

The Church of the Servant King

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Survey of the Bible Series – Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians

(SB_1Cor12D Temporary Gifts – Apostle & Prophet)

Temporary Gifts

Apostle

Definition: in the formal or technical sense, “Apostle” is the gift that provided authority over the churches until their authority became superseded by the written Canon of Scripture. (Terminated circa late A.D. 90’s with the death of John the Apostle, the last living Apostle)

Greek: *Apostolos* was used in classical Greek to refer to a commander of a naval expedition and came to refer to one sent out or dispatched as a delegate, envoy, or messenger. It came to be used to denote a group of believers who had been commissioned with a special function.¹

Other Comments: John F. Walvoord in regard to the technical usage of the term “Apostle.”

It seems evident from the Scriptures that the gift of apostleship was limited to the first-century church. Apostles were distinguished from prophets and teachers in 1 Corinthians 12:28. During the apostolic period they had unusual authority and were the channels of divine revelation. Often they had the gift of prophecy as well as that of working miracles. Generally speaking, those who were in the inner circle of the apostles were eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Christ or, like Paul, had seen Christ subsequent to His resurrection. In Protestantism comparatively few claims have been advanced that any persons exist today with the same apostolic gift found in the early church.²

Technical Usage of “Apostle”:

In the technical usage of the term “Apostle,” there have been at least 14 men who have been identified with this more formal or technical designation as “Apostle.”³

- The original Twelve Apostles to Israel (Matt 10:1-8) – the “Jewish Apostles.”
- Matthias – the replacement for Judas, the betrayer (Acts 1:25-26) – also a “Jewish Apostle.”
- Paul – the “Apostle to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46-47 cf. Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; 2:8-9; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; Titus 1:1).

Summary of Requirements to be an “Apostle” in the Technical Sense (Applicable to the “Jewish Apostles” and Paul, the “Apostle to the Gentiles”):

- Chosen by the Lord Himself (Matt. 10:1, 2; Mark 3:13, 14; Luke 6:13; Acts 9:6, 15; 13:2; 22:10, 14, 15; Rom. 1:1; Gal 1:15-24).
- Endued with sign gifts and miraculous powers which were the divine credentials of their office (Matt. 10:1; Acts 5:15, 16; 16:16-18; 28:8, 9).

¹ (See *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* by Walter Bauer, p. 99).

² John F. Walvoord, “The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts”, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143:570 (April 1986): 12.

³ I use the words “at least” due to some additional comments to follow regarding Acts 14:4 and 14.

- Had to be an eyewitness of the resurrection (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1).

Distinctions Between the Ministry of the “Jewish Apostles” and the “Apostle to the Gentiles:”

- The relation of the Jewish Apostles to the kingdom was that of heralds, announcing to Israel only (Matt. 10:5, 6) that the kingdom was at hand (Matt. 4:17) and they manifested kingdom powers (Matt. 10:7, 8).
- Their future relation to the Messianic kingdom will be that of judges over the twelve tribes (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:29-30).
- The New Jerusalem is built upon twelve foundations and in these are the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb (Eph. 2:20 cf. Rev. 21:14).
- Paul, as the “Apostle to the Gentiles,” was God’s chosen man through whom God communicated the truths relevant to the Gentile-centric dispensation known as the Church Age Body of Christ (e.g. 2 Cor 11:5-6; Eph 3:1-21) – a dispensation in which, among other things, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Gal 3:28).

The Relation of the “Jewish Apostles” to the Intercalated Church Age Body of Christ:

During the “transition period” between the Age of Israel into the present intercalated Church Age Body of Christ, the “Jewish Apostles” continued in their respective ministries with God’s sanction. So, a question arises in regard to the nature of their ministry during the portion of the 1st Century A.D. in which Paul was functioning as God’s appointed Apostle of truth relevant to the intercalated age.

As discussed in more detail in a prior session (see “*Temporary Versus Permanent Spiritual Gifts*” – session SB_12B), I believe that the “*transition*” period that we observe when reading the book of Acts reflects a *progressive understanding* on the part of believers (led by new revelation given to the Apostle Paul) of the Truths associated with the new dispensation.⁴ The temporary suspension of God’s Jewish-centric program through the nation of Israel occurred at a definite point even though Jewish people who accepted Jesus as the Messiah continued to practice Jewish tradition and even if, on occasion, we see Paul observing a Jewish ritual such as circumcision or the keeping of a Nazarite vow – acts that Paul certainly did not see as required for salvation nor as being demanded by God as a part of the spiritual walk of the believer. Paul viewed them rightly as a non-essential.

