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# THE SHIFTING PARADIGM

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TRANSITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF MINISTRY ROLES  
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

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In mid-1997, the Moscow congregation formally recognized “regional shepherds” (both men and women) as an unpaid complementary ministry role to the fulltime regional leadership staff (i.e., evangelists, women’s ministry leaders, and interns). This partnership between non-fulltime and fulltime ministers helped the congregation to mature, improved the pastoral care within the regions, and also demonstrated the value of vesting additional ministry roles with responsibility and influence—not to mention freeing up the evangelists to lead the evangelistic charge. A year later, the outline of this book began to take form as I was further reflecting and praying about the needs of the Russian-speaking ICOC congregations and what steps might be taken to meet those needs. In response to my study of scripture, in November 1998 I announced to the local ministry staff that after the completion of the training and appointing of one more evangelist with whom I was already involved, I would then devote my full attention to the further development of the regional shepherds program, training of teachers, and the appointment of elders, and leave the further training and raising up of evangelists to those that had already been trained and recognized. Unfortunately, this next phase of ministry training and development was never actualized because my wife and I were asked to move to Los Angeles in early 1999 and help coordinate the worldwide programs of administration and teaching. Although our agreement to leave the foreign mission field was contingent on the other mentors connected to the Russian-speaking work continuing the development and implementation of this training program for future teachers and elders, other challenges and issues within that leadership group prevented this from happening.

After arriving in Los Angeles, I became acutely aware that much of the ICOC leadership believed that the worldwide network of evangelists and associated women’s ministry leaders was sufficient as the final iteration of leadership development throughout our churches. Therefore, after completing a book on “communion” that I promised the Russian churches to write, I compiled my research about leadership roles into this book, and then printed and distributed it to all the participants of the 2002 ICOC Unity Meeting (November 2002, Long Beach, CA). My hope was that this study could serve as a foundational resource for biblical reflection and constructive discussion regarding the needed changes to the ICOC leadership paradigm. Instead, the meeting was marked by confusion and anxiety surrounding the dissolution of the role of “movement leader” and the voluntary disbanding of the ICOC Ecclesial Council (aka the World Sector Leaders Group). These changes exposed the dysfunction and communication difficulties within many regional leadership groups and regrettably no time was found during the meeting for meaningful analysis, reflection, and vision casting. The meeting adjourned with the decision to reconvene in six months (i.e., May 2003) for further discussion about organizational changes and global cooperation. Historically, this follow-up meeting never took place due to the firestorm that swept through much of the ICOC in early 2003.

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# THE SHIFTING PARADIGM

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## TRANSITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF MINISTRY ROLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

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### INTRODUCTION

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The purpose of this study is to examine the New Testament paradigm for ministry roles and their relationship to church building and world evangelism. The difficulties inherent in this type of discussion are well demonstrated by the diversity and division found in the modern “Christian” world. Both individuals and whole denominations have locked themselves into patterns and practices based on “snap shots” or even collages of New Testament information without clearly recognizing the underlying forces, principles and circumstances connecting those details. Also, the relatively short period (about forty years) of early church history recorded in the New Testament can easily be compressed from our “two-thousand-year-later” point of view, contributing to both distortion and misunderstanding of how the church grew and developed.

The significance of proper analysis is clearly demonstrated when we consider the completely different results and directions that have been produced by certain groups attempting to restore a new level of fundamentalism based on their own theological perspective. Movements like *Pentecostalism* focus on the supernatural events of Acts 2 as the standard for all Christian experience, and strongly argue that every church should resemble the church in Jerusalem at the time of its inception. Other movements like *Presbyterianism* were reactionary against powerful centralized hierarchies and emphasized autonomy and representative regional church government (as interpreted from the Pastoral Epistles). Although these two movements are based on definitive biblical patterns that can be identified and validated, they have also given birth to radically different views of worship, organization, and spirituality. The New Testament not only supplies us with facts and descriptions of how the church spread and grew in many different scenarios of culture, experience, and expectations, but also explains the spirit and power behind the original missionary impulse that began in the ministry and life of Jesus Christ and continued in the ministries and lives of his disciples. Essential to the analysis found in this study is the idea that the New Testament narrative is one of development, change and even adaptation as the *promised Holy Spirit guided the apostles of Jesus into all truth* (John 16:13).

## 1 – A CHURCH IN TRANSITION

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The church of the New Testament period was a church in *transition*. From the launching point in Acts 2 where eyewitnesses of the ministry of Jesus were gathered in Jerusalem and received power from on high, to decades later on foreign soil where assemblies of converted disciples met regularly together to worship God, the church went through some incredible changes. Some of the most significant transitions detailed in the New Testament narrative are as follows:

- 1) The transition of the church's membership from being completely Jewish to being significantly Gentile (non-Jewish), and the transition of public worship within the framework of established Jewish forms and customs (both temple and synagogue) to the church's own norms and practices.
- 2) The transition of the training and appointment of leaders being done by Jesus personally, together with miraculous confirmation from God through signs and wonders (Mark 16:20, Hebrews 2:3,4), to second generation leaders being trained and appointed by the preceding generation with accreditation of leadership being a matter of personal faith and the outcome of the minister's way of life (1 Timothy 3:1ff, Hebrews 13:7).
- 3) The transition of *new prophecy and revelation* being received by select individuals (spread by word-of-mouth and of limited accessibility), to *prophecy and revelation* being recorded (written down), collected, copied and circulated among the churches.

These changes were often gradual, and were also produced naturally as the result of two other fundamental conditions: (1) the original apostles (and other eyewitnesses to the ministry of Jesus) were aging and passing on to their heavenly reward, and (2) the changing landscape of the mission field as the great commission was slowly being fulfilled, beginning with Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and then on to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, Colossians 1:6,23).

Some of these trends and developments were so radical and substantial that fixation on any point in the process before its completion could result in a very wrong expectation and stunted development of the church in modern times. The first recorded "divisive" element in the church was the Judaizers (*members of the circumcision group* – Galatians 2:12) who strongly resisted an open door to the church being offered to the Gentiles without simultaneous conversion to Judaism.<sup>1</sup> The Judaizers wholeheartedly accepted the first snapshot of the church given on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and fully accepted Peter's message about repentance and baptism, but they also read into that same picture the condition that all converts to Christianity needed to follow the Law of Moses as well. When we consider that Peter and other apostles also held to this same belief for several years until the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10), it is easy to understand how this concept became firmly established in the original Christian community. Since God's plan (as revealed to Paul) was that the gospel was to be preached to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles (Romans 1:16), this popular misconception (i.e., that Christianity was simply a new Jewish sect) promoted a level of openness among the scattered Jews throughout the Empire. If the breaking down of the Jew-Gentile barrier had been fully understood and explicitly preached on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, it is doubtful that the same level of openness in the Jewish communities would have been encountered by the apostles as they took the message out to the ends of the earth. By the time of Paul's second and third missionary journey (the mid-50's A.D.), this openness was waning and the open gospel invitation to the Gentiles had truly become a stumbling stone for many of the unconverted followers of Judaism. A short time later, historical events like the

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<sup>1</sup> The issue of "the Grecian widows in Jerusalem being overlooked" (Acts 6:1ff) was a much smaller issue and more local in nature.

destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. clearly confirmed God's purposes and irrevocably sealed the changeover of God's covenantal relationship with his chosen people (Hebrews 8:13) – *physical* Israel was replaced by *spiritual* Israel (Romans 9:6-8). God was working through historical events to not only open doors of opportunity for his church but also to close doors of possibility: "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people – the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever" (Daniel 2:44; 7:18).

## THE GUIDANCE OF GOD

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As one reads through the Acts narrative it becomes clear that although the apostles had been given insight into the Scriptures concerning Jesus (Luke 24:27), had received amazing *spiritual gifts* (Acts 1:8; 2:4; 8:18) and even received an advance outline of God's plan for world evangelism ("Jerusalem, then Judea and Samaria, and on to the ends of the earth" – Acts 1:8), many of the practical details of how to spread the gospel and build the church were only revealed to them along the way. Sometimes God simply used the practical challenges and circumstances to move the apostles to prayer and thoughtful consideration in their decision-making. Examples of such situations are:

- The physical needs of the church resulted in the sharing of possessions (Acts 2).
- The specific needs of the Grecian-Jewish widows and time limitations of the apostles resulted in the appointment of additional *ministers* (Acts 6).
- The martyrdom of Stephen resulted in the scattering of disciples and the consequent evangelization of Samaria, Antioch and beyond (Acts 8).
- The evangelization and receptivity of Greeks to the gospel in Antioch resulted in the conversion of Greeks and the name "Christian" (Acts 11).
- Judaizers and the question of circumcision resulted in the convening of the Jerusalem council and the formulation of an authoritative epistle to the new Gentile converts (Acts 15).
- The riot in Ephesus (Acts 19) resulted in Paul concluding his ministry there and traveling into Macedonia, etc.

As the first-generation disciples became aware of both needs and difficulties, the Spirit moved in their hearts and minds to solve problems and make decisions.

Guidance was also given through the direct revelation and wisdom from the Holy Spirit, insight into the meaning of the already established Scriptures (i.e., Old Testament) and sometimes even through the personal intervention of Jesus Christ. Examples of such instances are:

- Insight into the fulfillment of Scriptures concerning the betrayal of Judas and the need for his subsequent replacement (Acts 1).
- The conversion of Paul (Acts 9).
- Peter's acceptance of the Gentiles beginning with a vision of the angel of God (Acts 10).
- The Holy Spirit setting Barnabas and Saul apart for their first missionary journey (Acts 13).
- The specific direction given to Paul through a vision not to enter Asia but to proceed instead to Macedonia (Acts 16).
- Paul's extended stay in Corinth was the result of a vision (Acts 18), etc.

Throughout the Acts narrative God directed the path of the apostles through visions, dreams, and revelations. These specific instructions and directives worked powerfully to help the gospel bear fruit and grow all over the world.

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS

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This phenomenon of progressive insight into the details of God’s plan for the growth and spread of the church is important as we seek to understand the New Testament paradigm of leadership roles since the chronological position of the various New Testament writings also affects their reporting and point of view on different stages of the church’s development. For example in the area of *revelation*, Paul’s early letters often spoke about prophecy in its oral form and the appropriateness of desiring such gifts (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 14:1-5), but his final letters more strongly emphasized the importance of studying the Scriptures (including the newly established teaching of the Christ’s apostles and prophets – Romans 16:26; 1 Timothy 5:18) and the devotion to correctly using them (Ephesians 3:1-6; 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:14-17). Peter also verified this trend by equating Paul’s letters with Old Testament Scripture at the end of his second letter:

Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:15-16)

There was obviously a great difference in circumstance between the situation of being dependent on the oral teaching of the apostles and prophets (i.e., requiring their physical presence), and the possession of accredited copies of their teaching (i.e., enabling whole groups of people to be presented with the truth without ever meeting an apostle or prophet personally). Any disciple so equipped with the word of God became an authoritative bearer of the life-giving gospel.

For the purposes of this study, a conservative and generally accepted chronology<sup>2</sup> has been used:

| <b>Letter</b>   | <b>Approx. Date of Writing</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| James           | 48–49                          |
| 1 Thessalonians | 52                             |
| 2 Thessalonians | 53                             |
| 1 Corinthians   | 55                             |
| Titus*          | 55                             |
| 1 Timothy*      | 56                             |
| 2 Corinthians   | 56                             |
| Romans          | 57                             |
| Galatians       | 58                             |
| Philemon        | 61–62                          |
| Ephesians       | 61–62                          |
| Colossians      | 61–62                          |
| Acts            | 62                             |
| Philippians     | 62                             |
| 1 Peter         | 64                             |

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<sup>2</sup> Unger, Merrill F., *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, (Chicago, IL: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago) 1998, c1988.



| Letter:     | Approx. Date: |
|-------------|---------------|
| (Titus)     | (64–66)       |
| (1 Timothy) | (64–66)       |
| 2 Timothy   | 64 or 67      |
| Hebrews     | 63–64         |
| 2 Peter     | 66–67         |
| Jude        | 66–67         |

The only information in this chronology that I feel obliged to contest (and thereby amend) is the placement of *Titus* and *1 Timothy*. Traditionally, the “pastoral” content of these letters has influenced scholars to date them after Paul’s first Roman imprisonment, but such a conclusion produces an insurmountable objection to those that simply believe in the accuracy of the New Testament chronological reporting. In Acts 20:25 Paul tells the Ephesian elders that they would never see his face again – confirmed again as fact by their response in v.38.<sup>3</sup> Since the context of the writing of *1 Timothy* described Paul as having just left Timothy behind in Ephesus on his way into Macedonia (*1 Timothy* 1:3) with the intent to return to Ephesus in the near future (*1 Timothy* 4:13), this letter could never have been written after Acts 20 – much less after Acts 28. Also, the common theological assumption that “elderships” were not yet fully developed before the end of the Acts narrative is clearly contradicted by the whole scenario presented in Acts 20:17ff where Paul calls together the elders (i.e., leaders) of the Ephesian church for one final word of encouragement and direction.<sup>4</sup> The very existence of this well-established eldership supports the idea that *1 Timothy* was written earlier than this final parting and was most likely even part of the directives that helped build that leadership group in the first place. It seems only reasonable to assume that Paul wrote *1 Timothy* near the beginning of his “unrecorded” second trip to Corinth, which probably occurred sometime during the period of his very effective ministry in the lecture hall of Tyrannus in the city of Ephesus (Acts 19:10; cf., *1 Corinthians* 16:9).<sup>5</sup>

## THE JERUSALEM MODEL

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The congregation about which we have the most narrative information in the New Testament is the church in Jerusalem – almost half of the book of Acts took place in or around that city. A survey of the “identified” leadership roles of the Jerusalem church throughout the book of Acts gives us the following overview:

Acts 2:42 – the *twelve apostles* were leading, and the church was devoted to their teaching.

Acts 4:34-35 – there were no needy persons among them for from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales, and put it at the *apostles’* feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

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<sup>3</sup> Remember also that Luke most likely finished the book of “Acts” two years into Paul’s first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:31) and therefore had a clear historical perspective on the events and meaning of Acts 20:17-38.

<sup>4</sup> Not to mention the additional testimony in the Acts narrative of elders being present in Jerusalem (Acts 11:30), and in Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch (Acts 14:23).

<sup>5</sup> For a fuller treatment of this possibility, consider *Appendix 1* at the conclusion of this paper.

Acts 5:42 – day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, the *apostles* never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

Acts 6:1-7 – the *Twelve* gathered all the disciples together and laid their hands on *seven men* that the church had chosen and appointed them to wait on tables.

Acts 11:27-30 – after a *prophet* from the Jerusalem church came to Antioch, the church there decided to send a gift to help the brothers in Judea during the reign of Claudius, and this was delivered to the *elders* (first mention) by Paul and Barnabas personally.

Acts 15:1-21 – the church in Antioch which was led by a group of prophets and teachers (Acts 13), sent Paul and Barnabas along with some other believers to Jerusalem to see both the *apostles* (possibly referring to Peter and John only) and *elders* concerning the issue of mandatory circumcision of the Gentile converts.

Acts 15:22-35 – with the issue resolved, the *apostles* and *elders*, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men to send back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas and Silas who were *prophets* and *leaders* among the brothers.

Acts 21:18 – when Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he reported to *James and all the elders*.

The development of the leadership in the Jerusalem church seems to have been a most natural one. Jesus began the church by using certain individuals that he had personally selected, trained and empowered. These men were in turn used to train, equip, and appoint others. Although the church was solely led by the apostles in the beginning (Acts 2:42), by Acts 21 all the apostles had apparently left Jerusalem, leaving James and the elders firmly in place to lead the congregation.

## DEVELOPMENT OF ROLES

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The development of ministry roles in the early church was also illustrated by the way Paul described his initial work in Corinth, and compared it to the subsequent ministry of Apollos (and others) – “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow,” and “by the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it” (1 Corinthians 3:6, 10). Paul saw his role as the one who planted churches and laid the foundation; others would water the planting and continue the building of the church. This process of maturation did not always move towards completion in every place at the same speed. By the time of Peter’s and Paul’s deaths in the mid-60’s A.D., the foundation for the church had not only been universally laid, doctrinally speaking, but in some places was already supporting mature and stable congregations of significant size (i.e., Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome). As the needs of the church became more clearly understood, it is only logical that the roles of leadership also developed to meet those needs accordingly.

## 2 – WHOEVER WOULD BE FIRST

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Although the purpose of Jesus coming into the world was to call all people everywhere to repentance, it soon became clear that he would also call certain individuals to special roles of *service* (i.e., *ministries*) in order to fulfill that primary objective. At some point quite early in his own ministry, Jesus selected *twelve* men from among the group of disciples following him “designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (Mark 3:14-15). From this point forward the ministry of Jesus took on two distinct levels: one was the proclamation of the good news for the general population and the other was the training of the apostles for their special role of service. These men were to become eyewitnesses of Jesus’ miracles, resurrection, and the relationship of love that he had with the Father. To them he would give the charge to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19).

### “TRUE GREATNESS” ACCORDING TO JESUS

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One of the greatest restorations of Biblical understanding in recent times has been the simple teaching of what it means to be a follower of Jesus and the call to discipleship. Consider the following study questions found in most versions of the ICOC “First Principles” lesson series on “Discipleship”:

Read Matthew 28:18-20 – “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’”

- A. *What does Jesus want everybody to become?*
- B. *Which is the more popular term— “disciple” or “Christian”?*
- C. *The word “Christian” only appears three times in the New Testament. It was the name that those in the world gave the disciples (Acts 11:19-26) about seven years after the beginning of the church.*
- D. *The word “disciple” occurs over 270 times in the New Testament. Jesus defines his usage of the term disciple through his personal ministry and example.*
- E. *Jesus came to make disciples. Only disciples will be saved.*<sup>6</sup>

The modern-day problem with the word “Christian” cannot be blamed on its original context. At first it served well enough to differentiate the disciples of Christ from the world, but now after centuries of enculturation and traditional usage the word has been weakened in its meaning and distinctiveness. Only the study of Scripture can bring us to unity on what kind of people Jesus truly intended for his followers to be and how the word “Christian” should be properly defined.

