

ARE LIVING APOSTLES AND PROPHETS NEEDED TODAY?

A specific incident from Israel's past, namely the imposition of divine judgment during the days of king Uzziah, concerning which the Lord said He would do nothing before revealing His plan to His prophets (Amos 1-3, especially 3:7), has convinced some that these special servants are still needed. However, Paul states that Scripture, not living authorities, is our all-sufficient guide. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16,17). We also read, ". . .Ye need not that any man teach you. . ." (1 John 2:27).

To communicate His Word to mankind, God ". . .gave some, apostles; some, prophets. . ." (Ephesians 4:11), that is, at some points in history. God now uses other means, which will result in the fulfillment of His ultimate purposes (Ephesians 4:11-13). The supreme act of God's revelation was the earthly ministry of His Son 2000 years ago. Christ fully declared God to men (John 1:18), including the promise that all truth would be revealed during the lifetimes of the original apostles (John 16:13). Therefore, the writer of Hebrews concludes, the ministry of prophets is past (Hebrews 1:1,2).

Since the primary work of the New Testament apostle was revelation (1 Corinthians 2:12,13; Ephesians 3:5), the completion of that revelation signaled the end of their office. 1 Corinthians 13:8 predicted the cessation of continuous revelation, there called special "knowledge." This explains why Revelation 21:14, a verse set in the context of the end of time, recognizes the existence of only 12 authentic apostles in all of world history. Where the term is used of others, it simply describes those who were in a general sense "sent ones," the broad definition of the word.

The church is ". . .built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. . ." (Ephesians 2:20). But what or who was their foundation? The answer is supplied by none other than an apostle named Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:11. ". . .Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." With the apostles and prophets let us, too, acknowledge and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our only Foundation and object of faith, as our only means of eternal life.

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life. . ." (1 John 5:11-13).

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