The “Jewish Apostles” did not receive the truths relevant to the present intercalated age – except indirectly as Paul’s teaching and writings eventually circulated back to Jerusalem and to other areas where these Jewish Apostles ministered as well. Even then, Peter who might have spoken representatively for all twelve of the Jewish Apostles, states – “...*just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction*” (2 Pet 3:15b-16). (Notice that among other things, Peter indicates that Paul’s writings are on a par with the “*rest of the Scriptures*” and Peter admits that some of Paul’s teaching contains instruction that is “*hard to understand*”).

So, the position of ***The Church of the Servant King*** (as best as I understand the issues at present) in regards to the relationship between the “Jewish Apostles” and the intercalated Church Age Body of Christ is that these Twelve continued in their ministry based upon a Jewish-centric paradigm of understanding. Accordingly, they were boldly proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah Who had been crucified, but Who would be returning soon to establish His Messianic reign. That message was equally applicable to Gentiles since the Gentiles will be a part of the future, literal kingdom of God on earth. This explains the ministry of some of these men (e.g. Peter) among the Gentiles in a manner that was consistent with the so-called “Great

⁴ See the Appendix for a diagram illustrating this principle.

Commission” (Matt 28:18). (The so-called “Great Commission” was specifically communicated to the Twelve by Jesus and had the anticipated Messianic Kingdom in view). As Paul continued his ministry and writing, then gradually, these Twelve became more and more exposed to the progressive unfolding of the new truths relevant to the present age. However, it is questionable, based upon the content of the non-Pauline epistles, that they ever fully grasped all of the content of Paul’s teaching (e.g. 2 Pet 3:15b-16). Their letters reflect a commonality to principles true of the intercalated Church Age Body of Christ due largely to the fact that there is a commonality between the relationship and ministry of the Holy Spirit to believers of the intercalated age and the kingdom age.

Non-Technical Usage in the Bible:

There is a generalized or non-technical manner in which the word is used in some passages. For instance, in Acts 14:4, 14 it is used of *Barnabas* as well as of *Paul*.⁵ In Romans 16:7 it is used of *Andronicus* and *Junias*. In 2 Corinthians 8:23, *two unnamed brethren* are called apostles. In Philippians 2:25 *Epaphroditus* is referred to as an apostle. It is used in 1 Thessalonians 2:6 of *Paul, Silas* and *Timothy* to define their relation to Christ. In Hebrews 3:1, it is used of *Christ* as our “apostle” and High Priest.

The Ministry of An Apostle – “Jewish Apostles” and Paul – the “Apostle to the Gentiles”:

- Laying the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20)
- Confirming in the sense of authenticating the Word preached (2 Cor. cf. Heb. 2:3-4)
- Oversight of the churches (see Acts 8:14 and 15:1-29 as examples)

Post-Apostolic Age Distortions of the Gift:

Some today claim to be “apostles” based upon the fact that the word was sometimes used in the non-technical sense in the New Testament to refer to the work of those who did not hold the office and gift. However, the following arguments can be advanced against those who hold such a position:

- The actual “gift” of apostleship in Scripture was always clearly used in the restrictive sense.
- Not every minister of the gospel in the apostolic age held the designation “apostle”
- The person who had the gift of apostle and held the office in the Apostolic age also possessed other gifts such as healing, performing miracles, etc. which are known to have been temporary in nature (see 2 Cor. 12:8-12). These gifts were designed to validate their apostleship
- Those who were given the gift of “apostle” had to have been eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus
- The New Testament canon is now completed. If anyone claims to now do all that those with the gift of apostle did, why is it that no one is legitimately writing Scripture?
- Every Church Age Body of Christ believer is “responsible” to the Lord for some activities which were also the “responsibility” of an “apostle” in the pre-canon period, i.e. witnessing, praying, etc. In some cases, the responsibilities of the pastor-teacher and teacher today overlap with those of the apostle in the pre-canon period of the Church Age. However, a similarity of responsibility does not equate to the same gift.

⁵ Some seem to imply that this reference in Acts 14:4 & 14 as regards Barnabas as support for a view that Barnabas was an “Apostle” in the technical sense, thus on an equal standing with Paul. The context seems to support the non-technical usage and as such, Paul and Barnabas’ ministry and missions activity is simply being sanctioned by the Lord as they are considered “ones who have been sent” – a meaning consistent with the definition of the term “apostle.”

