

# Ephesians Series

## Lesson #139

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# The Apostles and Prophets

## Ephesians 4:11



# EPHESIANS

THE WEALTH, WALK  
& WARFARE  
OF THE BELIEVER

**Eph. 4:11, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,**

**Eph. 4:12, “**for** the equipping of the saints **for** the work of ministry, **for** the edifying of the body of Christ,**

**Eph. 4:13, “until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;”**

**What the Bible Teaches  
About**

**the Church  
(Ecclesiology)**



# **Review**

## **1. The use of the term “church” in the New Testament:**

- the universal (or invisible) Church which includes all Church Age believers alive or with the Lord.**
- The singular “church” in the Greek refers to a group of churches in a city, a region, or in several regions.**
- The singular church also refers to a local assembly of believers, a local expression of the body of Christ.**

## **When Did the Church Begin?**

**Matt. 16:18, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”**

**Acts 5:11, “So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.”**

# **When is the Sign of the Church?**

## **1. The Baptism by the Holy Spirit, unique to the Church Age**

**It was future for John the Baptist, Matt. 3:11, and for Jesus just before He ascended.**

**Acts 1:5, “for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”**

# When is the Sign of the Church?

## 2. The Holy Spirit Descended in Acts 2

**Acts 2:2, “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.**

**Acts 2:3, “Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.**

**Acts 2:4, “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”**

# **Do not confuse the Church with the Kingdom**

- a. The universal rule of God over all of His creation**
- b. The theocratic rule of God over Israel**
- c. The future reign of Messiah from the throne of David in Jerusalem. This is an earthly, geo-political kingdom that is yet future. Its initial stage is 1,000 years, Rev. 20:1–8**

**The Church is not spiritual Israel. God's plan for the Church is distinct and separate from His plan for Israel.**

**Dan. 7:26, “ ‘But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever.**

**Dan. 7:27, “ ‘Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.’ ”**

**Thus we must understand who we are as Church Age believers in distinction from Israel.**

**We are not in the Kingdom now. We are the Church the Body of Christ and Christ is the head of the church and He gives gifts to the Church to edify and mature believers in this dispensation.**

**Eph. 4:11, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles,  
some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors  
and teachers,**

**Eph. 4:12, “for the equipping of the saints for the work  
of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,”**

# What the Bible Teaches About Apostles



**“A number of currents of thought in contemporary church life invite fresh attention to the precise nature and purpose of the New Testament apostolate. Some Roman Catholics and ‘charismatics’ are presenting new ideas about revelation. In this age of lawlessness, persons in many denominations and sects are raising questions about ecclesiastical authority. Others have misconceptions about ‘the signs of an apostle.’ In addition, there is the growing habit of referring to certain foreign missionaries or strong religious leaders as apostles—apparently intended literally rather than metaphorically.”**

**~Robert Duncan Culver, “The Apostles and the Apostolate,” *Bib Sac* 1977**

**1. The noun ἀπόστολος (*apostolos*) is used 80× in the Greek New Testament. 34× by Luke, 34× by Paul, 3× by Peter, once each in Matthew, Mark, John, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and Jude, twice in 2 Peter and 3× in Revelation.**

**2. The word *apostolos* is a Greek word that was used originally in classical Greek for a high-ranking admiral or general officer who was chosen to command either a naval fleet or an army.**

**In classical usage the word “never became a term for a personal emissary or representative.” This is one of many examples of words taken over and used with a different sense in the New Testament.**

**However, the Hebrew word, שלח *shalach* has the meaning of sending an authorized messenger in several contexts (2 Chron. 17:7) but a form of the word, שליח, *shaliach* does develop into a legal term in Rabbinical literature in the sense that “the one sent by a man is as the man himself” (Talmud, Berakoth, 5) (also see 1 Sam. 25:40–41).**

**Matt. 10:40, “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”**

**Within Judaism, the word was often used for official representatives of various groups, communities, and official bodies of Judaism in the early Christian centuries. Paul was functioning in this *shaliach* role when he was sent by the Sanhedrin to Damascus. Later in the Aramaic translation of the New Testament it uses *shaliach* to translate *apostolos*.**

# Summary

**The root meaning of the word *apostolos* within intertestamental Judaism took on a technical meaning for the one who is commissioned with a task. The individual was commissioned to perform a task and given the authority and responsibility to carry out that task. That means that the word inherently connotes command and leadership responsibilities.**

**3. Jesus appointed His disciples, known as “the Twelve,” to be designated as apostles.**

**Luke 6:13, “And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles:”**

**John 15:16, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”**

**An apostle is one who was commissioned by Christ Himself to the task of establishing the church in the Church Age. That is the technical use.**

**4. There is one group designated as the twelve apostles, these are the ones who were called and commissioned directly by the Lord Jesus Christ to go to make disciples and to proclaim the gospel, to establish churches, and to provide for revelation.**

**Rev. 21:14, “Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations [Θεμέλιος, *themelios*], and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”**

**5. An apostle must have been an eyewitness of the words and works of Jesus Christ.**

**Acts 1:21, “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,**

**Acts 1:22, “beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”**

**6. These are the Twelve who are the foundation of the church.**

**Eph. 2:20, “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,”**

**Θεμέλιος, *themelios***

**BDAG “② the basis for something taking place or coming into being, foundation, figuratively ① of the indispensable prerequisites for something to come into being:”**

**7. Others who were identified as apostles, but did not have the office. These are distinguished because they were not commissioned by Christ, but were commissioned by one of the Twelve or by a congregation.**

**Acts 14:14, “But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out ...”**

**General sense, Barnabas and Paul were sent out by the church in Antioch.**

**1 Cor. 9:5, “Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?”**

**1 Cor. 9:6, “Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?”**

**Both senses**

**1 Cor. 15:5, “and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.”**

**1 Cor. 15:6, “After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.”**

**1 Cor. 15:7, “After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.” [general sense]**

## **8. The apostles performed miracles as their credentials.**

**2 Cor. 12:12, “Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.”**

## **9. Three things indicate apostleship was temporary.**

- The office was limited to those who witnessed the resurrected Christ and were called and directly commissioned by Him.**
- Apostles and prophets were the foundation of the church.**
- The use of *apostle* to designate someone who was sent by a congregation does not mean they had the spiritual gift, they certainly did not have the office.**

# What the Bible Teaches About Prophets



**1. New Testament prophets are founded on the meaning of the Old Testament prophets.**

**2. Like apostles, New Testament prophets were given foundational gifts which were temporary and limited to the first century.**

### **3. Prophets are listed with other gifts.**

**1 Cor. 12:28, “And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.”**

**Rom. 12:6, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;”**

**4. New Testament prophets were to be evaluated. This would be grounded on the Old Testament tests of**

- consistency with all other authoritative revelation (Deut. 13)**
- predictions must come true with 100% accuracy (Deut. 18)**

**Deut. 18:20, “ ‘But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.’**

**Deut. 18:21, “And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’—**

**Deut. 18:22, “when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.”**

**Deut. 13:1** “If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder,

**Deut. 13:2**, “and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’—which you have not known—‘and let us serve them,’

**Deut. 13:3**, “you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

**Deut. 13:4, “You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.**

**Deut. 13:5, “But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.”**

**5. The emphasis on New Testament prophets was the giving of divine revelation. Biblical authors such as Luke, James, and Jude would have had the New Testament gift of prophecy.**

**6. The purpose of these foundational gifts was to provide spiritual direction in the early years of the Church, through verbal and written revelation.**