his day men would have chosen

Eliab, his elder brother. Elder brothers were, by custom, chosen ahead of their younger brothers for places of leadership. Though David was youngest, God chose him for a high place of leadership. Why? He was good to look upon, but he was not chosen for that reason. He was young, but that was not the reason either. The answer is in Acts 13:22: “I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.” He was chosen to be both a king and a prophet because God saw his will and attitude.

Prophets and other gifts of ministry are prepared and given to the body of Christ because God sees the inward qualities. Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Acts 22:14.

9 According to Acts 13:22, David was chosen for a *special* reason. Circle the letter before the correct reason below.

- a)** He was the prophet of Samuel’s choice.
- b)** He was the youngest son.
- c)** He was good to look upon.
- d)** He had the heart attitude God was looking for.
- e)** He had experience herding sheep, so he would be a good leader for God’s people.

The Function Expounded

The gift of ministry known as *prophet* has two main functions: (1) foretelling, which means “to tell about an event before it takes place,” and (2) forthtelling, which means “to tell forth, to speak out.” A prophet is one who speaks by inspiration. That is, he speaks out as he is led the Holy Spirit. He also is one who expounds God’s message to the people. *Expounds* means “gives the meaning.” One is speaking as a prophet only when he gives the meaning of God’s message as it is given by the Holy Spirit.

A prophet is one who predicts. The term “predict” means the same as “foretell.” The Old Testament prophets often foretold events before they came to pass. Then they gave the meaning of the message from God to the people.

The New Testament prophet's function is much the same. He also speaks God's message to the people and then gives the meaning. But there is some difference. The Old Testament prophet's words were not usually found in the Word of God already given (although they were not contrary to that Word). Only occasionally does he quote from a written record. The New Testament prophet, however, most often brings challenge and encouragement based on truths already received. The ministry of Judas and Silas in Acts 15:32 is a good example. Thus the prophet brings a special message from God by His Spirit to meet the needs of the people at the particular time.

There are also times when the New Testament prophet receives a message from God that foretells the future. In the book of Acts a man named Agabus is called a prophet. "After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea." (Acts 21:10). Twice we are told of his foretelling coming events. Agabus "stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)" (See Acts 11:28.) For the second account read Acts 21:11.

The prophet who foretells can be tested to see if his message is from God. If his prophecy does not come to pass he is speaking out of his own heart. "But a prophet who predicts peace can only be recognized as a prophet whom the Lord has truly sent when the prophets' predictions come true" (Jeremiah 28:9).

Peter is a good example of the New Testament prophet as a forthteller. He was one of the twelve apostles. He was also a prophet. Sometimes a man is gifted in more than one way. After the Holy Spirit was poured out, as it is described in Acts 2:1-12, a great crowd gathered to see what was happening. "What does this mean?" they asked. Then Peter spoke as a prophet. He told forth God's message as he was led upon by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brought to his mind the prophecy of God from the Old Testament. Peter did not have time to plan what he was

going to say. He just spoke forth. He was also given the ability by the Holy Spirit to give the meaning of the message.

The prophet's most important function is set forth in Ephesians 4:12, "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." The person who speaks forth the message of God, as he is breathed upon by the Holy Spirit, serves both purposes well. First he helps God's people get ready for Christian service. When people sense the Holy Spirit upon a teacher they learn much. They learn from what is said. They learn from the Spirit by whom the message comes.

10 Circle the letter before each statement which completes the sentence correctly. The function of a prophet is to

- a) walk proudly among the people.
- b) become known as a great leader.
- c) give the people God's message.
- d) explain God's message to the people.

The Development Explained

Usually God's gifts function best through people who have prepared well. Think of Peter's message again. He was prepared by being filled with the Holy Spirit. His knowledge of God's Word was an important part of the development also.

There are three important steps in the development of a prophet.

1. *Praying daily.* A prophet who does not pray will soon be no prophet at all. Praying makes it possible to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Unless a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, he cannot be a prophet. Praying also helps him to recognize when he is being moved upon by the Holy Spirit.

2. *Knowing God's Word.* A prophet increases his usefulness as he increases his knowledge of God's Word. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15).

A prophet is a teacher when he speaks forth God's message.

3. *Using the gift.* As the muscles in our legs and arms are developed by using them, so the gifts received from Christ are developed by using them. When the prophet begins to speak forth, he may be fearful. This does not mean he is not speaking by the Spirit. It only means he needs to learn more about allowing the Spirit to use him more freely. As a gift is used, it is more fully developed.

11 Circle the letter before the statement which best describes how a prophet can develop his gift.

- a)** Preparing and winning God's approval.
- b)** Praying and beginning to use the gift.
- c)** Studying all he can about prophets.
- d)** Reading in God's Word about prophets who did not please God.

self-test

1 Match each definition on the right with the word on the left by writing the correct number in the blank space.

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| ... a Expound | 1) Tell forth or speak out |
| ... b Will | 2) To send forth |
| ... c Forthtell | 3) Choose |
| ... d Foretell | 4) Predict |
| ... e Apostle | 5) Give the meaning |

2 The giver of all spiritual gifts is

3 Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.

- a** Paul became an apostle as soon as he accepted Christ as his Savior.
- b** Not everyone is called to be a prophet or an apostle.
- c** The function of an apostle today is no different from that of the original twelve apostles.
- d** The church determines which of its members are worthy to receive the gifts of ministry.
- e** Gifts are not developed the moment they are received; they are developed as they are used.

4 What are two primary responsibilities of apostles?

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5 What are the two main functions of a prophet?

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answers to study questions

- 1 a** False.
b True.
c False.
d True.
- 7 a** False.
b True.
c False.
d True.
- 2 b)** an entire passage.
- 8 a** F
b T
c T
- 3 b)** special men in the body.
- 9 d)** He had the heart attitude God was looking for.
- 4 c)** is given to an individual to edify the church.
- 10 c)** give the people God's message.
d) explain God's message to the people.
- 5 c)** wrote books of the New Testament.
- 11 b)** Praying and beginning to use the gift.
- 6 b)** carry the gospel to new places and oversee the development of God's work there.

Your Notes