Prophecy

Definition: The gift of “prophecy” allowed the one so gifted to utter exhortations, instructions, predictions and warnings as a result of immediate divine revelation. In many cases, the one so gifted had the ability to foretell the future and then to forthtell or courageously preach that prediction to the people. However, the predictive element was secondary to the proclamation of direct revelation from God.

Greek: There are primarily three Greek words relating to the gift of prophecy, i.e. *propheteia*, *prophetes*, and *propheteuo*. See *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, by Walter Bauer, pages 722-724.

- 1) *Propheteia* (noun) is used for prophetic activity by the one possessing the gift. Examples of the use of this Greek word are found in passages such as Mt. 13:14; Ro. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; 13:2; 14:22; 1 Ti. 1:18; 4:14; 2 Pet. 1:20; and Rv. 11:6; 22:7, 10, 18 among others.
- 2) *Prophetes* (noun) is used to refer to the one possessing the gift. In Greek pagan religions, it denoted an interpreter of the oracles of the gods. Examples of the use of this Greek word are found in passages such as Mt. 2:17; 3:3; 4:14:8:17; 14:5; 21:26; 27:9; Mk. 11:32; Lk. 1:76; 3:4; John 1:23; 12:38; Acts 15:32; 28:25; and 1 Cor. 14:29, 32, 37 just to list a few.
- 3) *Propheteuo* (verb) is used to mean to proclaim a divine revelation (which may have had no bearing on the future), to reveal what was hidden, and to foretell the future. Examples of the use of this Greek word in Scripture include Mt. 11:13; 15:7; Mk. 7:6; 1 Pt. 1:10; 26:68; Lu. 22:64; Acts 2:17; 19:6; 21:9; 1 Cor. 11:4; 13:9; 14:1, 3-5, 24, 31, 39; and Rev. 11:3, 11 to list a few.

Other Comments:

- In 1 Corinthians 12:28 the gift of prophecy is listed second only to the gift of apostle in the founding days of the Church.
 - “Prophets” or those possessing the spiritual gift of “prophecy” are mentioned in all four lists of spiritual gifts. This should highlight the importance of this spiritual gift during the transition period.
- The proclamation of direct revelation from God and the predictive element of the gift of prophecy distinguished the gift of prophecy from the teaching gifts.
- The gift of “apostle” had a prophetic element associated with it (1 Corinthians 2:7 and 13). The fact that Paul possessed prophetic insight is evidenced by his direct guidance from God in passages such as Acts 16:6ff; 18:9-10; 22:17-21; 27:23-24. This is different from the ministry of the Holy Spirit as one of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the Church Age believer today in that today there is no predictive or direct revelatory element associated with the guiding or leading ministry of the Holy Spirit such as is found in Acts 16:9-10; 18:9-10; 22:17-22; 27:23-24. In all probability, all of the apostles also possessed this prophetic element as a part of their apostolic ministries.
- The “prophet” of the Jewish-Centric dispensation of the Age of Israel is distinguished from those possessing the temporary spiritual “gift” of prophecy during the transition period of the present Gentile-centric dispensation of the Church Age Body of Christ in that the Age of Israel prophet often had the character of a national leader, reformer, and patriot and delivered his message normally to Israel.
- On the contrary, the person who possessed the gift of prophecy during the transition period of the present Church Age Body of Christ dispensation had no such national characteristics and effectively filled a temporary void in terms of divine revelation until the Canon of Scripture was completed.
- While it would be insightful and helpful for our understanding of this transition period if we knew the content of the messages being proclaimed by those possessing the temporary spiritual gift of prophecy, we can rest assured that God would not have sent contradictory or conflicting messages to believers by allowing those with the temporary spiritual gift of prophecy to proclaim at the same time one message to the Jewish believers and one message to the Gentile believers.

- Prior to Paul, those possessing the temporary spiritual gift of prophecy would have proclaimed a message consistent with Peter's proclamation regarding the contingency of the coming kingdom as dependent upon Israel's repentance (cf. Acts 3:19ff).
- Scripture does not provide much insight into the content of the messages of those possessing the temporary spiritual gift of prophecy once Paul emerged on the scene and the Gentile-centric, intercalated dispensation had begun.
- It is possible, that like Peter and the other Jewish apostles, these "prophets" during the transition period (after Paul's emergence on the scene) had a message that reflected the fact that there was a lag effect between Paul's communication of the new "mystery" truth related to the new, intercalated dispensation and a progressive dissemination and understanding of that new message (cf. 2 Pet 3:15b-16).