For the clarity of this study, there is another word that needs to be re-examined and at some levels even restored and re-established: i.e., *minister* or *servant* [Gr., *diakonos*]. Consider the following in parallel argument to the preceding teaching point:

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<sup>6</sup> *Revision comment #1 for this edition:* This final statement has proven to be over-simplified and one possible improvement might be: “Only faithful disciples in covenantal relationship with God can stand fully assured of their salvation.” How God chooses to judge the “faithfulness” of those not having full covenantal understanding (i.e., the degree of divine clemency), is not fully explained to us in Scripture (cf., Romans 2:11-16).

Read Mark 10:42-45 – “Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’”

- A. *How does Jesus define “true greatness”?*
- B. *Which is the more popular term— “servant” or “leader”?*
- C. *The word “leader” (lit., “one who rules” [Gr., hēgeomai]) only appears five times in the New Testament in reference to those serving within the church. The only time Jesus is recorded using the word is in Luke 22:26 where he states that “the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.”*
- D. *The word “servant” (with its associated forms of “service” and “to serve”) occurs 60 times in the New Testament in reference to those within the church. Jesus defines the usage of the term “servant” through his personal ministry and example.*
- E. *True greatness can only come from becoming a servant. Leaders in the church must be servants.*

Although the word “Christian” lost its offensiveness over a few centuries and is now even used as an adjective to describe people who are “commendably decent or generous,”<sup>7</sup> the words “servant” and “slave” have basically fallen into disuse in their “leadership” context. Words like “minister” and “deacon” do not effectively transmit the same sense of “lowliness” and “servitude” to the average person unaware of the definitions used by Jesus. Jesus challenged the thinking of those around him by both his personal example and mandate: “... whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant [Gr., *diakonos*], and whoever wants to be first must be your slave [Gr., *doulos*] – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28; also Mark 10:42-45).

The life and example of Jesus inspired his disciples to want to do something great with their lives, but they didn’t fully understand the cost of true greatness in God’s economy. While the world defines “greatness” as fame and fortune and measures it by the amount of authority and influence one has over others, Jesus demonstrated true greatness by being a servant to others (putting their needs first) and taking the position of a slave (being completely under God’s authority). For Jesus to challenge his disciples to take the role of a servant (and even more shockingly, the role of a slave) was as demeaning to those of the first century as it is to our generation. Jesus was looking for faithful men to train for the “apostolic” ministry (Mark 3:13-15) and never discouraged his disciples’ ambition for greatness. But he also did warn the ambitious disciples about the price – “to drink the cup that he would drink, and be baptized with the baptism that he would be baptized with” (Mark 10:38).

## TAKING THE NATURE OF A SLAVE

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A simple overview of some of the most popular English translations of the Bible demonstrates the difficulties we have with the concept of disciples being called to be slaves as well as the discomfort

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<sup>7</sup> *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated) 1993.

in using this term to refer to the Son of God. The translators of the *King James Version* [KJV, 1611] refused to translate the Greek word *doulos* as “slave” – most often preferring *servant* out of the possible 141 instances found in the New Testament. This seemingly weak translation may have been due to the political incorrectness of slavery or even possibly a view of “servitude” that was equally as demeaning as slavery. Almost three centuries later, the translators of the *American Standard Version* [ASV, 1901] followed the same pattern and avoided directly translating *doulos* as “slave.” The translators of the *New American Standard Version* [NASB, 1960] took a more straightforward approach and translated *doulos* as “slave” 98 times and then used the compound word “bondservant” in most of the other instances – although the two words mean exactly the same thing. Interestingly, the translators of the *New International Version* [NIV, 1978] definitively retreated to a compromise position and only translated *doulos* as “slave” 27 times, simply preferring “servant” in almost all other instances. The predisposition of the NIV translators is fairly obvious since in almost every instance of a figurative use of the word *doulos* (i.e., in direct reference to a person’s relationship with God) they insisted on translating it “servant.” Unfortunately, without a clear concept of “being a slave” it is impossible for us to have clear understanding of what it means to serve in leadership in God’s kingdom since Jesus calls us to take the nature of a slave in imitation of him.

The challenge of Jesus to be a slave was not so much a definition of function as it was a characterization of attitude. The New Testament defines a slave as one whom:

- should do exactly as he is told (Matthew 8:9; Luke 7:8).
- should not be motivated by earthly reward (Luke 17:9).
- should consider himself “unworthy,” first needing to fulfill his duty before attending to his own needs (Luke 17:10).
- had no permanent place in the family and therefore no inherent rights or inheritance (John 8:35).
- did not have the right to know his master’s business (John 15:15).
- is entrusted with a charge, then expected to gain a profit and give an account (Matthew 25:14; Luke 19:13).

Just as a slave is ideally not self-seeking in his motivations and expects nothing in return, the disciple who wants to be first (i.e., *to go first* or *to lead*) in God’s kingdom, must himself be in total submission to God. Jesus demonstrated this heart perfectly in coming to earth in human likeness:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,  
 did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,  
 but made himself nothing,  
 taking the very nature of a *servant* [lit., *slave*],  
 being made in human likeness.  
 And being found in appearance as a man,  
 he humbled himself  
 and became obedient to death—  
 even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:3-8; italics mine)

As Jesus himself testified, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). The fact that Jesus desires to develop our “discipling” relationship with him into true friendship and “no longer slaves” (John 15:15), and that God has made us into sons and heirs through his Spirit and “no longer slaves” (Galatians 4:7), does not change the

mandate for humility and submission if we want to be great in God's kingdom. Jesus set us an example that we need to strive to follow in our lives – perfect humility and complete obedience till death.

## GIVING UP ONE'S RIGHTS

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The New Testament is full of those who were referred to as “slaves of the Lord” or “slaves of Jesus Christ” or “slaves of God.”<sup>8</sup> Jesus also didn't hesitate to use slaves in his parables to represent *angels* (Matthew 13:27,28), *prophets* (Matthew 21:34,35,36), and *disciples* (Luke 17:7), as well as in the book of Revelation where *prophets* (Revelation 10:7, 11:18), *saints* (Revelation 1:1, 2:20, 7:3, 19:2,5, 22:3,6) and even *Moses* (Revelation 15:3) are all described as *slaves*. Interestingly, we have more specific examples of individuals being referred to as slaves in the New Testament than as ministers or servants [*diakonos*]. The concept of slavery was a reality for the first century church, and the idea of being a slave was both understandable and desirable when God or Jesus was identified as the Master. It is not surprising then that a slave is not above his master, any more than ‘a student is not above his teacher’ (Matthew 10:24) or ‘an apostle is greater the one who sent him’ (John 13:16), but the status of a slave is greatly increased by the fact that Jesus said ‘It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the *slave* like his master’ (Matthew 10:25). As disciples and slaves of Christ, we have a Teacher and Master whose overriding request is that we imitate him in how we live and love.

Paul referred to himself as a *slave* (5 times) with the same kind of conviction that he called himself an *apostle* (14 times) and a *servant* [*diakonos*] (7 times), being very serious about imitating the heart of Jesus in being a slave. Paul explained that although he had the right to marry, as did the other apostles and brothers of Jesus, he did not use that right for the sake of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:5). He had already explained the reason for such a sacrifice a few chapters earlier since “the interests of a married man are divided” (1 Corinthians 7:32-34). Paul also explained that although human wisdom, Scripture and even Jesus taught that a worker deserves his wages, for the sake of the gospel he gave up that right with the Corinthians, so that nothing would hinder their acceptance of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:12). By forfeiting his rights Paul understood that he was becoming the ‘slave of all’ – the kind of servant that God wanted him to be:

But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me. I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast. Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it. Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.  
(1 Corinthians 9:15-19)

Despite the obvious challenge of trying to imitate the ministry of Paul in preaching and planting churches, the most truly challenging aspect of Paul's life is his attitude of humility and the sacrifices that he was willing to make to become a more effective servant for God.

Paul strove to have the heart of a slave – there was no focus on earthly “entitlements” and rights, but on duty, service, and his eternal reward. In fact, just a few verses later Paul continued: “I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified

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<sup>8</sup> Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:38), Simeon (Luke 2:29), Paul (Romans 1:1; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Galatians 1:10; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1), Timothy (Philippians 1:1), Epaphras (Colossians 4:12), James (James 1:1), Simon Peter (2 Peter 1:1), Jude (Jude 1), and John, the apostle (Revelation 1:1).

for the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:27). Although Paul had accomplished much for the cause of Christ in his life, he realized that his own salvation would always come down to the full acceptance of God's grace – "not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:9). Since "worldly-minded" leadership, like "worldly-minded" worship, seeks its reward here on earth, we must be careful that as we do our acts of righteousness (i.e., give to the needy, pray and fast), we are truly doing it for our Father in heaven and not for any earthly reward (Matthew 6:1-18), thereby forfeiting our reward in heaven. Paul's service to God was neither based on receiving a salary nor being appreciated by those he was called to serve. It was a response to God's grace and expression of his decision to follow Christ with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength.

The challenge to be a slave in heart is the challenge to have the attitude of Jesus. Jesus didn't worry about position and was not concerned with earthly reward. He was focused on pleasing God no matter what the price, and in so doing stored up for himself treasure in heaven. Being a slave was not meant to be an office or title, but an attitude of heart that would lead to true greatness in God's kingdom. No matter how impressive the talent or how significant the ministry role, without the heart of a slave, God will not be pleased nor that talent or role fully realized. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 'he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave' (1 Corinthians 7:22), and further directed the Romans to "never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving (lit., "working as a slave for") the Lord" (Romans 12:11).

## THE SIMPLICITY OF SERVICE

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Jesus not only said "whoever wants to be first must be your slave [*doulos*]" but he also said "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant [*diakonos*]" (Matthew 20:26). This word *servant* has some other important forms in the New Testament: "to serve" [*diakonéō*] and "service" [*diakonia*]. The fact that the triplet of "servant," "to serve," and "service" does not directly equate in the modern mind to the triplet of "minister," "to minister," and "ministry" introduces a possible confusion in our understanding of "ministry" roles. In secular English usage the word minister can be used to describe "a high officer of state entrusted with the management of a division of governmental activities,"<sup>9</sup> even to the point that in some political systems the highest office is that of "Prime Minister." As a consequence of such prominent usage, we more readily associate the word "ministry" with the concepts of authority and leadership, than with the attitudes of submission and servitude. Historically, the confusion surrounding these words dates back even before the Latin Vulgate (the official Roman translation of the Bible produced in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century) where the word "servant" was sometimes transliterated to the form *diaconus* when describing a "servant of the church" – it was this scribal tradition that eventually evolved into our English word, "deacon." Before we can begin to understand the *spiritualized* meanings for these words, it is very important to review the fundamental concepts behind this family of words.

The concrete sense of "to serve" [*diakonéō*] is basic: a. "to wait at table"; b. "to care for"; and c. (comprehensively) "to serve."<sup>10</sup> This literal meaning is well documented in the New Testament where the following scenarios are described:

- The physical needs of Jesus being met by:

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<sup>9</sup> *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated) 1993.

<sup>10</sup> Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

- angels – Matthew 4:11; Mark 1:13.
- *Peter's mother-in-law* – Matthew 8:15; Mark 1:31; Luke 4:39.
- *the women with Jesus* – Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:41; Luke 8:3.
- *Martha* – Luke 10:40; John 12:2.
- The physical needs of Paul being met by:
  - Onesiphorus – 2 Timothy 1:18.
  - Onesimus – Philemon 13.
- The physical needs of churches and disciples in general by:
  - apostles to widows in Jerusalem (food distribution) – Acts 6:2.
  - Paul to the saints in Jerusalem – Romans 15:25.
  - Paul & brothers with him to the saints in Jerusalem – 2 Corinthians 8:19, 20.
- In the *Parable of the Unworthy Servant* Jesus demonstrates the common understanding by emphasizing that the servant doesn't take care of his own needs first, but first *serves* his master and only then worries about himself – Luke 17:8.

The fundamental action of *supplying another's physical needs* (i.e., food preparation) is well attested in the usage of the word "to serve" [*diakonéō*].

The connection between the word "service" [*diakonia*] and the word "to serve" [*diakonéō*] is well demonstrated by its usage to describe a number of the preceding situations:

- Martha preparing a meal for Jesus – Luke 10:40.
- Taking care of the daily distribution of food for the widows in the Jerusalem church – Acts 6:1.
- Economic aid sent to Jerusalem from other churches – Acts 11:29; 12:25; Romans 15:31; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:1, 12-13.
- The church in Thyatira (taking care of the poor) – Revelation 2:19.

In direct correlation to the verb, "to serve" [*diakonéō*], the word "service" [*diakonia*] describes the general practice of *supplying another's physical needs* (i.e., food preparation).

Of great interest to this study, is the fact that the word "servant" [*diakonos*] is rarely used in its literal sense in the New Testament. There are only two specific instances of individuals being described as servants who were physically involved in *supplying another's physical needs* (i.e., food preparation):

- The *Parable of the Marriage Feast* where the king's *servants* bound and expelled the guest who was not wearing wedding clothes – Matthew 22:13.
- The *servants* at the wedding in Cana that presented the "water become wine" to the master of the banquet – John 2:5, 9.

Although these few instances confirm that the word servant [*diakonos*] still maintained its most basic meaning, their infrequency may also suggest that this word in particular had already begun to have a much more specialized usage in the vocabularies of the first century disciples – the fact that this word is used in its *spiritual* sense 24 times throughout the New Testament adds great support to this suggestion.

The usual meanings of servant [*diakonos*], to serve [*diakonéō*] and service [*diakonia*] were well understood by the Greek-speaking peoples of the first century and carried "the basic nuance of



personal service” as compared to the other words for service.<sup>11</sup> It is also noteworthy that the Holy Spirit chose this family of words in favor of the usual words for “priestly service” that had been well-established in the Septuagint (words related to the Greek *leitourgós* from whence we derive our English word “liturgy”). These words (i.e., *diakonos*, *diakonéō* and *diakonia*) were meant to convey a non-religious sentiment and focused on the fulfilling of genuine spiritual needs through personal service.

## LEADING THROUGH SERVICE, NOT SERVING THROUGH LEADERSHIP

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After Jesus washed his disciples’ feet in John 13:1ff, he asked them if they understood what he had done. He went on to explain that although he was their Lord and Teacher, he had set them an example that they should do as he had done for them. In a parallel account, Luke records these words of Jesus:

“The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the *one who serves* [*diakonéō*]. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the *one who serves* [*diakonéō*]? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as *one who serves* [*diakonéō*].” (Luke 22:25-27)

The Gentile leaders liked to call themselves “Benefactors” – concluding that the people under their authority were the true “beneficiaries” of having leaders like themselves (i.e., not unlike modern “benevolent dictators”). Rather than humble themselves and serve, they arrogantly used their ability and position to exercise authority and labelled that as service. Jesus took the attitude of the slave and was given the work of a servant, and then called his disciples to follow his example. In response to the disciples’ ambition (and the ambition of the scribes and Pharisees) for greatness, being called “teacher” (probably implying the exaltation to a singular title or position like “The Teacher”), wanting to be first and requesting the places of honor – Jesus answered the same way – “the greatest should be the servant of all” (Matthew 20:26; 23:11; Mark 9:35; 10:43). Greatness in God’s kingdom was never meant to be measured by the extent of one’s authority but by the extent of one’s service.

As much as the challenge to be a slave focuses on the attitudes of our hearts, the call to be a servant challenges our way of looking at greatness. Jesus made it clear in his teaching that there would be roles of leadership, but they needed to be understood as roles of service – “the one who rules (i.e., the leader, [NASB]) should be like the one who serves [*diakonéō*]” (Luke 22:26). In Luke 12:35-40, Jesus warned his disciples that they need to be watchful like faithful slaves waiting for the return of their master – “the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him” (v. 40). In response, Peter asked Jesus if this parable was about them or was it about everyone – “Are we apostles (leaders) really supposed to see ourselves as servants and slaves, or is that teaching just for the masses?” Answering Jesus retold the parable with an additional detail that one of the slaves had an elevated position and was the “manager put in charge” of the other servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time. This parable really drives home the whole concept of servant/minister in the church, since the whole function of “leadership” is to provide for the spiritual needs of the people. Jesus emphasized that although some servants would be put in positions of responsibility over the other servants, they would still be fully answerable to him for their service. Jesus went on to explain that:

That servant [lit., *slave*] who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who

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<sup>11</sup> Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. (Luke 12:47-48)

Jesus clearly illustrated that even though one servant was put in a position of responsibility over the others, it did not mean that he became privileged or exempt from accountability. In fact, just the opposite was true – the punishment would be greater for the one who more fully knew his master’s will. Those that have been given much (i.e., talent and opportunity) need to give back even more, and those that are entrusted with much (i.e., position and responsibility) need to give an even fuller account. The answer to Peter’s question was “Yes” and that the parable was about both them and everyone – each one will be judged according to what he has been given and by how much he has been entrusted with. Those who are given roles of service need to be fully responsible for their charge.

