

"And He Gave Some To Be ..."

"... apostles; and some prophets, and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers ..." (Eph. 4:11).

In this verse and the two which follow, the apostle tells of gifts which Christ gave when he *"led captivity captive."* As verse twelve reveals, these gifts were for *"the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministry, unto the building up of the body of Christ."* Some of these gifts were temporary; others of them were designed to be permanent.

"He gave some ... apostles." Likely, the first thing which comes to mind when the word *"apostle"* appears is of the twelve whom Jesus chose and such is its significance here. The word *"apostle"* means *"one sent"* and is found in a broader sense than just the twelve in the Word. Jesus is the *"apostle and high priest of our confession"* (Heb. 3:1). Because Paul and Barnabas were sent out on a preaching tour by the church in Antioch of Syria, they were called *"apostles"* (Acts 14:14). The twelve were chosen by Christ and sent out to *"teach all nations"* (Mt. 28:13-20). Because to be an apostle required that one have companied *"with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the day that he was received up ..."* there are no apostles in that sense today, for there are none alive today who could so qualify (Acts 1:21f). These men were promised and received the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth, who also helped them to confirm, by signs and wonders, the message they preached.

"He gave some to be prophets." The word *"prophet"* means to *"bubble up, like a fountain"* and always includes the thought of inspiration. Prophets played a significant role in the history of Israel and Judah and had it not been for their efforts, it would have been extremely unlikely that the remnant of faithful would have survived. Old Testament prophets did point to the future, both of their nation and then of the coming Messiah, but they also sounded constant warnings to Israel not to depart from the old paths, being constant in their work by *"rising up early and late."* Prophets in the New Testament filled a subordinate role to the apostles and their work was eclipsed by the Apostles, yet did function and occasionally they appear, performing their tasks. Such a one was Agabus, who told of a great dearth which would come upon Judaeen churches, as well as to spell out, in a very graphic way, the imminent imprisonment of Paul (Acts 11:27f; 21:10f). Luke mentions *"prophets and teachers"* in Antioch and Paul spoke of prophets in the Corinthian church (Acts 13:1f; 1 Cor. 14).

Apostles and prophets were a part of the first century church but their work was temporary and ended during that century or shortly after the turn of that century, while the latter three "*gifts*;" evangelists, pastors and teachers might have been empowered in their work by spiritual gifts conferred by the apostles, need for their work continues to the present day. On the other hand, the continuing influence of the apostles and prophets continue through the ages through their works which survive them, for, like Abel, they "*being dead yet speaketh*" (Heb. 11:4). The rich man, who begged that Lazarus might go back and warn his brethren not to come to "*this awful place*" was told, "*they have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them*" (Lk. 16:29). We likewise have the apostles and prophets, and we ought to hear them. Peter wrote the things he did for that very purpose (2 Pet. 1:15).

On the other hand, the living church needs the benefit of the labors of evangelists, pastors and teachers. Who is there of God's people today who cannot say, "I have been benefited by the labors of evangelists, pastors and teachers?"

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