... just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:15b-16)

- Based upon my current and best understanding of this subject, the fact that there was a progressive dissemination and understanding of the new revelation for which the Apostle Paul was the conduit does not necessarily imply (as some effectively contend) that God had two programs running concurrently – one with the Jews and one with the Gentiles. (While perhaps few who address this topic from a dispensational perspective would claim a two-program view of the transition period, that is logically the position being presented in the explanations provided. My examination to date of this subject of the transition period and the temporary spiritual gifts leads me to an understanding that we are witnessing an issue of progressive dissemination and understanding of the new Truth for which Paul was the conduit).

The Gift of Prophecy in the Early Days of the Church Age:

We see examples of where the gift of prophecy is related to the direct revelation of new truth. Sometimes the exercise of the gift resulted in predictive messages such as the prediction by Agabus concerning a coming famine in Acts 11:27-28 and his declaration that sufferings and perhaps death awaited Paul in the future in Acts 21:10-14.

In other cases, we are not informed regarding the total content of the message of those possessing the gift of "prophecy" during this period. Barnabas and others are mentioned among the prophets and teachers at Antioch in Acts 13:1. The four daughters of Philip possessed the gift of prophecy per Acts 21:9. Judas and Silas were prophets per Acts 15:32.

Paul sets forth regulations for the use of gifts in the local assembly in 1 Corinthians 14:26ff in which he addresses the responsibilities of one believer to another. In this passage, Paul states in verses 29-33 that prophecy could occur among individual members of the congregation. This type of prophesying was not limited to men per 1 Corinthians 11:4-5. Consider the following quote taken from Dr. Constable's notes in a class taken at DTS entitled "Acts and Pauline Epistles" in which he comments in regard to 1 Corinthians 14:29-31:

Likewise the prophets should minister in an orderly fashion and limit themselves to two or three messages at a service. The others in the congregation should pay attention to what they said. The Greek word *diakrino* means "pass judgment" (NASB) or "weigh carefully" (NIV). In 12:10 it reads "distinguish." Here it probably means to evaluate carefully and, if need be, to reject if the ministry was not in harmony with Scripture. Here we seem to have an example of two of the different kinds of prophesying that took place in the early church conflicting with each other. What Paul seems to have envisioned was one person - men and women could prophesy in this sense (11:4-5) - sharing a word from the Lord. This type of prophesying was open to almost anyone in

the church. While this person was speaking, another prophet received a revelation from the Lord. This appears to be a more direct revelation than just the desire to address the congregation that had moved the first speaker to minister. In such a case the first speaker was to give preference to the person making the new revelation. Presumably (sic) the first speaker would finish what he was saying later.⁶

The Ministry of a Prophet:

Before the completion of the canon of Scripture, prophets were the inspired revealers of God's teaching to the churches. This edifying aspect to the gift is what Paul had in mind in 1 Corinthians 14:3ff where he places the gift of prophecy in a more prominent position than the gift of tongues. Prophecy had as its basic purpose the building up of believers by verbalized inspired messages from God concerning faith and practice. As such, the "prophets" of the early Church fulfilled a need which was later to be filled by the completed canon.

Post-Canon Distortions of the Gift:

Today, some claim that the gift of prophecy is a gift of the Holy Spirit which is operational today. I believe that those who claim that the "gift" of prophecy is an operative gift today use the "non-technical" passages which refer to "prophesying" to validate their position. We have not received any "direct" revelation from God since A.D. 96 even though the Holy Spirit illuminates the believer regarding the meaning and application of the canon of Scripture.

John Walvoord writes on page 178 in his book *The Holy Spirit* that even though prophets were men and women "...who could err in judgment and conduct, as illustrated in Peter's compromise with legalism, in their prophetic messages they must be kept from error. Accordingly, there is no reference in the New Testament to anyone teaching error who is designated a true prophet." If anyone claims to have the gift of prophecy today and claims that he has received direct revelation from God, then he is contradicting existing Scripture which explicitly states that prophesy shall cease per 1 Corinthians 13:8 – "Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away." As we have studied and as will be further developed in future sessions, it is my belief that the temporary spiritual gifts ceased by A.D. 70. The permanent spiritual gifts continue until the Rapture of the Body of Christ.