## CHRIST SETS THE EXAMPLE

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These illustrations of service and accountability also made another provocative point: “It will be good for those *servants* [lit., *slaves*] whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and *wait on* [*diakonéō*] them” (Luke 12:37; italics mine). These are bold and radical statements considering the normal status of the master-slave relationship in both Greek and Jewish society of the first century. Jesus was teaching yet again that although he was the Lord, he was more than ready to serve and reward. Even God is ready to honor anyone who serves Jesus whole-heartedly: “The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant [*diakonos*] also will be. My Father will honor those who serve [*diakonéō*] me” (John 12:25,26). Jesus taught a completely new perspective on being both a servant and a slave. Although he was the Son of God, the Lord, Master, and Teacher – he “came to serve, not to be served” (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; Luke 22:27) and he calls us to go and do likewise. In both these passages in Matthew and in Mark, Jesus challenged his disciples that if they wanted to share in his glory, they would have to drink from the same cup that he was drinking from – not just a matter of long hours, fatigue, and sacrifice, but to have the heart of a servant and humility of a slave, being willing to be obedient even at the cost of their lives. Jesus not only expected for all of his disciples to surrender themselves completely to the kingdom, but he especially challenged those with ambition to do something great to follow his example and become “servants of all.”

### 3 – LEADERSHIP ROLES IN FIRST CENTURY JUDAISM

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The influence of first century Judaism on the early church should not be underestimated since its initial converts were exclusively Jews and, in many cases, continued to operate within the Jewish community for decades. About twenty years after the church began, Luke reports in Acts 15:5 (c. 50 A.D.) that some of the early converts still maintained their relationship with the sect (and beliefs) of the Pharisees even though they had become followers of Jesus Christ. In Acts 21:20-23 (c. 58 A.D.), James and the elders in Jerusalem informed Paul that thousands of Jews had believed and continued to be zealous for the Law and were upset with Paul because it had been reported that he was teaching Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, circumcision, and Jewish customs. And finally in Acts 24:5ff Luke reports that the Jewish authorities considered the disciples of Jesus as members of a Jewish sect (i.e., the sect of the Nazarenes) and Paul as one of its ringleaders to be causing a great disturbance among all the Jews throughout the world. More than two years later (c. 60 A.D.), when Paul arrived in Rome under guard awaiting his audience with Caesar, he met with the leaders of the Jews who told him, “We want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect” (Acts 28:22).

Despite the obvious tensions and conflicts between the early church and those Jews that refused to obey the gospel message, much of this Jewish heritage would have been very helpful to the infant church:

- The synagogue meetings would have supplied a foundational model of assembly, worship and organization for local groups.<sup>12</sup>
- Deep reverence and familiarity with the Old Testament scriptures would have reinforced doctrinal unity among the new converts and given credence to the concept of *new inspired* writings.
- Familiarity with various leadership roles would have promoted order and harmony in the new community life.

These well-established patterns must have contributed greatly to the structure and stability of the early Christian communities.

Such a foundation would also help explain the apparent tenacity and viability of many early church plantings such as Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13), Iconium (Acts 14) and Thessalonica (Acts 17), to name just a few – not to minimize the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul customarily began his ministry in new cities by making converts in the local Jewish synagogues (Acts 17:2). Despite the fact that Paul’s personal ministry in these cities could often be measured in months and in some cases even weeks, these churches were able to grow and thrive (Acts 16:5). Recognizing this underlying foundation of Jewish culture and experience is essential to our understanding of how the early church developed and matured, since it also supplies some important background and clarification for the relatively “undocumented” roles of shepherds and teachers (compared with the better-known apostles, prophets, and evangelists), as well as the ability of these early congregations to possess functional elderships in remarkably short periods of time. Since some of the ministry roles that are found in the early church seem to have had strong precedence in the already established norms of the Jewish community, this chapter will simply overview those leadership roles from an Old Testament

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<sup>12</sup> A fuller treatment of this observation can be found in another work by this author: *In Remembrance of Me: Enriching Our Understanding of the Lord’s Supper*, pg. 110-113 (Billerica, Massachusetts: Discipleship Publications International) 2002.

perspective as well as examine the information found in the narrative detail of the New Testament showing their current expression and development.

## THE CULTURE OF ELDEERSHIP

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Historically, elders were by definition the natural leaders of large families and clans from the earliest times. Of all the types of leadership mentioned in the Old Testament, whether it be the role of prophet, priest, judge, king or any other appointed official, the most constant component of community leadership is that of the elders. Even before Israel became established as a nation outside the borders of Egypt, the descendants of Jacob had recognized 'elders' who naturally functioned as the leaders of the people: when Moses initially returned to Egypt to lead out the Israelites, God instructed him to gather the elders of Israel together (Exodus 3:16), and just before the exodus the elders were instructed concerning the requirements of the first Passover celebration and were given responsibility for disseminating the information among the people (Exodus 12:21). Although the Israelites were slaves in Egypt and had not yet received any formal religious organization from God, the people of Israel already recognized certain individuals among them as elders and viewed their leadership as authoritative and representative. Moses clearly had nothing to do with the creation of this leadership structure – it had developed naturally and was typical of the times.

Two other phenomena that were visible among the people of Israel as well as in other nations of the Old Testament were the leadership role of local elders in city/village communities and the existence of a representative body of elders that often functioned at a national level. When the Gibeonites approached Joshua and told him that they had come a long distance, they explained that their elders and people had sent them (Joshua 9:11). Also, the elders of Moab and Midian seemed to work as advisors and emissaries for the kings or rulers of their nations when they approached Balaam (Numbers 22:4, 7). And finally, the "*dignitaries* [lit., elders] of the house of Pharaoh" together with the "*dignitaries* [lit., elders] of the land of Egypt" (Genesis 50:7; italics mine) participated in mourning the death of Jacob in Egypt. The Old Testament actually gives us no indication of how these individuals were selected, but they were clearly respected and approved in their roles by society around them. The very idea of "elder" brings with it the wisdom of counsel that age and experience offer (Psalm 105:22, 119:100; Ezekiel 7:26). It can only be assumed that whatever sociological processes produced "elders" in families and clans before the exodus from Egypt, continued to work throughout the wilderness wandering and even after the Israelites had settled in the Promised Land.

Although there was never any mention in the Old Testament of God intervening and personally appointing elders for Israel, he clearly recognized their position and authority, and held them accountable for their leadership. On occasion God gave very specific direction to the elders and outlined his expectations of their duties. A few examples of this in different areas of service are seen in the Law of Moses:

- 1) *Responsible to instruct the people* (Moses wrote down the law and gave it to the priests and to the elders of Israel and charged them to read it publicly to the people during every seventh year gathering, Deuteronomy 31:9-13).
- 2) *Assist God's chosen leadership* (the Lord requested that Moses select seventy men (known as elders and officials of the people) so that the Lord could put some of the same Spirit that he had put upon Moses, upon them, Numbers 11:16-30).
- 3) *Represent the people* (when the whole Israelite community sinned unintentionally, the elders of the community were to come and put their hands on the head of the sin offering, Leviticus 4:15).

- 4) *Judge community issues at local levels* (a stubborn and rebellious son should be brought by his parents to the elders at the gate of his town to be judged and executed (Deuteronomy 21:19-21).

Although a group of elders seemed to develop naturally without divine intervention at the community level, these examples make it abundantly clear that God recognized the leadership role of “elder” among his people and had certain expectations of how such individuals should serve in that role.

The subsequent narrative of the Old Testament books is full of examples that demonstrate that these directives for elders given through Moses continued to be followed even after the Israelites had settled in the Promised Land:

- 1) *Responsible to instruct the people* (some of the elders of the land stood up and reminded the people of the prophesy of Micah of Moresheth concerning the fate of Jerusalem – Jeremiah 26:17).
- 2) *Assist God’s chosen leadership* (after the death of Absalom, David sent a message to Zadok and Abiathar, the priests to ask the elders of Judah why they were not seeking his return to Jerusalem – 2 Samuel 19:11).
- 3) *Represent the people* (the elders of Israel approached Samuel concerning his age and his wayward sons, who were unqualified to lead. They requested that a king be appointed over them to judge, like other nations – 1 Samuel 8:4-5).
- 4) *Judge community issues at local levels* (the elders of Bethlehem witnessed and testified to the transaction of Boaz redeeming Ruth and marrying her – Ruth 4:2, 4, 9-11).

God considered the elders responsible for fulfilling these duties. Whenever the leaders of Israel were held accountable for the spiritual condition of Israel, the elders were often included in that judgment: “The Lord enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: ‘It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses’” (Isaiah 3:14).

Throughout Old Testament history the elders were a vital part of the leadership of Israel – both on the community level and national level. Although there is no evidence of a command from God encouraging this partnership as in the case of Moses (Numbers 11:16-17), many leaders who came after him followed his example and retained elders as advisors and let them share in their leadership. Some examples of men in defined leadership roles that enlisted elders are as follows:

- Leaders (i.e., Joshua).
- Kings (i.e., David, Solomon, Ahab, Hezekiah, Josiah).
- Generals (i.e., Abner).
- Prophets (i.e., Elisha, Ezekiel).

It was the elders of the assembly that suggested a workable plan to get wives for the Benjamites (Judges 21:16), and it was also the elders of Israel who approached Samuel reporting dissatisfaction with his sons as judges and requesting the appointment of a king (1 Samuel 8:4-5). The elders of Gilead also approached Jephthah and made him their leader (Judges 11:5-6), and in the end he judged Israel for six years with God’s approval. Sadly, the elders of Israel were also led astray by Absalom’s craftiness and supported his rebellion against David (2 Samuel 17:15). Although we have no directive that the “group of seventy” (Numbers 11:16) that served Moses in a special way became a permanent entity, it is interesting to note that in Ezekiel’s vision of the wicked elders of Israel he saw a group of exactly that number (Ezekiel 8:11). Whereas other leadership roles seemed to be established administratively, based on character and human appointment (i.e., judges, officials); divinely through ordination and succession (i.e., priesthood, kingship); and sometimes even through the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit and miraculous gifts (i.e., prophets, some leaders); the office of the elder seemed to develop by natural processes in most communities. Eldership was a position of respect given to those who would

serve the community through mature counsel and wisdom – of course, this is not to rule out the reality that wealth and heritage probably had great influence on the actual positions that elders had in relation to one another in such community “elderships.” Nevertheless, God recognized the existence of the position and role of elders and held them accountable for the quality of leadership they provided.

The most visible manifestation of “elders” in Jewish society found in the New Testament narrative was in their role as members of the ruling Jewish council, the *Sanhedrin* (i.e., transliteration of the Greek word for “council”). Matthew records that after Jesus was arrested, he was delivered to the residence of Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes (i.e., teachers of the law) and the elders had assembled. This assembly is described two verses later as “the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin” (Matthew 26:57, 59)—quite possibly being a representative gathering if not the whole council. Sometime after the return of the remnant to Jerusalem in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, the priestly nobles and heads of clans became an aristocratic senate in Jerusalem with the high priest as president. The Pharisees managed to achieve a place in the Sanhedrin (c. 76-67 B.C.) and from that time forward the “Pharisaic scribes” steadily grew in power and influence. The rabbis stressed Exodus 24 and Numbers 11 as a model and support for the formation of the Sanhedrin as well as for rabbinic ordination.<sup>13</sup> In the gospels and the book of Acts we have 26 references to the elders together with some combination of chief priests and/or scribes. The chief priests were almost always given the first position in these references. Obviously, this position of “elder” was much greater in prestige and influence than those belonging to the typical local “eldership.”

There is only one direct reference to local Jewish elders in the New Testament narrative (when the centurion asked the elders of Capernaum to go to Jesus on behalf of his sick servant, Luke 7:3), but external evidence affirms that this leadership role continued to exist in Jewish communities throughout the New Testament world just as it did in the Old Testament period. *The Mishnah* (a Jewish commentary from the early third century A.D.) also verifies the ongoing community function of elders in the New Testament period:

- “Elders went down from Jerusalem to their towns and decreed a fast...” (Taanit 3:6).
- “Elders of the city shall call him...” (Yebamot 12:6, affirming that the custom of publicly humiliating a man who refused to marry his brother’s widow by removal of his sandal was still being practiced [Deuteronomy 25:8]).
- “The elders of that town...” (Sotah 9:5-6, affirming that the rule of the elders of a city needed to make atonement for an unsolved murder that happened nearest to their town [Deuteronomy 21:1ff] was still being practiced).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> “In exile the elders emerge once again as the main leaders in limited self-government. ... As suggested by Nehemiah 5:17, the trend is toward the establishment of a kind of senate made up of representatives of the leading families in Jerusalem and acting as a centralized college. ... The beginnings of the council of elders, the Sanhedrin, go back to the Persian period. At first all the members, then only lay members, are called elders; the two other groups are the scribes and the priests, the dominant group. After the fall of Jerusalem the Sanhedrin of Jamnia, composed of 72 elders, takes control, but with no political and only limited judicial power. It consists exclusively of scribes. ... Elder is a term that is also used for leading older scholars, who may often be members of the Sanhedrin.” Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, pg. 932 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

<sup>14</sup> Neusner, J. (1988). *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

These quotes give clear support that the leadership role of the elders in the local communities was fully operational in the New Testament period since the Old Testament directives describing how such elders should function were still being applied by the Jewish authorities of that time.

## THE WORK OF THE TEACHERS

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One of the most powerful influences on the practice of first century Judaism was that of the "scribes" (most often translated as "teachers of the law" in the NIV). Although the New Testament uses this word "scribe" once in its ordinary Greek sense of "clerk" or "secretary" (Acts 19:35), all other 66 instances of this word denote the "rabbinic scholar" or "theologian" (with one other possible exception to be noted later). The actual phrase "teacher of the law" is only found three times in the Greek New Testament and is clearly "synonymous" with the scribes based on Luke's usage in his gospel (compare Luke 5:17 and Luke 5:21 in the NASB).<sup>35</sup> In direct contrast to the well-established role of elders in Old Testament society, there is no evidence that a role of "spiritual teacher" ever existed as something separate from the work of a prophet, priest, or parent. As a prophet, Moses exemplified the role of a leader chosen by God who was empowered to teach God's people through divine revelation (Exodus 4:12, 15; Deuteronomy 4:1, 5, 14; 5:1, 31; 6:1). Through Moses God also conferred on the priests the responsibility of teaching the law to the people (Leviticus 10:11; Deuteronomy 33:10) and on the parents (Deuteronomy 4:9-11, 11:19). The Old Testament specifically affirms this teaching ministry of the priests and/or Levites, centuries after the exodus during the reigns of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:7-9), Josiah (2 Chronicles 35:3) and Joash (2 Kings 12:2).

Just as the books of Ezra and Nehemiah give us a possible clue to the eventual formation of the Sanhedrin by the first century A.D., it may have been the example of Ezra that popularized the Jewish understanding of the word "scribe" as well. Ezra the priest and scribe is portrayed as a "teacher well versed in the law of Moses" (Ezra 7:6), "learned in matters concerning the commands and decrees of the Lord for Israel" (Ezra 7:11), and as one who read the law publicly and instructed heads of all the families, along with the priests and Levites (Nehemiah 8:1, 4, 13). The rise of teachers as a role independent of the priesthood or even membership in the tribe of Levi seems to have gone hand in hand with the institution and proliferation of the Jewish synagogue (i.e., local assemblies for teaching and worship) – both without precedent in the Mosaic law.

During the exile, the Jewish communities began to build "houses of prayer and instruction" for these assemblies that were supported by the local community, and in association with these institutions there began a tradition of training up teachers and eventually rabbinical schools. After many of the exiled Jews returned to Judea, they continued to build these synagogues<sup>16</sup> both in Jerusalem and the outlying cities and villages. By the first century A.D. it could be said that, "sociologically, the rabbis were the direct successors of the prophets, i.e., men who knew the divine will and proclaimed it in instruction, judgment and preaching."<sup>17</sup> The scribes of the first century taught that "Elijah must come before the Son of Man" (Matthew 17:10; Mark 9:11), that "the Christ is the son

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<sup>35</sup> Luke may have done this to clarify the common Jewish usage of this word to his Greek audience. Luke also used the Greek word *nomikós* meaning "lawyer" to describe the "scribes" and translated "experts in the law" (Luke 7:30, 10:25, 11:45-52, 14:3). Matthew only used this word "lawyer" once (Matthew 22:35; also translated "expert in the law") while the parallel text in Mark 12:28-32 used the word "scribe."

<sup>16</sup> The word 'synagogue' eventually became the word used to describe the actual building where these assemblies were held, not unlike the evolution of the meaning of the word "church" in the English language.

<sup>17</sup> Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume 1, pg. 741 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

of David" (Mark 12:35) and were even able to answer Herod at the time of Jesus' birth that "the Christ was to be born in Bethlehem in Judea" (Matthew 2:3-6). It is also noteworthy that the New Testament made no mention of "priests" in their teaching role; it may have been that the emergence of the "scribes" and synagogue replaced this priestly function in Jewish society.

Although the New Testament clearly identified a smaller group within the sect of the Pharisees that were also "scribes" (Luke 5:30; Mark 2:16; Acts 23:9), it is not possible to conclude that every scribe mentioned in the gospels was necessarily a "Pharisee." Jesus even made a distinction between the two in Luke 11:39-52 by challenging the Pharisees for their outward piety, superficial regulations, and glory-seeking egos, and then further challenging the scribes for loading burdens on the people with their teaching; for honoring both their forefathers and the prophets they had killed; and for removing the key to knowledge for both themselves and others. Some of Jesus' strongest words were directed toward the religious leaders of his day, for valuing their role and their traditions above simply worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

The general acceptance of these teachers and their teaching explains the overall freedom of both John the Baptist and Jesus to gather disciples around themselves, relatively unhindered. Before Jesus was ever known as "the Christ," he was called "the Nazarene" (Mark 10:47; Luke 18:37; John 18:5; Acts 2:22; etc.) and as mentioned earlier, his followers were considered members of the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5). The fact that society accepted both the existence of these teachers as well as a form of denominationalism among the Jewish population provided an incredible opportunity for the public ministry of Jesus without immediately having to make the radical and provocative claim that he was "the Prophet" who was to come (Deuteronomy 18:15-19) and the prophesied Messiah (Daniel 9:25,26). In Matthew 8:19-20, a scribe approached Jesus and declared that he would follow Jesus wherever he went, and John 3:1-15 relates how Nicodemus, a ruler of the Pharisees and teacher of Israel, came to Jesus affirming his faith that Jesus had come from God because of the miraculous signs that he performed. It is interesting that the only established members of society that are recorded as actually commending Jesus for his answers were the scribes (Mark 12:28-33; Luke 20:27-40). Jesus also acknowledged a certain level of respect for these scribes as well when he replied to one that "he was not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34) and when he taught publicly that "every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure new things and old" (Matthew 13:52, NASB). Although friend and foe alike seemed to accept and address Jesus as a "Rabbi" or "Teacher" (Gr., *didaskalos* explained as equivalent in John 1:38), none of the gospel writers ever refer to Jesus simply as a "scribe" – possibly due to their understanding that God had trained Jesus for his ministry and that his teaching was inspired by the Holy Spirit. For the religious authorities of first century Judea, the notion that Jesus of Nazareth was a teacher seemed initially acceptable (or at least tolerable), but any claim to be something more (i.e., prophet or Messiah) was met with their strong condemnation. Despite the outward similarities between the ministry of Jesus and that of the scribes, "the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law" (Matthew 7:29; Mark 1:22).

