

Truth and Spirit Ministries

Apostles and Prophets

At my Church they teach that the ministries of the Apostle and Prophet no longer exist today. Is this true?

There are quite a few denominations that teach that these two ministry gifts no longer exist and are not necessary for the Body of Christ today. However this goes contrary to what is written in the word of God and also to what the Living Word of God (Christ) has ordained for the Church. The ministry offices of the apostle and prophet were set into the Church by the Lord himself, along with the evangelist, pastor and teacher. The scripture reads, **“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers...” (Ephesians 4:11)** We must understand that the Lord *always* speaks and acts with divine purposes in mind. He evidently deemed it necessary to give his Church these ministry gifts for specific reasons. As the Head of the Church, he had authority given to him to place these gifts within his body at the inception of the Church and no man has ever been given the authority by God to remove them.

The New Testament scriptures explain the necessity of these five ministry gifts and how they benefit the whole Church. They were given **“To prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:12-13)** This passage of scripture teaches us that all of these ministries are necessary to equip the saints to do works of service for Christ and also to bring them into spiritual maturity. Since all five ministries have been listed together, this also teaches us that they’ve been commissioned by Christ to work together as an anointed leadership team to accomplish his divine purposes. *Nowhere* in the New Testament scriptures does it say that Christ did away with any one of these ministries in the Church under this age of New Testament grace.

Those that teach that apostles and prophets are no longer necessary for the body of Christ today do so in ignorance. Most often they have received the traditions of men that have been handed down to them. In doing so, they have now become blinded to the fact that these traditions actually go contrary to the teachings of Christ. In this fact or fiction I will address three major false teachings that have caused many to reject the offices of the apostle and prophet today. When we learn the truth about these two ministries through the teachings of Christ however, we will wholeheartedly accept what he has divinely ordained for his Church.

False Teaching # 1

In I Corinthians 13:8-10 in the KJV it says, ***“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*”**

1. Today there are certain denominations that believe that the phrase “when that which is perfect is come” is referring to Jesus. As a result of this interpretation many saints have also been taught that the gifts of the Spirit and also the ministries of the apostle and prophet have been done away with by Christ at his first coming and are no longer necessary for the Church.

This is a faulty interpretation however. The phrase “but when that which is perfect is come” is not referring to the perfection of the Lord though *but rather to the perfection of the Church*. The Bible teaches us that after the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord that he gave spiritual *and* ministry gifts unto men so that the saints would be equipped to minister and to help bring the entire Church into the maturity or perfection of Christ. **(Mark 16:15-20; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 4:11; I Corinthians 12:6)** Also, these ministry gifts of Christ and gifts of the Spirit were not given until *after* Jesus was raised from the dead and for the express purpose of helping the *New Testament Church* under this entire age of grace. All of these God-given gifts will be needed then until the Lord returns at the Second Advent.

God’s Church is still being built and is not yet a completed temple and we have not yet attained unity in the faith as attested to by the many denominational divisions and belief differences today. The Lord Jesus said, **“I will build my Church...”** The Lord is still building His Church and it will not be perfected or made complete until He returns again a second time. Also, those in the faith who have gone on before us will not receive their complete perfection before we do, only together with us will they be made perfect when we are changed from mortal to immortality at the Lord’s return. **(Hebrews 11:39-40; I Thessalonians 4:13-17)**

We, in the Body of Christ, need to embrace the totality of everything that God has given us to help us mature to become like Christ our Lord. Do we really believe that we do not have any need for those things today that were absolutely necessary for the Church in the beginning? We must remember that the Lord has said, **“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit.” (Zechariah 4:6)** We can do nothing apart from the Lord and His Spirit. He has given us spiritual and ministry gifts to accomplish His purposes and we should receive all that the Lord has ordained for us. It is only by the power of the Spirit that we can accomplish the Great Commission. Receiving all five of the ministry gifts of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher will help us to attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. When we allow Christ and his Spirit to live through us we can then be the powerful and effective witnesses for him in the earth that he desires us to be. **(Acts 1:8, I Corinthians 12:1-11, Ephesians 4:11-13)**

False Teaching #2

Some also hold the belief that the Church no longer needs the divine revelation that Christ gives through apostles and prophets because we now have the Bible. They say that everything that God *will ever say to us* is contained within its pages therefore he no longer has to speak to us through his apostles and prophets.