If the gift of prophecy was given by God to the Church for the purpose of establishing its foundation in sound doctrine, what legitimate purpose could the person who alleges to exercise the gift today expect to accomplish in view of the fact that the Church's foundation (the canon of Scripture) is complete?

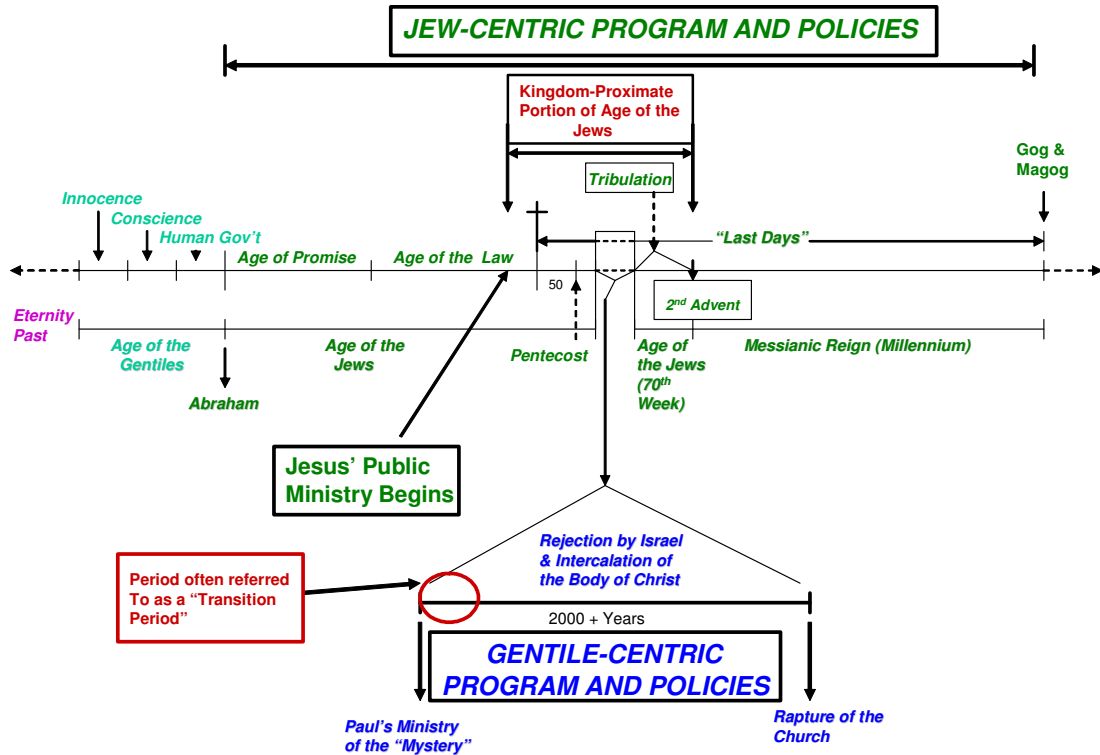
The Church faced its first major controversy over this issue in A.D. 150. A Christian convert named Montanus claimed that the supernatural gifts of apostle and prophet were renewed in him and his two prophetesses so that new revelations could be given through them which superseded the Scriptures. At his baptism, Montanus spoke in "tongues" and began "prophesying." Among their numerous prophecies were warnings that the second coming of Christ was at hand. They believed that their prophecies clarified the Scriptures and that Spirit-inspired prophets would continue to arise in the Christian community.

The whole movement appeared to be a response to a perception (real or imagined) that lax practices had begun to arise in the Church. For instance, they claimed that second marriages were wrong, thus indicating that perhaps divorce and second marriages were being abused. They secured their most famous convert when Tertullian (ca. A.D. 160-220) became a Montanist.

⁶ Thomas Constable, "Notes on 1 Corinthians," www.soniclight.com

This movement did not have a lasting impact upon the Church as is true of any movement rooted in Scriptural error.⁷

APPENDIX – DISPENSATIONAL DIAGRAM⁸



⁷ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House Company, 1983, 1984, 1985), 851.

⁸ This diagram is one of several that attempts to present a Biblically supported view of dispensations. It is virtually impossible to capture every nuance and point of discussion in a chart in regards to this subject; however, this chart presents the concepts explained in various sessions and notes. The chart is not the Truth – just merely a tool to illustrate the Truth, i.e. Scripture.