## THE MODEL OF THE SHEPHERD FOR LEADERSHIP

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Although neither the gospels nor Old Testament narrative use "shepherd" as the title for a defined leadership role in Jewish society, the concept of being a shepherd is used as one of the most powerful descriptions for the desired heart of a leader. Jacob was the first one recorded to use this word in its leadership context where he described God as "his shepherd" all the days of his life (Genesis 48:15). In Psalm 23, David gave an incredibly poetic description of God's heart where he described God as the loving shepherd who provided for his soul's needs, gave guidance through the darkest moments, comforted even through discipline, honored and esteemed him before the world, and promised



blessings both in this life and in the next. Many of the prophets also compared the care and love of the Lord to the heart of a shepherd for his sheep (Isaiah 40:10-11; Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekiel 34:12, 16) and Micah begged God to again shepherd his people as he had in the past (Micah 7:14). These passages describe a powerful God who loves his people deeply and desires more than anything to take them in his arms, comfort them, and provide for all their needs.

With the standard set by God himself, the desired heart of leadership for both prophets and kings is also described as that of shepherds of God's people: e.g., Moses (Isaiah 63:11), Joshua (Numbers 27:15), David (2 Samuel 5:2), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 17:16), and various judges (2 Samuel 7:7). The idea was so prevalent that even the leaders of foreign nations are referred to as shepherds in many passages: e.g., Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28); Babylon (Jeremiah 6:3, 50:44), Lebanon (Jeremiah 22:22), Edom (Jeremiah 49:19), Assyria (Nahum 3:18), etc. However, the strength of this concept as a description of how leadership should conduct itself becomes the clearest in God's rebuke to Israel's leaders in times of their sin and rebellion. When God spoke through Zechariah and called the leaders to account, he called them "shepherds" and spoke of the house of Judah as his flock (Zechariah 10:3). One of the strongest passages in the Old Testament of God's judgment against the leaders of his people is Ezekiel 34:1-31. Here the shepherds are condemned for only taking care of themselves (v. 2), neglecting the weak, the sick, the injured (v. 4), not bringing back the strays or searching for the lost (v. 4). God condemns their leadership as brutal and harsh (v. 4) and promises to hold them accountable and remove them from tending the sheep – "I will rescue my flock from their mouths" (v. 10). Jeremiah described the wicked shepherds as "senseless" and those who "do not inquire of the Lord" (Jeremiah 10:21), and also as those "who are destroying and scattering the sheep" (Jeremiah 23:1). Although the word shepherd was never an official title for any particular leadership role, the concept of caring for the people like a good shepherd was clearly God's standard and therefore any leader who refused to care for God's flock properly faced his judgment.<sup>18</sup>

Lastly, the Old Testament made it clear that the Messiah would be the kind of leader that God was searching for – a loving shepherd. After the scathing rebukes of Ezekiel 34, God declared that he would take care of the sheep and said, "I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them ... and be their shepherd" (Ezekiel 34:23), and later, "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd" (Ezekiel 37:24). Micah described his coming with the following in Micah 5:2-5:

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
 though you are small among the clans of Judah,  
 out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel,  
 whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.  
 Therefore Israel will be abandoned  
 until the time when she who is in labor gives birth  
 and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.  
 He will stand and shepherd his flock  
 in the strength of the LORD,  
 in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.  
 And they will live securely, for then his greatness  
 will reach to the ends of the earth.  
 And he will be their peace.

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<sup>18</sup> The imagery of being a "shepherd" would have been very powerful throughout the whole New Testament world, considering the agrarian nature of much of society at that time.

Although it was not ever really a title, the Old Testament honors the concept of being a “shepherd” as a powerful description of both the work and heart of godly leadership. Another passage describing “the Son” that was to be enthroned in Jerusalem describes him as *ruling* with an iron scepter – with the Greek verb “to shepherd” being used for “ruling” in both the Septuagint (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. translation of the Old Testament into Greek) and the New Testament quotes (Revelation 2:27, 12:5, 19:15).

## OLD TREASURES AS WELL AS NEW

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Paul clearly believed that there was an advantage in being a Jew because they had been entrusted with the very words of God (Romans 3:1-2). In the area of church leadership, this advantage took the form of familiarity with the concepts of being God’s people and the responsibility of leading according to God’s standard. The role of elders in the community would have been as clear and natural as the role of parents in the nuclear family. The role of teacher, although not directly ordained by the Mosaic law, embodied the “teaching” ministry that had been entrusted by Moses to the priests and elders on the community level. And the concept of shepherding God’s people would have been well established by their knowledge of God’s heart, as well as the honor given to their scriptural heroes together with the judgments made against the failures of their ancestors as recorded in the Old Testament. Those familiar with these concepts had an incredible resource of both knowledge and experience to help build up the body of Christ and encourage the saints at the church’s inception.

## 4 – THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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As the eyewitnesses of the ministry of Jesus went out into the entire world spreading the good news, “God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and *gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed* (lit., “distributions of the Holy Spirit”) according to his will” (Hebrews 2:4; italics mine). If we are going to properly understand the New Testament paradigm for ministry and ministry roles, it is imperative to understand the nature of this miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the first generation of disciples.

### OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

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A lot of the “present-day” confusion surrounding the work of the Holy Spirit in the primitive church is related to a lack of clarity concerning what actually took place on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Jesus had told the apostles that they would be “baptized with the Holy Spirit” and that “they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came on them” (Acts 1:5, 8). For the purpose of understanding exactly what Jesus was referring to, it is necessary to review the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament period as well as his prophesied future working. As surprising as this may be to some, God had “distributed gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his will” long before the Day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2.<sup>19</sup>

God worked powerfully through Moses as a prototype of “charismatically-gifted” leadership and continued to do so through many of the leaders that came after him. Such charismatic gifts were never available to the masses but were almost always given to key individuals to either confirm their “prophetic” ministry or to empower their leadership – with only two recorded exceptions, specifically noted later in this paragraph. The Hebrew text described this phenomenon with particular verbs such as: the Spirit *coming over* someone; the Spirit *being in* someone; the Spirit *falling over* someone; the Spirit *clothing* someone; or even the Spirit *filling* someone. All of these instances referred to the miraculous empowering of a normal human being to do something beyond their natural ability. The tangible results of these distributions of the Spirit were *leadership, prophecy, wisdom, knowledge*, and the *ability to perform miracles* (including *healings* and even *physical resurrection*). Three additional and important observations about these gifts can also be made:

- Spiritual gifts were *not necessarily permanent*: (1) Samson lost his gift due to breaking faith with God; (2) the Spirit was directly taken away from Saul, and; (3) after David’s sin with Bathsheba, he begged God not to take his prophetic gift away (probably after reflection upon what he had seen God do with Saul).
- Spiritual gifts *did not always signify spirituality*: It is twice recorded that the Holy Spirit came over definitively “unspiritual” men and gave them the ability to prophesy (i.e., *Balaam* and *Saul and his men*). Both situations indirectly involved leadership decisions and God’s people.
- Spiritual gifts *were never equated with the forgiveness of sins* or the salvation of people’s souls.

For the first century Jews well versed in Old Testament history, the idea of God giving spiritual gifts for the leadership of his people at the advent of the new covenant must have been quite natural and even possibly expected. These narrative details supply some important context for the manifestation of God’s Spirit as recorded in the New Testament.

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<sup>19</sup>The scripture references for the following points are given in detail in *Appendix 2*.

Two other actions of the Holy Spirit which the Old Testament prophets foretold as being still in the future were: (1) *the pouring out of the Holy Spirit*, and (2) *the putting of the Spirit into the hearts of men* (i.e., *the indwelling of the Holy Spirit*). At no time in the Old Testament narrative was this type of language ever used for something that was already taking place – it was consistently reserved for future events and fulfilment.<sup>20</sup> There are only four passages in the Old Testament specifically describing the future pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and each one of them contributes valuable details to understanding what was going to take place on the Day of Pentecost, after Jesus rose from the dead:

- God will *pour out* his Spirit on all people (Joel 2:28).
- Young and old, male and female will prophesy (Joel 2:28-29).
- God will show wonders in the heavens and on earth (Joel 2:30).
- Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Joel 2:32).
- God will *pour out* the Spirit of grace and supplication, they will look on him (God), the one they have pierced and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child and firstborn son (Zechariah 12:10).
- On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity (Zechariah 13:1).
- The Lord will gather back his people from the nations, and show himself holy in the sight of many nations. He will no longer hide his face from his people, “for I will *pour out* my Spirit on the house of Israel” (Ezekiel 39:27-29; italics mine).
- When the Spirit is *poured out*, the desert becomes a fertile field and the fertile field like a forest. Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness in the fertile field. The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever (Isaiah 32:15-17).

The pouring out of the Holy Spirit would be like the opening of a fountain in which men could be cleansed from their sin and impurity. There would be miraculous signs in heaven and on earth, and at that time men would be grieved that they had pierced and killed “God,” mourning as for an only child and firstborn son. Then salvation would come to those that call on the name of the Lord, and men would be able to have a new, eternal relationship with their God.

This future salvation would be made available through the pouring out of God’s Spirit (i.e., “a fountain will be opened ... that will cleanse them from sins and impurity” – Zechariah 13:1) and is further described as God putting his Spirit into men’s hearts:

For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God. I will save you from all your uncleanness. ... This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt. (Ezekiel 36:24-29, 33; cf. 11:16-21)

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<sup>20</sup> A more detailed treatment of these prophecies is given in *Appendix 3*.

These prophecies make it clear that God planned to first pour out his Spirit, and then transform men's hearts through putting the Spirit in them.<sup>21</sup>

The manner in which this second step would be achieved is further alluded to in a prophecy of Ezekiel:

Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.'" (Ezekiel 37:11-14)

Although the meaning of all this would remain hidden until the time of its fulfillment, Ezekiel prophesied that this 'putting of God's Spirit in men so that they would live' could be compared with resurrecting someone to life from the grave. It is significant to notice that although the Holy Spirit is never once mentioned as being actively involved in the redemptive system of Old Testament worship and sacrifice, the prophets foretold of the time when God would work a redemptive miracle in the hearts of men by putting his Spirit in them, washing their sins away and raising them to a new life.

## THE DAY OF PENTECOST (ACTS 2)

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With the Old Testament background firmly in place, we can now proceed with our discussion of what exactly happened on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. The first step in our analysis is to realize that a number of different prophecies were fulfilled on that day, and although these separate events were related to each other, they were still distinct fulfillments: (1) the pouring out of the Holy Spirit; (2) the receiving of the indwelling Holy Spirit through water baptism; (3) the introduction of a new *gift* [Gr., *charisma*] – "speaking in tongues"; and, (4) the empowering of the apostles to confirm their testimony with "miraculous powers."

### 1. THE POURING OUT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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In Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, he explained that God raised Jesus from the dead, just as had been foretold through the prophets. He then went on to say in Acts 2:33, "Exalted to the right hand of God, he (Jesus) has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear." Since Jesus was now the exalted Son of God (Philippians 2:9) and had received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father, he was now able to pour out the Holy Spirit with a new quality never before available to mankind – the *spirit of sonship* (Romans 8:15). This action was also equivalent to Jesus' *baptizing with the Holy Spirit*, although the imagery was a little inverted: normally we imagine "baptizing" something as *an object being immersed into a container already full of an element* (i.e., water), but in this case the object was in the container already, and the element was poured in afterwards until the object was completely covered.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, as Jesus poured out the Spirit on all

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<sup>21</sup> Although the first step would be initiated by God and make his Spirit available to all men, the second step would require a certain response within the heart of the individual before it would be accomplished as explained in the next prophecy to be discussed.

<sup>22</sup> *Revision comment #2 for this edition.* For those that practice "baptism" as an act of sprinkling or pouring water (i.e., a practice dating back to the early third century), this observation is not necessarily obvious.

people, so the spirit of sonship was made available to all people, or in the words of Zechariah – *the fountain was opened in which mankind could be cleansed from their sin and impurity* (13:1). The pouring out of the Holy Spirit did not bring immediate salvation to anyone; it simply made salvation available in this particular way for the first time in human history.

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## 2. RECEIVING THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT

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Although John the Baptist had preached a baptism (i.e., immersion in water) of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, there was no promise of the Holy Spirit and spiritual rebirth. All this changed on the Day of Pentecost, after the Spirit had been poured out and Peter preached in Acts 2:38, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Therefore, anyone who believed in this promise of salvation needed only to repent and be baptized in faith to receive it. This distinction was clearly demonstrated in Acts 19:1-7 when Paul met some disciples who had been baptized with John’s baptism though had not heard that there was a Holy Spirit to be received.

Joel had prophesied that “everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved” (Joel 2:32). Ananias associated this action with baptism when he instructed Saul during his conversion, “And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16). Ezekiel had also prophesied, “then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live” (Ezekiel 37:13-14). This moment of “new life” was also confirmed as taking place in baptism by Paul: “we were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Romans 6:4), and “in him you were also circumcised in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead” (Colossians 2:11-12). Therefore, the greatest significance of the Day of Pentecost was that eternal salvation was made available to all peoples through the *pouring out of the Holy Spirit*, and that by calling on his name through baptism, that same *Spirit would be put in an individual’s heart along with receiving the forgiveness of sins*.

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## 3. TONGUES – A NEW GIFT

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As we already noted from our overview of the Spirit’s working in the Old Testament, God gave gifts through his Spirit to either confirm “prophetic” ministry or to empower leadership in his people beginning with the prophet, Moses. In fact, very specifically God’s Spirit *came over* (*fell over, filled, clothed*, etc.) chosen individuals and resulted in gifts of *leadership, prophecy, wisdom, knowledge* and the *ability to perform miracles* (including *healings* and even *physical resurrection*). Therefore, spiritual gifts were in no way peculiar to the New Testament era and definitely not unique to the day of Pentecost. In fact, during his earthly ministry, Jesus had already given his apostles in their limited commission to the people of Israel, the “authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness” (Matthew 10:1).

In addition to this, the Spirit did introduce a new gift on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:4-11 – *the ability to speak in human languages foreign to the speaker without ever having studied them*. Paul explained this gift in 1 Corinthians 14:21-22 by quoting a prophecy from Isaiah 28:11-12:

In the Law it is written:

“Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people,  
but even then they will not listen to me,” says the Lord.”

Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter had quoted Joel's prophecy, saying there would be "wonders in heaven above and signs on earth below" (Acts 2:19) on the day when God poured out his Spirit. The sound of a mighty wind definitely qualified as the first, while the "speaking in tongues" definitely qualified as the second. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit was in and of itself invisible, as was the receiving of the indwelling Holy Spirit, as explained by Jesus in John 3:8. Therefore, visible signs accompanied the divine action so that the "unbelievers" in Jerusalem might truly believe that it had happened.

Interestingly, the only other two instances of "speaking in tongues" in the book of Acts were situations where there clearly were "unbelievers" concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit:

- The first instance was in Acts 10 where Peter and the six brothers with him had not yet come to believe that God had poured out the spirit on the Gentiles (i.e., made salvation available to them). Therefore, as Peter was preaching to the household of Cornelius, the Spirit came on the whole household and they began speaking in tongues. Immediately Peter and the brothers understood from this sign that "the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles" and Peter's immediate response was logical, "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water?" As with the Jews beginning at Pentecost, the indwelling Holy Spirit could only be received through repentance and baptism.
- The second instance was in Acts 19 where Paul met twelve disciples who had never even heard of the Holy Spirit since they had only received the baptism of John. On hearing about Jesus, "they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus and when Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied" (v. 6). Again, tongues served as a sign for unbelievers; except this time, the twelve disciples who had probably believed in the baptism of John for at least 25 years already, only now were being instructed about the promised gift of the Holy Spirit.

Unlike any of the other spiritual gifts, the gift of "speaking in tongues" was also a unique sign that the Holy Spirit had been poured out. Unfortunately, this association has been misunderstood and confused by some who have mistaken the sign for the actual event itself. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit was an invisible action by Jesus Christ and therefore initially needed tangible signs as a confirmation. From the moment of its introduction on the Day of Pentecost onward, "speaking in tongues" became one of the available "spiritual gifts" given to the church (i.e., Mark 16:17-20; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10) and was even considered equal to the gift of prophecy if there was someone with the gift of interpretation present to translate it (1 Corinthians 14:4-6, 27-28).