Although we do receive the Bible as the infallible word of God, God still anoints the ministries of the apostle and prophet today in order to impart revelation knowledge and understanding to us through the Spirit concerning the depths of the Gospel of Christ. We must remember that revelation knowledge is not extra-biblical knowledge but is a revealing or *uncovering* of that which is already contained and hidden in the word of God. Even though these truths have been written down for our benefit, they are only *ink on paper* until understanding is imparted to us by the living Spirit of God. He can reveal understanding to us personally or through those that he has chosen and anointed to preach and teach his word. **(I John 2:27; Ephesians 3:1-5; I Corinthians 14:29-32)** Whatever fresh revelation is imparted however, will not ever go contrary to the Gospel that the Lord Jesus Christ has already given us through his sacred word. Instead it will line up perfectly. **(Galatians 1:6-9; 2:14)**

It's important to understand that the first-century apostles and prophets did not have a complete and perfect knowledge and neither do we in the Church today. That's why we are taught in God's word to progressively grow in grace and knowledge. **(II Peter 3:18)** Paul himself wrote under divine inspiration that each of us would not have complete or perfect knowledge until we meet Christ face to face. Now, it is like we are looking through a dark glass. When we behold him at his return however, there will be nothing that will prevent us from seeing *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that is hidden within him. **(I Corinthians 13:8-12, Colossians 2:1-3)** The Church then, is still under construction. He is not only the author but the perfecter or finisher of our faith. **(Hebrews 12:2)**

It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to us the deep things of God and gives us understanding of his Word so that we can mature in Christ. **(I Corinthians 2:9-16)** God can speak to us as believers in two major ways. He speaks to us through his written word (the Bible) which is defined as the *logos* of God and he also speaks to us as the Living Word (Christ) which is defined as the *rhema* or *spoken* word of God. The Lord has been raised from the dead, is alive and is the Eternal One. He is the Head of his Church and still speaks to us personally today *by his Spirit* as well as through his written word. **(Revelation 1:8,18, 2:11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13,22, Hebrews 3:7-8, 4:7)**

He can also speak to us through the five-fold ministries that he has called and anointed in our generation. He speaks as they preach and teach the Church his written word (*logos*). Apostles and prophets can also speak to us under the divine inspiration of the Spirit of Christ. (*rhema*). Just as he has not stopped *speaking and acting* through his evangelists, pastors and teachers, he has also not stopped *speaking and acting* through his apostles and prophets. Although we thank God for what he did through the apostles and prophets of the first century, they are no longer working among us. People die but ministerial offices do not. These ministry gifts are to keep functioning until the Church reaches perfection at the coming of the Lord.

So how does God work through his apostles and prophets today? According to the scriptures, the Lord gives direct revelation to apostles and prophets to spiritually benefit and help build up the Church. **(Ephesians 3:2-5, I Corinthians 14:29-32)** The Church is still growing in grace and knowledge and must continue to grow until his return. In order for these gifts to be done away with (or not needed anymore), the Body of Christ would have had to already attain to the whole measure (complete perfection) of the fullness of Christ *and we know that this has not yet happened*. As long as we are in the flesh we will not attain this perfection. This teaches us that we will need the gifts as long as we are in these mortal bodies and until the Lord returns. **(I Corinthians 15: 50-58)** According to the Apostle Paul it is only when *the Church* reaches perfection that the gifts of the Spirit shall be done away with. **(I Corinthians 13:8-10)** After we reach perfection they will no longer be needed. Until the Church reaches perfection or maturity and grows up to the stature and fullness of Christ, we will need all the ministry gifts to help prepare us to be ready for the return of our Lord.

False Teaching #3

Lastly, some erroneously teach that Christ only used apostles and prophets in the first century to lay the foundation of the Church. They believe that this work was completed at its inception; therefore these two ministries are no longer needed today.

Although the apostles and prophets were placed into the Body to lay a proper foundation of Christ within the Church, as we study the Word of God, we will find that this work was not an exclusive work for the apostles and prophets of the first century but is a commission given to apostles and prophets throughout the entire Church age. Why does this work need to continue? As long as new converts or *Churches* are being established (and they are even today) we will need these two ministries to lay the foundational truths of Christ in the lives of babes in Christ. They will still need apostles and prophets to teach them these vital spiritual truths and impart understanding to them so they can continue on into maturity in Christ.

When new converts come to Christ, they become part of God's people and members of the household of faith and so need to begin getting rooted and grounded in that faith by first learning the foundational truths of Christ. The scriptures declare: **"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."** (Ephesians 2:19-22)

The "you too" in this scripture includes you and I today that are in God's household. Are we any less the Body of Christ than those who existed in the infancy of the Church? Of course not! Just as our brethren in the infancy of the Church needed these ministerial gifts for being built up, we also need them today to teach us foundational truths contained in God's word, to equip us to serve God and help us to move on to maturity in Christ. **(Hebrews 6:1-3; Ephesians 4:11-13)** We also need them to help us become fully prepared for our Lord's

coming. Apostles and prophets will also bring us much needed correction that will help us to be become spiritually pure before the Lord returns. **(II Corinthians 13:1-10)**

We need to believe God rather than men and receive what He has ordained. If someone is teaching something that is contrary to the Gospel of Christ as given in the Holy Scriptures, we need to reject their teaching. It's important when we're listening to others or reading their material that we **"Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good."** **(I Thessalonians 5:21)** If we receive teaching without proving whether it is of God or not, we can get cheated and this in turn will hinder us from receiving the spiritual blessings and maturity that God intends for us have. If we prove that something is from him through the word of God and receive it though, we will be greatly blessed, grow up to become like Christ and be ready to meet him at his return. – *answer by Denise Bostic*