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#### 4. SIGNS, WONDERS, AND MIRACLES

Lastly, Jesus had promised his disciples in Luke 24:49, "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" and in another passage, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (Acts 1:8). As Jesus foretold what was going to happen to the apostles, he used familiar figures of speech from the Old Testament to describe how the Holy Spirit would work miraculously through them: they would be *clothed* with power from on high and the Holy Spirit would *come over* them. Since the apostles had already received authority to drive out demons and heal the sick during their limited commission, it is clear that something even greater awaited them on the day of Pentecost. In Acts 2:43, as Luke described the community life of the new church in Jerusalem he wrote, "Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles." Even though we have record of a group

prayer in Acts 4:30 where all the disciples present asked God to “stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus,” we still read later that “the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people” (Acts 5:12). In the first five chapters of the book of Acts, only the apostles are specifically recorded as possessing the ability to perform signs and wonders. It was only after the Twelve had prayed and laid their hands on seven other men (later referred to as “The Seven”), that other individuals were also recorded as performing signs and wonders [i.e., Stephen (Acts 6:8) and Philip (Acts 8:6)] who were among these seven named individuals. As already stated earlier in reference to the Old Testament period, such gifts were never available to the masses but were almost always given to key individuals, either to confirm their “prophetic” ministry or to empower their leadership of God’s people.

## “CHARISMATIC” GIFTS

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In his letter of 1 Corinthians, Paul described more fully how these distributions of the Holy Spirit played a supernatural part in the definition and development of ministry roles:

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service [Gr., *diakonia*], but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

These manifestations of the Spirit were described as different kinds of gifts given through the Spirit, different kinds of service [Gr., *diakonia*] for the same Lord, and different kinds of working of the same God in all men. Although the Spirit gave them to each person just as he determined, these manifestations of the Spirit were all given for the common good.

The plural form of the Greek word *charisma*, translated “gifts” in this passage, denotes the result of grace [Gr., *charis*] as an action, i.e., “proof of favor,” “benefit,” or “gift.”<sup>23</sup> The main sense of this word is that the gift was not based on the merit of the receiver but on the grace [*charis*] of the giver. Therefore, in the New Testament all gifts [*charisma*] are attributed to God’s grace and bring attention to God’s generous heart, not man’s worthiness to receive them. Paul used this word in the book of Romans in its fullest sense, where words relating to different aspects of our salvation are called “a gift” [*charisma*].<sup>24</sup> For example, twice Paul made use of the phrase “gift of God” to denote either “eternal life” (Romans 6:23) or “mercy” (Romans 11:30), and twice in parallel with two other Greek words for *gift* [i.e., *dōrea* and *dōrēma* in Romans 5:15-16] in reference to the salvation brought through Jesus Christ. Surely these blessings are the greatest examples of an *undeserved* gift from God that a person could ever imagine.

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<sup>23</sup> Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

<sup>24</sup> Such usages are always found in the singular number, never plural.



In the preceding list of 1 Corinthians 12:8-11, the word “gifts” [*charisma*] denotes “various types of revelation and miraculous abilities given by the Holy Spirit” (hence, the familiar terms of “charismatic gifts” or “spiritual gifts”). Since this passage is simply the first of three such lists given in the New Testament, it only supplies a partial picture of God’s intention for such gifts. Even Paul’s use of the word *gifts* [*charisma*] earlier in 1 Corinthians 7:7 opens up some other possibilities since Paul used it to describe both the states of “being married” and of celibacy – neither of which we would normally consider to be supernatural.<sup>25</sup> Paul saw both these states as having their own particular function and blessings for disciples, and in this way considered them both *gifts* from God – the married man is equipped to fight against immorality (1 Corinthians 7:2) and the unmarried man is free to focus on Christ without having his attention divided (1 Corinthians 7:32-34).

A few years later, Paul wrote the letter of Romans and again listed various gifts [*charisma*]:

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving [*diakonia*], let him serve [*diakonia*]; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. (Romans 12:6-8)

If this list and not the one found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 was used as the basis for defining the nature of gifts [*charisma*], the emphasis would have been somewhat different. Although this list is given in a similar context of the church being a single body made up of members with different functions (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 and Romans 12:3-5), Paul focused much more on the human operation involved in exercising these gifts as compared to the earlier emphasis of the miraculous distribution to chosen individuals. In fact, these gifts seemed to be describing the ability to function within the body of Christ, and Paul’s admonition to the Romans was to use these abilities in the right way. In this list, serving [*diakonia*] is listed as a gift and the one possessing it was simply instructed *to serve*. Of all the gifts mentioned here, only prophecy would normally be considered *supernatural*, but even this would not always hold true, since prophecy could also be reliably repeated by one who heard it – either by word of mouth or letter. Paul’s apparent change of focus in Romans 12:6-8 simply confirms his introductory comment in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 that these manifestations of the Spirit were given for the common good, for different kinds of service [*diakonia*] to the Lord and for different kinds of working of God in all people.

Later still, after Paul had written Romans, Peter also cited a list of gifts [*charisma*] in his first letter; but in this instance simply categorized them by how they were used practically:

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve [*diakonéō*] others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves [*diakonéō*], he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

These general terms for speaking and serving [*diakonéō*] could easily include many kinds of *speaking* (i.e., preaching, teaching, public reading of Scripture, encouraging, etc.) and many kinds of *serving* (i.e., leading, benevolence, administration, etc.) – with speaking and serving sometimes even overlapping

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<sup>25</sup> Jesus explained the possibilities for celibacy in Matthew 19:10, “For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven.”

in practice. Interestingly, this passage doesn't even mention the miraculous aspect of these gifts, but instead the emphasis is given fully to functionality and spirituality.

In review, consider the comparison below of the three "recorded" lists of gifts [*charisma*] given in the New Testament. If we use the chronologically latest list of 1 Peter 4:10-11 to supply two row titles (speaking and serving) and then divide the specific gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 accordingly, we are left with a remainder from the list in 1 Corinthians 12 that closely resembles another list found in Mark 16:17-20 described as "signs of confirmation" worked by the Lord in connection with the preaching of the apostles):

| <b>Comparison of Lists of "Spiritual Gifts" [Gr., <i>charisma</i>] in the New Testament</b> |   |   |   |                                    |
|---|---|---|---|------------------------------------|
| <b>FUNCTION</b>   | <b>Mark 16:17-20<br/>(describing 30 AD)</b>   | <b>1 Corinthians 12:8-10<br/>(55 AD)</b>  | <b>Romans 12:6-8<br/>(57 AD)</b>  | <b>1 Peter 4:10-11<br/>(64 AD)</b> |
| <b>SPEAKING</b>   |   | <p>prophecy</p> <p>faith</p> <p>word of wisdom</p> <p>word of knowledge</p> <p>interpretation of tongues</p>                  | <p>prophecy<br/>(according to the measure of faith)</p> <p>teaching in his teaching</p> <p>exhorting in his exhortation</p>   | speaking                           |
| <b>SERVING MINISTRY</b>   |   |   | <p>service / ministry in serving</p> <p>giving (sharing) <i>generously</i></p> <p>leading <i>zealously</i></p> <p>showing mercy <i>cheerfully</i><br/>(i.e., helping those in need)</p> | serving (ministering)              |
| <b>SIGNS OF CONFIRMATION</b>  | <p>(pick up serpents and drink<br/>deadly poison without harm)</p> <p>(speak new tongues)</p> <p>(cast out demons)</p> <p>(heal the sick)</p> | <p>working of miracles</p> <p>kinds of tongues</p> <p>distinguishing spirits<br/>(?driving out?)</p> <p>gifts of healings</p> |   |                                    |

From the shift in emphasis of these lists over time, it is clear that God's continued working *through the gifts* was the most important component – not the fact that they had been originally initiated through the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.

## THE MIRACLE OF THE WRITTEN WORD

The transition from *new prophecy and revelation* being given through select individuals, to *prophecy and revelation* being written down and circulated also had its effect on how the Spirit was manifested through certain *spiritual gifts* [*charisma*]. First, the need for confirmation of the spoken word through signs, wonders and miracles would eventually disappear as the message took the form of accredited and authoritative writings from already known and recognized sources (i.e., the apostles and a few others). These inspired writings would then come to be circulated throughout the churches and eventually collected and recognized as the New Testament Scriptures. The purpose for signs, wonders and miracles was clearly demonstrated in John's gospel where John exclusively described the miracles of Jesus as "miraculous signs" [Gr. *sēmeion*]<sup>26</sup> performed by Jesus so that people would:

<sup>26</sup> The NIV translators added the word "miraculous."

- 1) *Put their faith in him* (i.e., his disciples – John 2:11; many people – John 2:23; and even a Roman official's household – John 4:53-54).
- 2) *See his true identity* (i.e., teacher from God – John 3:1,2, 9:16; the Prophet promised by Moses – John 6:14; and even possibly the Christ – John 7:31).
- 3) *Be tested in their hearts* (i.e., a great crowd followed him – John 6:2; many came out to hear and see him – John 12:18; some demonstrated their hardness of heart by disbelief and even hate for Jesus – John 11:47-53, 12:37ff).

John also explained the extension of this purpose into the written word when he summarized his rationale for recording the miraculous signs of Jesus in his gospel:

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you might have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)

John wrote down his gospel for the very same reason that Jesus performed his miracles – so that people would believe in the message of Jesus Christ and receive eternal life. This confirmation through the testimony of the written word has continued on through the ages until today, where the Scriptures are still powerfully at work, building faith in Jesus, testifying to his true identity and testing our hearts through our response to the message.<sup>27</sup>

Although it was true that Jesus promised his original disciples “that these signs would accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well” (Mark 16:17-18), this accreditation is now fulfilled through a single enduring miracle or sign – the materialization of the New Testament Scriptures.<sup>28</sup> The church was built on the proclamation of “the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 3:4-5). From apostolic times until now, Christ’s constant purpose has been that God’s household be “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20). With the message of the apostles and prophets written down, accredited and in circulation, God’s purpose for signs, wonders and miracles as means of confirmation was fulfilled.

Secondly, the completeness of God’s message, given through the written testimony of the apostles and prophets, would cause certain other gifts [*charisma*] (including the ability to perform *confirming* signs, wonder and miracles) to pass away. At some point in their ministries both Peter and Paul became convinced through the Holy Spirit that God’s purpose was that “new” Scriptures were being produced:

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<sup>27</sup> This is not to say that God no longer works miracles of healing or intervenes in human affairs in response to the prayers of faith, but instead to understand that now God confirms the spoken message of any preacher by simple agreement with the testimony of his written word.

<sup>28</sup> This directly parallels the writing ministry of Moses – “He led them out of Egypt and did wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the desert” (Acts 7:36). Once Moses was accredited before the people, his legacy in the first five books of the Old Testament never needed miraculous reaffirmation – people either accepted it as truth or rejected it.

For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." (1 Timothy 5:18 citing both Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7)

Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him—to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen. (Romans 16:25-27)

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:14-16)

Paul confidently cited Luke's gospel together with of the Law of the Moses, and Peter compared both the use (and abuse) of Paul's letters to the treatment of already recognized Scripture (obviously including the Old Testament).

Paul also understood that this process of receiving new revelation from God was limited and would soon come to an end. Consider Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 13:8-12 [NASB]:

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. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.<sup>29</sup>

1 Corinthians 13:9-10 could also read: "For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the *complete* comes, the partial disappears." Notice that Paul is not saying categorically that all prophecy and all knowledge would pass away but instead that these incomplete and partial gifts would disappear when the "perfect" or "complete" appears. Up until this time, God had given different "parts" or "portions" of prophecy, tongues (i.e., "*interpreted*" tongues = prophecy according to 1 Corinthians 14:5) and knowledge to different individuals at different times and places, but Paul was looking forward to the time when complete revelation (i.e., complete prophecy and knowledge) would be available for everyone.<sup>30</sup> The allusion that "now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face" reminds us of God's words concerning Moses in Numbers 12:8: "With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles" as compared to other prophets of the Lord (implied by the passage). Therefore, when the "perfect" or "complete" comes and replaces the "partial" or "incomplete," the difference will be as great as that

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<sup>29</sup> *Italicized words* in the NASB text indicate that the translators added those words for clarity.

<sup>30</sup> One of the greatest paradoxes of mainstream "charismatic" theology is that although it maintains that all the same spiritual gifts of the apostolic period should be available today, it also asserts that the New Testament is complete and that no one should add additional books to it. In fact, any group would be condemned as *deviant* and *heretical* that would even attempt to add new "inspired" material to the established collection of New Testament books.

between the complete foundation for the old covenant as revealed through Moses, and the partial revelation given to other prophets of the Lord.

God has defined his purpose for the Scriptures and declared that they are sufficient and complete. Although someone might argue that the New Testament Scriptures are not complete because not all of their questions are satisfactorily answered, this can be compared to the Pharisees' disbelieving attitude and demand that Jesus perform additional miraculous signs. Paul further clarified this concept when he wrote his last letter:

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16,17)

This emphasis on the written word is markedly different than Paul's earlier emphasis on desiring spiritual gifts, *especially* prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:1). Paul regarded the Scriptures as the "complete" solution for prophecy and knowledge: the New Testament supplying the church with a permanent foundation on which to be built through succeeding generations, and both Old and New Testaments supplying each disciple with enough teaching and training to completely and thoroughly fulfill God's will for their lives.

## THE ONGOING FUNCTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

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Although "spiritual gifts" [*charisma*] were initially manifested through miraculous means in the early church, this eventually shifted to an emphasis on the function that they modeled in building up the church and their real power to minister to the church for the common good. Therefore, in New Testament terminology, the normal ability and opportunity for different kinds of "speaking" and "serving," in accordance with apostolic teaching and example, could also be considered *charismatic gifts*, just as much as the more spectacular practices of miracle-working, prophecy, and speaking in other languages (tongues). These natural or learned abilities could be understood as *spiritual gifts* since they had their origin in God's grace and were underserved by those who benefited from them. Although the content of this *speaking* (i.e., prophecy, faith, wisdom, knowledge, interpretation of tongues, teaching, exhortation) was initially given by God to humanity by supernatural means, these messages could later be passed on to others by normal means (i.e., by mouth or by letter) with exactly the same spiritual impact as when received with faith (Romans 10:17; Galatians 3:2). The long-term significance of *charismatic gifts* in speaking and serving was always meant to be ministry, rendered in the Lord's name and as the working of God in all people, and not confined to just the testimony of their miraculous origins through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is incorrect to say that all spiritual gifts have passed in our modern age, but it is more correct to acknowledge that some gifts including "partial prophecy," "partial knowledge," and "miraculous signs of confirmation," have become obsolete with the reception of the accredited testimony of the New Testament scriptures.

There is one note of caution that needs to be added to this discussion of gifts: "spiritual gifts do not guarantee spirituality." As far as can be deduced from the New Testament record – after Jerusalem, no church appeared to be more endowed with spiritual gifts from its onset than the church in Corinth. Paul opened his letter of 1 Corinthians with the following words:

I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge—because our testimony was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not

lack any *spiritual gift* [*charisma*] as you eagerly wait for our Lord to be revealed. (1 Corinthians 1:4-7)

Just as Mark ended his gospel with “the Lord worked with them [i.e., *the apostles*] and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (Mark 16:20), so Paul affirmed that his testimony had been confirmed by the reception of the full roster of spiritual gifts – the Corinthians “did not lack any spiritual gift.” Unfortunately, at the same time, there was something that the Corinthians did lack – *spirituality*.

After addressing the divisive attitude of the disciples in Corinth and their arrogance regarding spiritual wisdom in the first two chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul stated:

I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ ... You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? (1 Corinthians 3:1-3)

Paul went on to discuss the “lowliness” of Apollos and himself, reminding the Corinthians that they were “only servants [*diakonos*]” and that God is the one who “made it grow” (1 Corinthians 3:5). And then after another 23 verses of similar discussion, Paul stated:

Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written.” Then you will not take pride in one man over against another. For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? (1 Corinthians 4:6-7)

Truly one of the greatest challenges in being “spiritually-gifted” is to remain humble and refrain from comparing oneself to others, not forgetting that God is the true source of every good gift (James 1:17). There is a great temptation to measure the value of all other possible gifts by comparison to the virtue of our own particular gift.

Paul’s goes on to deal with the Corinthians’ tolerance of sin (1 Corinthians 5:1-13), misguided values even to the point of litigation against each other (1 Corinthians 6:1-11), sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:12-20), and so on. Later, Paul discusses spiritual gifts in greater detail and reinforces the fact that, although there are different kinds of gifts, they all come from the same Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4) and to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7). The church is the body of Christ and each one is part of it and therefore valuable (1 Corinthians 12:27). Paul then goes on to speak in hyperbole:

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

Although “speaking in tongues,” “prophecy,” and “giving” are all listed as *spiritual gifts* in either Romans, 1 Corinthians or both, to exercise such gifts without love is meaningless. Again, the possession and exercise of spiritual gifts does not guarantee spirituality.

Although “tongues have been stilled,” the corrective instruction given by Paul concerning the misuse of “speaking in tongues” in 1 Corinthians 14 teaches a valuable principle relating to possession of any gift today. “Speaking in tongues” was unique among all the gifts since it held no benefit for other members of the church unless another spiritual gift was also present – the gift of “interpretation.” At the same time, this circumstance demonstrated a noteworthy by-product of possessing and using a *spiritual gift* – it was possible that the individual who exercised the gift was encouraged, regardless of the result experienced by anyone else – i.e., “he who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who

prophecies edifies the church" (1 Corinthians 14:4). If those possessing *spiritual gifts* today are overly focused on "self-realization" and "individualism," even non-miraculous gifts like "speaking" and "serving" can be easily misused, since the holder of the gift can be more focused on exercising their gift (i.e., in teaching, leadership, serving, etc.) than on the actual effect that is being worked in the hearts of others. Paul corrected this emphasis in 1 Corinthians 14:12, "Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts [lit., *spiritual things*], try to excel in gifts that build up the church."

The safeguard against the misuse of spiritual gifts is simple if the possessor sees himself as a servant and slave – an attitude that would protect the heart from thinking more highly than we ought and valuing our own edification over the edification of the church. The stories of Samson and Saul stand as a warning to all who would take a spiritual gift from God and use it to their own ends. God can take a spiritual gift away without us even realizing it and give our role to someone else. Even Judas received "authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness" (Matthew 10:1) but that experience did not guarantee either his faithfulness or ongoing spirituality. In Luke 10:17ff, the seventy-two returned to Jesus filled with joy exclaiming, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." To this Jesus replied, "Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Spiritual gifts are an awesome blessing from God, but they must be received and exercised in humility according to his will.

## 5 – SETTING THE EXAMPLE

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Although most of the transitions discussed at the beginning of this paper were global in nature and affected the church universally, they also resulted in changes in the life of the local church as well, especially in the area of church leadership.

### PATTERNS FOR CHURCH BUILDING IN ACTS

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The Jerusalem church provides us with the most detailed example of leadership transition among all the congregations described in the New Testament. The church began with just the apostles in Acts 2 [c. 30 A.D.], but within a short time, the duty of the “daily distribution of food” [lit., “daily serving (Gr., *diakonía*) of food”] to the widows began to interfere with their focus on the “ministry [Gr., *diakonía*] of the word and prayer.” It is noteworthy that this first instance of appointing additional leadership exemplified the concept of ministry in the church, since a specific need was identified and then spiritual men of character were chosen to take the responsibility for meeting that need (Acts 6:1-6). These seven men became known as “The Seven” and the process of their appointment would become the standard for future church practice.

Not long after their appointment, two of The Seven achieved greater notoriety when Stephen became the first martyr at the hands of the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, and Philip went on to evangelize Samaria and the coastal area of Palestine. By Acts 11:27-30 [c. 43 or 44 A.D.],<sup>31</sup> there were *prophets* and *elders* in the Jerusalem church who were apparently leading the church together with some of the apostles — at least until the time of Acts 15:6 [c. 49 or 50 A.D.]. Then by Acts 21:18 [c. 57 A.D.] it would appear that all the apostles had left Jerusalem and that the congregation was being led by James and the elders. Although it is impossible to determine exactly how long it took to appoint elders in the Jerusalem church (no more than 13 years), it is clear that the elders initially worked together with the apostles and eventually took the lead of the congregation.

Although it is more difficult to document the transitions experienced in other cities and regions, we do have some fragmentary glimpses of some of the more prominent congregations. The church in Samaria was begun in Acts 8:4-8 [c. 32 or 33 A.D.] through the preaching of Philip, after many of the disciples in Jerusalem had been scattered due to the persecution associated with Stephen’s death. God confirmed Philip’s message through miraculous signs. Many people believed his message and were baptized; then the apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria so that they could lay hands on the believers and further distribute gifts of the Holy Spirit. Although the church in Samaria is never mentioned again, the Acts narrative records that Philip traveled about and preached the gospel in many towns until he reached Caesarea (Acts 8:40). How long this mission lasted is unclear, but in Acts 21:8-16 [c. 57 A.D.], on his way to Jerusalem, Paul stopped in Caesarea and visited Philip, who is described by Luke as an “evangelist.”

The church in Antioch also started after the persecution in connection with Stephen through the evangelistic work of the scattered disciples from Jerusalem (Acts 11:19)—sometime later than 33 A.D. In response to the news of their evangelistic success, the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to them in Acts 11:22 [c. 41 or 42 A.D.]. Barnabas later brought Paul to Antioch. They worked together in that city for a year, after which they delivered a benevolent offering to the church in Jerusalem in Acts 11:30 [c. 43 A.D.]. By the time of Acts 13:1 [c. 44 A.D.], Luke recorded that there were “prophets” and “teachers” leading the church at Antioch (naming Barnabas and Paul among them). While the Antioch

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<sup>31</sup> This first mention of the Jerusalem elders has them being responsible for receiving the benevolent offerings – a function formerly fulfilled by the apostles (Acts 4:34-35).



leadership was fasting and praying, the Holy Spirit spoke to them and called Barnabas and Paul to a new “apostolic” ministry. In agreement with this new calling, in Acts 14:3-4, Luke began to refer to Barnabas and Paul as *apostles*; he wrote that God confirmed “the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.” After Barnabas and Paul returned from their mission, they were chosen along with some others to go to Jerusalem in connection with the question of circumcision and the Gentiles in Acts 15 [c. 49 A.D.]. As a result of that meeting, the apostles and elders in Jerusalem sent a general letter to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia without addressing any identifiable leadership roles in those places, and chose Silas and Judas, two of their own “leaders” (Acts 15:22) and “prophets” (Acts 15:32) to accompany Barnabas and Paul. Although Paul visited Antioch at least one more time in Acts 18:22 [53 A.D.], there is no further detail given regarding specific leaders or leadership roles in that congregation.

On Paul’s first missionary journey in Acts 13:1-14:25 [45-48 A.D.], Paul and Barnabas traveled through the cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. On their return trip they again visited Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch, where they strengthened the disciples and encouraged them to remain true to the faith. Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders for them in each church and committed them to the Lord with prayer and fasting. Although these elders may have been converted on the outward trip and were possibly disciples for only one to three years, there was also a chance that some of these people had been in Jerusalem at Pentecost (i.e., from Phrygia and Pamphylia – Acts 2:10, 41), and had become believers at that time. Although Paul revisited these churches again in Acts 16:1-5 at the beginning of his second missionary journey [c. 51 A.D.], there is no mention of the congregational leadership except that which is implied by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium speaking well of a young brother named Timothy, whom Paul wanted to take along with him, and then did.<sup>32</sup>

Paul came to Philippi, Macedonia in Acts 16:12-40 [c. 51 A.D.]. The church began with the conversion of Lydia and her household, and sometime afterwards, after a night in public jail, Paul and Silas moved on to Thessalonica. Although Paul probably passed through Philippi at least three more times (cf., 1 Timothy 1:3; 2 Corinthians 2:13; Acts 20:1, 6), it is only in Paul’s letter to the Philippians [c. 62 A.D.] that we read of the *overseers* and *deacons* being present and functional among the congregation.

Paul began his work in Corinth in Acts 18 [c. 52 A.D.]. The fact that we have so little detail about the local leadership of the church in Corinth may be part of the explanation for its many internal problems and lack of unity. The only clear reference to possible “local” leadership is found in 1 Corinthians 16:15 [c. 55 A.D.] where Paul commends the household of Stephanas (the first converts in Achaia) for devoting themselves to the service [*diakonia*] of the saints. Paul stayed in Corinth for more than a year and a half, accompanied by Silas, Timothy, Aquila and Priscilla. Some months later, after his conversion in Ephesus, Apollos also went to Corinth and spent time teaching the church (Acts 18:27-28). After Apollos again returned to Ephesus, he seemed unwilling to return to Corinth (1 Corinthians 16:12) and it appears that Titus then took his turn in helping to build the church in Corinth (2 Corinthians 7:13). Exactly how Peter came to have such great influence on this congregation is unclear (1 Corinthians 1:12), but the unexplained disappearance of Silas from Paul’s company after Corinth may somehow be of interest since Silas was last mentioned in Corinth and then later reappeared back with Peter in 1 Peter 5:12 [62-64 A.D.].

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<sup>32</sup> *Revision comment #3 for this edition.* At the same time, this episode is probably the same incident about which Paul reminded Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:14, “Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.” A prophetic word spoken at the time of Timothy’s departure seems quite fitting and these elders were probably those of Lystra or Iconium or possibly even both.

Finally, the last church for which we have any significant information is the church in Ephesus. Paul made a passing visit on his way back to Syria in Acts 18:18-21 [c. 53 A.D.] but later returned to Ephesus and spent three years building up this church, including his very effective ministry in the lecture hall of Tyrannus in Acts 19:1-21 [54-56 A.D.]. Paul's instructions to Timothy in 1 Timothy during a brief absence from Ephesus [55 or 56 A.D.] give great insight into Timothy's work as an "evangelist" as well as the training and appointment of "elders-overseers" and "deacons" [*diákonos*] for the local church. And then on his final tour through the region [c. 57 A.D.], Paul also met with the Ephesian elders-overseers and charged them to "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood" [NASB; Acts 20:28). From Paul's warning, we understand that the local elders-overseers were definitely responsible to God for the further care and leadership of the Ephesian church.

Despite sparse details and great differences in identified actors and settings, a similar scenario was played out repeatedly throughout the book of Acts – *apostles, prophets, teachers and evangelists* in various combinations and sequences worked together to establish churches and raise up and appoint local *elders-overseers* and *deacons*. Jesus had earlier promised before his death that he would send other kinds of ministers besides the apostles—i.e., "I will send them prophets and apostles" (Luke 11:49). This was further expanded in Matthew's record, "I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers [lit., scribes]" (Matthew 23:34). Paul wrote that Jesus fulfilled that promise "when he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men ... 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 4:8, 11). These gifts are defined elsewhere in the New Testament as roles of ministry [*diakonia*] and those that received them as ministers [*diákonos*]<sup>33</sup>, so the kind of heart and attitude common to all of them for their proper fulfillment had already been established through the teaching and example of Jesus.

## JESUS – THE "ROLE MODEL" FOR ALL ROLES

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Since Jesus is our perfect example, it is not surprising that every one of these roles can find exemplification and inspiration in various aspects of his earthly ministry. Through his person and ministry, Jesus demonstrated many aspects of what it is like to serve in roles like those of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers:

### APOSTLE – "ONE SENT"

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The Hebrew writer called Jesus "the apostle and high priest whom we confess" (Hebrews 3:1), and the gospels (especially John) repeatedly state that God *sent* [Gr., *apostellō*, root form of the word "apostle"] Jesus and described his mission with the following phrases:

- "to the lost sheep of Israel" (Matthew 15:24).

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<sup>33</sup> Passages that directly identify these roles with service [*diakonia*] and servants [*diákonos*] are:

- Being *apostles* (in general, Acts 1:17, 25; then specifically *Paul* – Acts 20:24, 21:19; Romans 11:13; 1 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 3:3, 6, 6:4, 11:8, 23; Colossians 1:23, 25; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:11).
- Being *teachers* (by inference through ability and assigned tasks: *Archippus* – Colossians 4:17; *Apollos* – 1 Corinthians 3:5).
- Being *evangelists* (specifically *Timothy* – 2 Corinthians 3:3, 6, 6:4; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; 1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 4:5; and then by inference through parallelism with remarks about Timothy: *Tychicus* – Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7; *Epaphras* – Colossians 1:7).

- “to proclaim freedom for the captives and recovery of sight for the blind” (Luke 4:18).
- “not to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17).
- “to speak the words of God” (John 3:34); etc.

Jesus said, “the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me” (John 5:36). Therefore, Jesus knew exactly what it was like to be sent on a mission in the name of another, and then to use all his energy and resources to fulfill those objectives.

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## PROPHET

The ministry of Jesus so closely reminded the people of Judea of the Old Testament prophets, that some people even speculated that he was one of them resurrected from the dead (Matthew 16:14; Mark 6:15, 8:28). The Samaritan woman responded, “I can see you are a prophet,” when Jesus told her the truth about her life (John 4:19). And the two disciples on the road to Emmaus testified “Jesus of Nazareth ... was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people” (Luke 24:19). Indeed, the New Testament affirmed that Jesus was the prophet like Moses who was to come into the world (John 6:14; Acts 3:22-23, 7:37).

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## EVANGELIST – “ONE WHO PROCLAIMS GOOD NEWS”

Although this word was never applied to Jesus, the verb, “evangelize” [lit., “to proclaim good news”], was often used to describe his public ministry (Matthew 11:5; Luke 4:18, 19, 7:22, 8:1, 20:1). The central theme of this “good news” was that “the kingdom of God was near” (Mark 1:15). Jesus preached everywhere: in the cities, in the villages, in the countryside, in the temple and in the synagogues – as he explained to his disciples, “That is why I have come” (Mark 1:38; Luke 4:44).

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## SHEPHERD

Jesus fulfilled the Messianic prophecy of Micah 5:2, “for out of you [Bethlehem] will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel” (Matthew 2:6). Jesus demonstrated the heart of a shepherd in how he looked at the lost: “when he was with the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34). Jesus also viewed his disciples as sheep that could be scattered (Matthew 26:31) and as his lambs that needed to be fed and taken care of (John 21:15ff). In John 10:1-17 Jesus taught that he was the “Good Shepherd” who knows his sheep and they know him. He would care for his sheep even to the point of laying down his life for them.

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## TEACHER

This may be the word that most fully defined the ministry of Jesus, since he taught constantly and with such conviction, authority and insight into the Scriptures that the people were amazed (Matthew 7:28; Mark 1:22) – including silencing the Sadducees<sup>34</sup> in one instance (Matthew 22:33). Jesus taught by using parables (Mark 4:2), by directly quoting the Scriptures (Matthew 11:10), by asking questions (Mark 12:35) and even taught his disciples to pray (Luke 11:1). Friend and foe alike addressed him as “Teacher” (even “Rabbi”), and Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel and member of the Sanhedrin

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<sup>34</sup>The Sadducees were one of the more significant Jewish sects with great political influence during the New Testament period. Their thinking was marked by a strong secularism. They denied both the existence of angels and the possibility of human resurrection.

believed and declared to him, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him” (John 3:2).

Although the various roles defined by these titles were slightly more complex than just the simple meaning of the words (i.e., “evangelist” seemed to be involved with more than just public proclamation), Jesus’ life and ministry gave greater depth and context to their definitions. As already noted, Jesus said, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant [lit., *slave*] is greater than his master, nor is a *messenger* [lit., *apostle*] greater than the one who sent him” (John 13:15-17).

## THE MINISTRY OF “APOSTLE”

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Somewhere near the beginning of his ministry, Jesus spent a whole night in prayer and then chose twelve of his disciples and designated them “apostles” (lit., “one sent”) that they might be with him and that he might *send them out* to preach and to have authority to drive out demons and heal every disease and sickness (Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:14-15; Luke 6:13). That they became known as “The Twelve” is probably best explained by the fact that although there would be others that would also serve as “apostles,” these particular twelve enjoyed a unique status of personal training and relationship with Jesus – the actual number “12” seemed to have been chosen as a correlation to the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28; Revelation 21:14). During Jesus’ ministry on earth, the Twelve were also:

- 1) Privy to the true meaning of his teaching (Mark 4:10).
- 2) Sent out by Jesus ‘two by two’ on a limited mission to the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 10:5, 11:1; Mark 6:7).
- 3) Privately warned about his coming betrayal, condemnation, death and resurrection (Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32; Luke 18:31);
- 4) Present for the last Passover celebration and the inauguration of the Lord’s Supper (Matthew 26:20ff; Mark 14:17ff; Luke 22:14ff).

After the resurrection, “the remaining Eleven” met with Jesus on a mountain in Galilee and were commissioned to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:16-20). A little later, on the Mount of Olives, the Eleven saw Jesus again. He told them that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on them and that they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). In clarifying the meaning of the term “apostle,” *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* states: “The disciples begin their apostolic work when Jesus makes them co-workers. ... If the disciples have full power to speak and act as Jesus does, this does not confer rights but implies the duty of service... commissioning by Jesus means humiliation rather than exaltation... they make it a commission rather than an office.”<sup>35</sup> The mission of an apostle was to represent both God and Christ: “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me” (Luke 10:16).

In Acts 1 at Peter’s suggestion, based on some fresh insight into some Old Testament passages, the apostles cast lots and chose Matthias to take Judas’ apostolic ministry and place of *leadership* [lit., “oversight” – the same word as found in 1 Timothy 3:1 in describing the local responsibility of the elders and translated “office of overseer,” NASB]. Peter also stated that the one replacing Judas would need to be “one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

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<sup>35</sup> Kittel, G. (1985; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Page 71). Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans.

beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us” and “to become a witness with us of his resurrection” (Acts 1:15-26). The selection of Matthias underscored one of the primary functions of being an apostle – to be a witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This ministry of “testimony” and “bearing witness” was alluded to over and over again (*Peter* – Acts 2:40; *Peter and John* – Acts 3:15, 8:25; *apostles* (in general) – Luke 24:48; John 15:27; Acts 1:8, 2:32, 4:33, 5:32, 10:39-42, 13:31; *Matthias* – Acts 1:22) and was also given as the reason for the apostles producing the gospels and letters (i.e., John 19:35, 21:24; 1 Peter 5:1, 12; 1 John 1:2, 4:14). As already discussed in the preceding chapter, “God also testified to it [i.e., the truth of the testimony of those who saw him] by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will” (Hebrews 2:4).

The priorities of the apostolic ministry were well described by Peter, who explained his suggestion that others be given the responsibility for waiting on tables so that “we will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). With the exception of Peter, James and John, none of the Twelve were ever again mentioned by name in the New Testament after the Day of Pentecost.<sup>36</sup> Although the Acts narrative only recorded Peter and John traveling in a similar area as to Jesus in the gospels, their letters attest to the fact that Peter traveled as far as Rome (symbolically called Babylon in 1 Peter 5:13) and that John relocated to the vicinity of Asia Minor (Revelation 1:9) – James, of course, was killed and became the first of the Twelve recorded as being martyred for his faith in Acts 12:2 [43 or 44 A.D.].

As mentioned earlier in the overview, while Paul and Barnabas were serving in the “prophets and teachers” group at Antioch, they were each given “apostle” status due to the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit, and sent on a missionary journey where they preached the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 13:1ff). Paul emphasized his calling to be an apostle in almost every letter that he wrote (as did Peter), and in addressing the Gentile disciples in Rome he said, “Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them” (Romans 11:13-14). Once, after Paul had received a revelation from God, he went to Jerusalem where James, Peter and John agreed that just as Peter had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Jews, Paul had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:1-9). This special focus of Peter’s may also explain his two-decade association with the church in Jerusalem, since it was the undisputed center of the Jewish world in the first century.

Paul’s zeal for his ministry teaches us a lot about the work of an apostle. A few years after Paul had established the church in Corinth in Acts 18 [c. 52 A.D.]; false apostles came in masquerading as

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<sup>36</sup> The apostles apparently served together for a time in Jerusalem and then early church traditions ascribe to most of them different regions of the known world where they traveled and fulfilled their apostolic mission:

- *Philip* – Phrygia, Asia Minor, martyred in Hierapolis.
- *Andrew* – Asia Minor, Scythia, Greece, martyred in Achaia.
- *Bartholomew* – Elam, Media, Mesopotamia, Arabia, India, martyred in Armenia.
- *Thomas* – Parthia.
- *Matthew* – Ethiopia.
- *Matthias* – stayed in Judea.

List compiled from: (1) Eusebius, *Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, vol. 1, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890), 132; (2) John Foxe, *Foxe’s Annals of Martyrs* (Burlington, ON: Inspirational Promotions, 1960), p. 20-21, 25, 42-43.

apostles of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:13). Their identity is unclear, but they were apparently Jewish (2 Corinthians 11:22), claiming to be ministers of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:23), excellent speakers (2 Corinthians 11:5-6) and demanded financial compensation for their service (2 Corinthians 11:7). Paul facetiously referred to them twice as “super-apostles.” Paul also made it clear that the region of Achaia was assigned to him by God (2 Corinthians 10:13) – a fact supported by the Acts narrative, as it describes how Jesus and the Holy Spirit directed Paul during his second missionary journey (Acts 16-18).<sup>37</sup> On their first missionary journey, God enabled Paul and Barnabas to perform miraculous signs in confirmation of their message (Acts 14:3). Paul spoke of this *spiritual-giftedness* in 2 Corinthians 12:12, where he defended his apostolic ministry: “The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance.” So just like the Twelve, Paul testified and bore witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 18:5, 20:21,24, 23:11, 26:22, 28:23) and God confirmed his message through signs, wonders and miracles. Paul also based the defense of his apostleship on the fact that he had seen the risen Jesus and had been personally commissioned by him. In some ways the defense of his apostleship was a moot point as he had reminded the Corinthians in his earlier letter: “Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 9:2).

When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans from Corinth on his final tour through Achaia, Macedonia and Asia, he stated that his work in these regions was complete and that he was now planning to travel through Rome on his way to Spain: “it has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation” (Romans 15:20, [c. 57 A.D.]). This was just weeks or maybe months before his final farewell to the Ephesian elders, where he again reiterated that his work in that part of the world was finished and that they would never see him again (Acts 20:25, 38). Although Paul would always retain the special relationship of having become the father (in the faith) of the Corinthians through the gospel (1 Corinthians 4:15), there is no indication that this was meant to imply a permanent role of leadership in their lives or over the local churches.

The fact that there were other apostles besides the Twelve, Paul and Barnabas, is affirmed in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 where Paul lists all the different individuals and groups to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection – Peter, *the Twelve*, five hundred of the brothers at once, James, *all the apostles* and lastly to Paul. The simplest explanation of whom these others may have been can be found in Luke 10:1-17 – Jesus *appointed* (same word used of Jesus’ choosing between Matthias and Barsabbas to take Judas’ place) seventy[-two], *sent them out* (Gr., *apostellō*) “two by two” (as he had done with the Twelve in Mark 6:7) and gave them authority to heal the sick, drive out demons and announce the good news of the kingdom (again, just like he had done with the Twelve – Luke 9:1-6). As to whether general references to “the apostles” throughout the book of Acts (i.e., 1:2, 2:37, 42, 43, 4:33, etc.) were meant to include all possible apostles or just the Twelve is difficult to determine, but their presence together with the Eleven, the women, and the mother and brothers of Jesus would seem to be a reasonable explanation for why the group of believers in Jerusalem before Pentecost numbered about a hundred and twenty (Acts 1:13-15). The specific details of the missions and ministries of these other apostles are

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<sup>37</sup> The mandate of regional responsibility for the various apostles may also have influenced the history of Paul’s dealings with Ephesus and the province of Asia. At first Paul was prevented from going into Asia by the Holy Spirit in Acts 16:6 [c. 51 A.D.], but later when Paul had completed his first tour through Macedonia, Greece and Achaia he passed through Ephesus on his return trip to Syria (Acts 18:18-21, [c. 53 A.D.]). The Jews in the synagogue in Ephesus requested that Paul stay and spend more time, but he answered, “I will come back if it is God’s will” (v. 21). God’s will did become clear (either through revelation or maybe even discussion with others in Jerusalem or Antioch), because after spending some in Antioch, Paul returned to Ephesus, where he worked for the next three years [54-56 A.D.].

basically unknown to us, with the possible exception of a short greeting of Paul in his letter to the Romans: "Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was" (Romans 16:7). Although Paul's general statement about those things that mark an apostle would seem to imply that these men were also able to perform signs and wonders as a confirmation of their message, Paul's desire to visit the Roman church so that he could impart some "spiritual gift" to them (Romans 1:11)<sup>38</sup> while these two other apostles were already present, may imply that not all apostles were equally endowed with the ability to pass on spiritual gifts to others through the "laying on of hands"—in other words, some apostles were simply "missionaries" and not equivalent to "The Twelve."<sup>39</sup> Only Peter and John (Acts 8:18), and Paul (Acts 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6) are specifically mentioned as having the ability to pass on spiritual gifts to others—something that normally belonged only to "The Twelve," but then granted to Paul as one "abnormally born" (1 Corinthians 15:8).

Finally, Paul confirmed in his letters what seemed to be true from the Acts narrative: the ministry of an apostle was not meant to be a permanent role in any one local church, but instead involved the universal ministry of passing on revelation from God, starting new churches and raising up the local leadership. The details of Paul's work in Corinth exemplifies this concept, showing that his purpose was to bring them to perfection and maturity:

Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong. Not that people will see that we have stood the test but that you will do what is right even though we may have seemed to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is for your perfection. This why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down. (2 Corinthians 13:6-10, [c. 56-57 A.D.])

At an even more difficult moment about one year earlier, Paul described this humiliation and exposure like being "on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena" (1 Corinthians 4:9). As glorious as the ministry of an apostle may have seemed, at a local level Paul faced

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<sup>38</sup> This is the only instance where the actual phrase "spiritual gift" [Gr., *pneumatikos charisma*] is found in the Greek text of the New Testament.

<sup>39</sup> Although the two unnamed brothers who accompanied Titus to Corinth (2 Corinthians 8:23) and Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25) are also referred to as *apostles* (Gr., *apostolos* translated "representative" and "messenger" respectively in the NIV), these could also be classified as "apostles of the churches" and not the more typical "apostles of Christ." (This idea also resonates with the use of the word "servant" [Gr., *diakonos*] which took a different sense when used on the congregational level).

This secondary use of the word *apostle* as a "representative" or "messenger" also has an interesting parallel in the use of the word "angel" [Gr., *aggelos*] as a *human messenger*:

- John the Baptist as the messenger sent by God to prepare the way for Jesus (Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27).
- John's disciples as messengers sent by John to Jesus with some questions (Luke 7:24).
- Disciples of Jesus whom he sent as messengers ahead of him to a Samaritan village to get things ready for him on his way to Jerusalem (Luke 9:52).
- James described the spies that Rahab protected as messengers (James 2:25).

This usage of the word "angel," although limited, may possibly explain the identity of the *angels of the churches* in the book of Revelation as *messengers of the churches* receiving/delivering John's letter to their respective congregations (Revelation 1:20; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14).

the same challenge that John the Baptist faced with the growing ministry of Jesus: "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. ... He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:27-30). To be successful in the apostolic ministry meant that each apostle needed to be a true minister of Jesus Christ with the heart to serve and the humility of a slave. "Feeding the sheep" would always prove to be a better description of the *apostolic* ministry than "leading the sheep" since the building up of the church was the focus and not individualistic achievement or commendation.



## 6 – DIFFERENT KINDS OF SERVICE [MINISTRY] BUT THE SAME LORD

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Jesus gave certain ministry roles for the establishment of the church – some would help to lay the doctrinal foundation for the church universally and others would both plant and water new churches throughout the world to maturity. Although these ministry roles shared some common characteristics like teaching, setting an example for the believers in faith and way of life, and providing leadership on the local level, they also had some fundamental differences that complemented each other and worked together to build the right foundation and set the right example for future generations of believers.

### THE MINISTRY OF “PROPHET”

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At some point after the church began in Acts 2, Jesus gave additional roles to other disciples through the Holy Spirit that supported and supplemented the ministry of the original apostles. Jesus had spoken of this scenario earlier in Luke 11:49 where he promised to send “apostles *and prophets*” (paralleled to “prophets and wise men and *teachers* [lit., *scribes*]” in Matthew 23:34). Since these roles varied enough from each other to warrant differentiation in the Acts narrative (i.e., *apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists*), it would be useful to examine just how they differed and what they had in common with each other in assisting the apostles “to prepare God’s people for works of service [*diakonia*], so that the body of Christ might be build up” (Ephesians 4:12).

Although the New Testament prophets shared a similar gift to their Old Testament counterparts in receiving revelation from God to be passed on to his people, the already established presence of the apostles who had been personally trained and commissioned by Jesus placed them in a secondary, supportive role in building up the church. In Paul’s overview of ministry roles given by the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:28 [55 A.D.], he ranked the prophets immediately after the apostles (i.e., “in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, ...”), and in his letter to the Ephesians [61-62 A.D.] Paul paired them with the apostles in the establishment of the “doctrinal” foundation of the church:

Consequently, you are no longer foreigner 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. (Ephesians 2:19-20)

In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. (Ephesians 3:4-5)

The prophets uniquely shared this global role with the apostles – to speak for God and pass on new revelation and prophecy to God’s people. Prophets were not necessarily eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ nor had Jesus personally trained them during his earthly ministry, but Jesus through the Holy Spirit had given this prophetic ministry to them (Ephesians 4:11).

Just as Peter described the work of some of the Old Testament prophets with “it was revealed to them that they were not serving [*diakonéō*] themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven” (1 Peter 1:12), a number of these New Testament prophets (along with some of the apostles) would also leave “inspired writings” after them for the serving of disciples of future generations. Paul also described the gospel that he preached as being “now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him” (Romans 16:26). Paul was the first to acknowledge that this initial system of disseminating God’s word

through the “apostles and prophets” was incomplete because each one only prophesied in part (including him), and he looked forward to a time when “the *perfection* [i.e., *complete*] comes” and “the *imperfect* [i.e., *incomplete*] disappears” (1 Corinthians 13:10).

While any person given the role of “prophet” by God would naturally possess the *spiritual gifts* [*charisma*] of prophecy and revelation; it does not appear that the converse was necessarily true – possession of these gifts did not necessarily make someone a “prophet.” Prophecy was an important source of strengthening, encouragement and comfort, and different than “uninterpreted” tongue speaking, it edified the church, not just the individual (1 Corinthians 14:3,4). There is a sense that these *spiritual gifts* [*charisma*] could operate independently of the ministry of a prophet when we read passages like:

- “If a man prays or prophesies...” (1 Corinthians 11:4).
- “If a woman prays or prophesies...” (1 Corinthians 11:5).
- “If an unbeliever or someone who does not understand come in [to your meeting] while everybody is prophesying...” (1 Corinthians 14:24).
- and “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire ‘spiritual gifts’ [lit., *spiritual things*], especially the gift of prophecy” (1 Corinthians 14:1).

It would seem that prophecy and revelation could come spontaneously to an individual in much the same way that “tongue-speaking” came.

The prophet, on the other hand, could control his ability to prophesy as evidenced by these directives given for public assembly of the church in Corinth:

Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. (1 Corinthians 14:29-33)

In writing to the Corinthians, Paul also asked the prophets present in the congregation to affirm his letter – an action that would in turn validate their prophetic ministry and spirituality (1 Corinthians 14:37-38). In the early decades of the church, especially before the letters and gospels began to circulate, the ministry of the prophets and gift of prophecy were vital in supplying much needed instruction and encouragement to the local congregations. In 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 [52 A.D.] which predates Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, Paul admonished the disciples, “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good.”

On a congregational level, the prophets also provided additional leadership to the early church either by supplementing the work of the apostles locally, or even in some cases, forming part of a leadership group (without apostles) working to bring a local church to maturity. After the Jerusalem council came to its conclusions and decided to send a letter to the Gentile converts in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia, the apostles and elders, and the whole church decided to send two of their own men to Antioch with the letter in the company of Paul and Barnabas. These two men, Judas and Silas, were both *leaders* among the brothers (Acts 15:22, [49-50 A.D.]) and prophets (Acts 15:32), so they said much to strengthen and encourage the church in Antioch. This congregation in Antioch was also the first prominent Gentile church to be planted and was led initially by a group of five prophets and teachers. Barnabas and Paul were part of that original group. Considering that prophets were ranked before teachers (1 Corinthians 12:28), and Barnabas was named first in the list and Paul named last, Barnabas most likely functioned as a “prophet” in the original group while Paul would have worked as a “teacher.” How long the other prophets and teachers stayed in Antioch is impossible to determine, but it was clear

from the example of Acts 13:1ff that they were a leadership devoted to the ministry of the word and prayer, and that the Holy Spirit was moving powerfully in their ministry.

Finally, it is important to understand that not every instance of “prophetic utterance” was necessarily a doctrinal statement or deep insight into spiritual truth or description of how final judgment would come to pass. Sometimes, the prophets predicted mundane events of the times or even spoke very personally concerning an individual’s life and future. The aforementioned sending of Judas and Silas in Acts 15 was not the first time a group of prophets went down to Antioch from Jerusalem, since some prophets had made the same trip years earlier in Acts 11. One of the prophets, named Agabus, stood up and predicted through the Spirit that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. This specific revelation motivated the disciples in Antioch to take up a collection for the brothers in Judea, which they sent to the elders in Jerusalem by Barnabas and Paul (Acts 11:27-30, [c. 44 A.D.]). More than a decade later, while Paul was staying at the house of the Philip the *evangelist* in Caesarea (Acts 21:8ff, [c. 57 A.D.]), this same Agabus came down from Judea and predicted Paul’s impending capture and imprisonment in Jerusalem. Paul also referred to a prophecy made concerning Timothy’s ministry when a body of elders had laid their hands on him (1 Timothy 1:18, 4:14) – this may have been in reference to a parting blessing that he might have received from the elders in Lystra as he left them to accompany Paul (Acts 16:1-3). In much the same way that “speaking in tongues” produced a byproduct of encouragement to the speaker himself, it would seem that the “gifts of prophecy and revelation” in the early church not only helped provide a doctrinal foundation for the church but also gave guidance and direction to individuals and groups in very specific situations.

## THE MINISTRY OF “TEACHER”

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As already outlined in Chapter Three, in the Jewish society of the first century, a teacher was both powerful and influential. In fact, some “teachers of the law” (or scribes) were even members of the Sanhedrin (the highest-ranking council of the Jewish nation). Gamaliel, one such teacher of the law, was honored by all the people and was so influential that he was able to persuade and calm (through his wise counsel and advice) an infuriated assembly ready to harm the apostles (Acts 5:33-40). But it was Jesus himself who truly gave the role of “teacher” prestige for the Christian community since “Teacher” or “Rabbi” was the most frequently used title given to him in the gospels (more than 50 times) – directly corresponding with the usage of the word “disciple” for those that followed him. Despite the outward similarities between the ministry of Jesus and the other teachers of his day, “the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Matthew 7:29; Mark 1:22).

The fact that Paul ranked “teachers” third after apostles and prophets in 1 Corinthians 12:28 was not meant to demean the ministry of teachers, but instead to lift up the ministry of apostles and prophets. Whereas the apostles and prophets were God’s instrument to convey “revelation and prophecy” to the church firsthand, the teachers were those who simply continued the process by propagating further these already established truths. Jesus alluded to the process of becoming a teacher in Luke 6:40:

A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

There is nothing inherently miraculous about becoming a teacher, although it does require a certain amount of innate ability and aptitude. That “a student who is fully trained will become like the one who instructed him” is matter of natural process. The intentional element of this education and training (as opposed to a miraculous calling and empowering) is demonstrated by James’ warning to those who might want to be teachers: “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because

you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly” (James 3:1) – reminiscent of the warning of Jesus to those servants who were put in charge of the other servants (Luke 12:48). If being a teacher were dependent on some sort of miraculous qualification, the presumption of being a teacher inappropriately would have been much more difficult and consequently more easily proven to be false.

Whereas the apostles and prophets received a message from God that had “been revealed [to them] by the Spirit” (Ephesians 4:5) and not by men, teachers were those who were trained through study, listening, and dialogue (and in the Christian context through wisdom and insight given by the Holy Spirit). This is not to say that apostles and prophets did not also gain knowledge in the ordinary way (i.e., by learning) but emphasizes that they had been given some portion of revelation by God directly. This is not to say that teachers could not have also received some sort of miraculous gift through the Holy Spirit, but simply to illustrate that it was not imperative to the carrying out of their ministry. Therefore, the difference between the ministry of a prophet and that of a teacher was not necessarily the content of their message, but more in the means by which they had gained their knowledge – the prophet may have received it directly from God while the teacher had simply learned it from another.

Just as there were similarities between the Christian prophets and their Old Testament counterparts, the Christian teachers seemed to share some characteristics in common with the Jewish teachers of the first century as well. Remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 13:52:

Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.

For a teacher of the law to become a disciple did not negate the value of his previous knowledge or training, but rather augmented it and put it into the proper perspective.

One of the most well-known examples of such a transformation was the account of Apollos in Acts 18:24-28:

Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

Whether Apollos had ever been officially recognized in Jewish society as a “teacher of the law” is not stated, but his ministry both before and after his conversion certainly exemplified the work of such a teacher. The fact that Apollos was able to serve powerfully from the moment of his conversion in the ministry of the church attests to both the quality of his character (since the brothers in Ephesus were supportive of him) and the idea that teachers (whether Jewish or Christian) were produced through a comparable training process.

This description of Apollos “vigorously refuting the Jews in public debate” in Corinth, is reminiscent of another conversion recorded earlier in the book of Acts – the account of Paul:

At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here

to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. (Acts 9:20-22)

There is no indication that Paul's knowledge of the Scriptures was "miraculous" or connected to his conversion, but simply that his preaching and teaching were now energized by his deep conviction that Jesus had risen from the dead and the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit.

Paul attested to his level of training and achievement in numerous passages dealing with his former way of life:

I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city [Jerusalem]. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. (Acts 22:3)

I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. (Galatians 1:14)

On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. (Acts 26:10)

Since Paul was "thoroughly trained under Gamaliel" who was himself a famous "teacher of the law," Paul's status as a Jewish teacher is implied. Paul also described his ministry in the church with these words: "I was appointed a preacher, an apostle and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles" (1 Timothy 2:7; cf. 2 Timothy 1:11).

Paul also seemed to fit very well with the description of Christian "teachers" [lit., "scribes"] that Jesus alluded to in Matthew 23:34:

Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and *teachers* [*scribes*]. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town.

These prophetic words were fulfilled in the life of ministry of Paul being a trained Jewish teacher, sent by Jesus (Acts 9:15), beaten and flogged at least eight times (2 Corinthians 11:24-25), chased out of town numerous times (Acts 13:50; 14:5-6; 17:5-10) and pursued to the next city by the Jews at least once (Acts 17:13).

In the same way that the ministries of the "apostles" and the "prophets" were more than just being "messengers" and "those who communicated revelation from God" respectively, the ministry of the "teachers" was more than just passing on to another what they had learned. On a congregational level, the teachers would have provided additional leadership to the early church (as did the prophets) either by supplementing the work of the apostles and/or prophets locally, or even in some cases, forming part of the leadership group, working to bring a local church to maturity (without the presence of either apostles or prophets). This additional leadership aspect is alluded to in Ephesians 4:11-12:

It was he [Jesus] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service [*diakonia*], so that the body of Christ may be built up....

The grammatical structure of the Greek text in this passage links "pastors" (i.e., *shepherds*) and "teachers" together by the use of a single article, most likely implying that they are describing the same person or ministry role. This is also the only passage in the New Testament that actually uses the noun

“pastor” (lit., “shepherd”) as a ministry title in the church and adds a dimension to our understanding of the teacher’s ministry.<sup>40</sup>

The only specific mention in the New Testament of recognized “teachers” was in the church at Antioch:

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1-3).

This “shepherd-teacher” shared the same objective as an apostle or prophet in a local congregation: “to prepare God’s people for works of service” and “build up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). This single passage also demonstrates that “teachers” did not directly correspond to “elder-overseer” since Paul was one of the teachers mentioned and “unmarried.” Considering the Old Testament background of the concept of a “shepherd-leader,” the role of “shepherd-teacher” would be an apt description of the kind of ministry needed on the congregational level. We are not aware of any “global” responsibilities normally held by the teachers in Antioch until there was a moment of divine intervention and a subsequent change of roles for Paul and Barnabas. God has always viewed his people as the flock of his pasture, and entrusts to the leadership of each flock the responsibility for strengthening the weak, taking care of sick, binding up the injured and searching for the strays. Without the direct oversight of the apostles, as well as no indication of having yet produced elders-overseers, the church in Antioch thrived and grew through the ministries of these prophets and shepherd-teachers.<sup>41</sup>

## THE MINISTRY OF “EVANGELIST”

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Although the role of *evangelist* appears last of all in the Acts chronology (Acts 21:8) and is not even mentioned in the list of 1 Corinthians 12 [55 A.D.], Paul placed the role of *evangelist* in third place before “shepherd-teachers” in the list found in Ephesians 4:11 [62 A.D.]. This ordering is probably best explained by the wider missional aspect of this ministry, in contrast to the more localized responsibility of the “shepherd-teacher.” Just as the prophets supplemented the ministry of the apostles in being an additional source of revelation and teaching for the church universally, the evangelists (lit., “one who tells good news”) shared in the “apostolic” mission of planting new churches and raising up local leadership in new cities and regions. This word is derived from the verb “to evangelize” (lit., “to tell good news”), often with a sense of initial presentation where those that are being evangelized are

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<sup>40</sup> Whereas the NIV gives the impression that the “elder-overseers” were also called “shepherds,” the NASB demonstrates that the correct translation of those passages requires the verb form “to shepherd” and not the intransitive phrase “be shepherds” (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). The viewpoint that “shepherd-teachers” and “elder-overseers” are the same role is common, but one of the conclusions of this author is that the gap left by insufficient numbers of apostles and evangelists to raise up mature leadership for local churches was filled by these recognized “shepherd-teachers”—many of whom who would have been natural candidates to eventually serve as “elder-overseers.”

<sup>41</sup> One other possible example of such a “shepherd-teacher” was the case of Archippus in Colossae since Paul wrote that Epaphras had begun the work in Colossae (Colossians 1:7), and then told Archippus to “complete the work he had received in the Lord” (Colossians 4:17; cf. Philemon 2). With no mention of elders, this may have been a charge to finish the work of training the church to maturity.

hearing “the good news” for the first time (Matthew 11:5; Luke 1:19; 2:10; 3:18, 4:18, 43; 7:22; 8:1; 9:6; 16:6; Acts 5:42; 8:4, 12, 25, 35, 40, etc.). Even though the word “evangelist” is only used in the New Testament three times, we can understand a great deal about this ministry since the other two instances directly refer to well-known personae – Philip and Timothy.

Our knowledge of Philip began with the appointment of the Seven, where he was recognized as being full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom and being capable enough to take over the apostles’ responsibility of waiting on tables (Acts 6:1-6). As the disciples were scattered from Jerusalem due to the persecution in connection with the stoning of Stephen, Philip went down to Samaria where he “preached the gospel” [lit., *evangelized*] and performed miraculous signs (Acts 8:4ff). Although there is no indication of what Philip’s ministry role was called at this point, his abilities were definitely more limited than those of the apostles, so Peter and John were sent down from Jerusalem to lay their hands on the converts and pass spiritual gifts on to them. Philip was later told to go to the desert by the Holy Spirit where he met the Ethiopian eunuch and after “sharing the gospel with” [lit., *evangelizing*] him – baptized him (Acts 8:26-39). Then Philip travelled about, “preaching the gospel” [lit., *evangelizing*] in all the towns until he reached Caesarea (Acts 8:40) That is exactly where Paul found him years later as he made his final journey to Jerusalem (Acts 21:8). Philip’s ministry was definitely characterized by “preaching the gospel” (or “evangelizing”) beyond Jerusalem!

Whereas the Acts narrative gave us a fair amount of detail about Philip’s ministry and almost no information concerning his training, the case of Timothy was reversed – in the book of Acts he is the perpetual helper and *minister in training* under Paul’s guidance. Timothy was the son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father and was raised knowing the Scriptures from childhood (Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 3:14-15). Both his mother and grandmother had converted to Christianity at an earlier date and were personal acquaintances of Paul (2 Timothy 1:5). The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him and since Paul decided to take him along on the journey, Timothy was circumcised because of the Jews who lived in that area (Acts 16:2-3, [c. 51 A.D.]). In much the same way that Paul and Barnabas had taken John Mark along with them as a helper on Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13:4-5), Timothy accompanied Paul and Silas on this second missionary journey in a similar capacity. After joining Paul’s company in Acts 16:3, Timothy is not specifically mentioned by name again until Acts 17:14 when he stayed behind with Silas in Berea while Paul traveled on to Athens. Timothy would have been present when Paul received a vision of a man from Macedonia asking for help and would also have been included in Luke’s “we” in Acts 16:10 – “After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to “preach the gospel to” [lit., *evangelize*] them.” Since Timothy was neither thrown into prison with Paul and Silas in Philippi, nor persecuted by the jealous Jews of Thessalonica, it would appear that he was not yet a visible leading personality or even considered a threat by the opponents of the gospel. After Timothy and Silas later joined Paul in Athens, they decided to send Timothy back to Thessalonica to see how things were going, and the writing of 1 Thessalonians [52 A.D.] was in response to the positive report that Timothy brought back to them (1 Thessalonians 3:1-10). In this particular letter Paul refers to the three of them (Silas, Timothy and himself) as “apostles of Christ” (1 Thessalonians 2:6), but it would appear that this was more in reference to their shared involvement in Paul’s apostolic ministry than a designation of their individual ministry roles and identities.

Paul’s confidence in Timothy continued to grow. By the time that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians [55 A.D.], he described Timothy in glowing terms to the church in Corinth:

Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church. (1 Corinthians 4:16-17)

Timothy's ongoing training was also evidenced by Paul's detailed instructions in 1 Timothy [56 A.D.] and the exhortation: "if you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed" (1 Timothy 4:6). This letter contains many important directives concerning church leadership: dealing with false teachers, maintaining a good conscience, proper attitudes for men and women in teaching and worship, qualifications for local leadership roles, rules for the support of widows, relationship to the elders (honor, rebuke and appointment), as well as special challenges for both slaves and the rich. Just a little later as Paul concluded his third missionary journey, he sent Timothy ahead of him into Macedonia, and Luke described Timothy at that time as his [Paul's] helper [lit., "one serving"] (Acts 19:22, [57 A.D.]). As Paul began his final trip to Jerusalem, Timothy was named as one of his traveling companions (Acts 20:4). That reference was the last specific mention of Timothy made in the Acts narrative. It is not clear if Timothy remained near Paul during his imprisonment in Caesarea or if he was out ministering to the churches, but Paul's later letters confirmed that their association remained close, and that Timothy continued his own ministry despite Paul's physical absence. Although, it is not possible to pinpoint the exact moment of Timothy being recognized as an "evangelist," it was definitely sometime before Paul wrote his last letter (2 Timothy, [64-67 A.D.]) and quite possibly even before Paul's first letter to Timothy [55 A.D.].

Even though hundreds of miles and at least a dozen years separated the ministries of Philip and Timothy, there are still a number of noteworthy similarities:

- 1) They were both commended by the churches where they were members.
- 2) They were both trained in the ministry by recognized apostles.
- 3) They both received the "laying on of hands" by the apostles and worked together with them.
- 4) They both traveled and were engaged in the public proclamation of the gospel and Scripture teaching.
- 5) They both eventually became known as *evangelists*, and continued their ministries independently without the ongoing company of an apostle.

Both Philip and Timothy were trained by apostles to continue on in the "apostolic" ministry initiated by Jesus and worked to spread the gospel even further throughout the world.

Although we know that Philip had received at least one spiritual gift [*charisma*] – the ability to perform miraculous signs (Acts 8:6)—the exact nature of the gift [*charisma*] that Timothy received through the laying on of Paul's hands is never clearly identified:

For this reason I remind you to fan into the flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. (2 Timothy 1:6-7)

Although this gift [*charisma*] may have been something like "working miracles" or "prophecy," it seems better explained as simply a reference to the gift of service [*diakonia*] or leadership (cf., Romans 12:8; 1 Peter 4:10), which in Timothy's case would have been his role and calling as an "evangelist." This explanation is supported by further consideration of the overall theme of the other challenges from Paul to Timothy in the rest of the letter of 2 Timothy:

- do not be ashamed to testify (1:8).
- what you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith in love in Christ Jesus (1:13).
- the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others (2:2).



- endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus (2:3).
- do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (2:15).
- don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels ... and the Lord's servant [lit., *slave*] must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful (2:23-24).
- continue in what you have learned and become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it (3:14).
- Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction (4:2).
- keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an *evangelist*, discharge all the duties of your *ministry*' (4:5).

As Paul neared the end of both his physical life and earthly ministry, he wanted to ensure that Timothy remained committed and faithful to the mission and entreated him to join with him in suffering for the gospel – an offer that Timothy apparently accepted, since the writer of Hebrews affirms sometime later that “Timothy had just been released” [from prison] somewhere in Italy (Hebrews 13:23).

The classification of Timothy as an evangelist and all the details given concerning his training and ministry provides us with enough evidence to conclude that at least one other associate of Paul also shared in this ministry of being an *evangelist*: Titus. Although the Acts narrative is strangely silent regarding Titus (not a single reference), Paul's letters provide us with numerous details concerning his background. In Galatians 2:1-14 Paul states that Titus was a Greek who had traveled with him and Barnabas to Jerusalem, and had not been compelled to be circumcised.<sup>42</sup> When the Corinthian church continued to struggle after Apollos had left and Paul was working with the church in Ephesus (Acts 19:1ff; 1 Corinthians 16:12), Paul sent Titus to Corinth to help strengthen the church (2 Corinthians 7:13-14, 12:18). After receiving a good report from Titus in Macedonia concerning the Corinthians (Acts 20:1-2, [c. 57 A.D.]), Paul sent Titus back with another letter and held him up to the Corinthians in much the same vein as he later held up Timothy to the Philippians (2 Corinthians 8:16-17; cf. Philippians 2:20). Finally, in Paul's last letter he reported that Titus has gone to Dalmatia with the clear implication of doing the work of the ministry (2 Timothy 4:10; [64-67 A.D.]).

Of course, the most obvious evidence of Titus' ministry as an evangelist is in the directions given him by Paul in the letter personally addressed to him – a letter that parallels Paul's first letter to Timothy in many ways. Although Paul described a number of specific disciples as his “fellow workers” including Timothy and Titus, these two were unique inasmuch as Paul addressed them both as “his true son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4). In his letter, Paul reminded Titus of the qualifications of the “elder-overseers” and gave him specific advice for dealing with false teachers. Paul also instructed Titus how to teach the different components of the church like men and women, young and old, slave and master, etc. Much like Timothy, Paul encouraged Titus to set the young men an example and not to let anyone despise him but to encourage and rebuke with all authority. Paul's opening instruction to Titus underscored the similarity between the mission objective of the apostles and that of the evangelists: “The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you” (Titus 1:5). Paul wrote to the Romans that “now there is no more place for me to work in these regions” (Romans 15:23), referring to Achaia, Macedonia and Asia – he was ready to move on to Spain, Lord willing. It would seem that neither the role of an apostle nor an

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<sup>42</sup> The details of this private meeting with James, Peter and John seem to indicate that it predated the Jerusalem conference of Acts 15:4ff, since not long after the meeting had ended Peter came to Antioch and still lacked conviction about associating with the Gentiles.

evangelist was meant to be permanent in one geographic location, but instead they sought to establish and build local churches that would be mature and equipped to fulfill the purposes of God under the oversight of local leadership.

## REACHING UNITY IN THE FAITH

The fundamental natures of the roles of prophets, evangelists and shepherd-teachers collectively function to define different aspects of the universal apostolic ministry:

- 1) *prophets* – laying the doctrinal foundation for the church through revelation.
- 2) *evangelists* – spreading the kingdom by planting new churches in new cities and regions.
- 3) *shepherd-teachers* – watering those churches to maturity.

There is no indication that these roles were ever meant to be permanent *in their "universal" application and thereby create regionalized structures and hierarchies*, but instead these ministries functioned together to bring a unity of faith and maturity that could eventually be sustained by the local church itself *with local ministers imitating these roles and functions*.<sup>43</sup> Consider the following diagram of how these ministry roles worked together and complemented each other:

| BUILDING PHASES |   | FOUNDATIONAL (1st generation)   | TRANSITIONAL  | PERPETUAL / MATURE  |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|
| FUNCTION        |   | SUPERNATURALLY INITIATED  | HUMANLY TRAINED & APPOINTED   | HUMANLY TRAINED & APPOINTED   |
| UNIVERSAL       | <b>OVERSIGHT</b><br>Geographic Responsibility to Preach the Gospel, Plant Churches, Train & Appoint Congregational Leadership   | <b>Apostles</b><br>Trained & Appointed by Jesus, Eyewitnesses, Supernaturally Gifted and Capable of Passing on Miraculous Gifts | <b>Evangelists</b><br>Itinerate Ministers of the Word (2nd generation from Apostles possibly supernaturally gifted) | <b>Evangelists (i.e., Missionaries) &amp; Teachers</b><br>Itinerate Ministers of the Word                         |
|                 | <b>CONVEY NEW PROPHECY, REVELATION &amp; TEACHING</b><br>(including new "Scripture" to complete the Old Testament)  | <b>Apostles, Prophets &amp; Teachers</b><br>Supernaturally Gifted with Inspired Speaking & Writing                              | <b>Shepherd-Teachers</b><br>Handing Down the Teaching (2nd generation from Apostles possibly supernaturally gifted) | <b>New Testament Scriptures</b><br>(Ephesians 2:19-22)  |
| LOCAL           | <b>OVERSIGHT</b><br>Congregational Responsibility to Shepherd (Lead), Care for, Be an Example, Teach, Labor in the Word, Defend the Faith, Exhort, Share, Show Mercy, Serve | <b>Apostles</b>   <b>Prophets</b>   <b>Teachers</b>   | <b>Evangelists</b>   <b>Shepherd-Teachers</b> (possibly even lacking sometimes)                                     | <b>Elders aka Overseers</b><br>Possibly supplemented by localized <b>Evangelists</b> and <b>Shepherd-Teachers</b> |
|                 | <b>ADDITIONAL SPEAKING &amp; SERVING</b>  | <b>Supernaturally Gifted Individuals</b>  | <b>Spiritual Individuals</b><br>(2nd generation from Apostles possibly supernaturally gifted)                       | <b>Congregational Servants aka Deacons</b>  |

Since the maturation process worked at different speeds in different locales and was organic in nature, involving the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals and relationships, this diagram by its delineation of stages is most likely much "neater" than the reality. At the same time, the reality of a foundational model that eventually evolved into a form of organizational maturity (or completion) is historically accurate and demonstrates the plan of world evangelization in the first century.

This table also illustrates a number of important trends in this process of transition and maturation:

- 1) The apostles trained "evangelists" to complete the mission of expanding the kingdom. These evangelists were not necessarily miraculously "gifted," and it is not unreasonable to assume that they in turn would have trained up more evangelists if the mission had not yet been completed in their lifetimes—a possible nuance of 2 Timothy 2:2.
- 2) Although apostles and evangelists could serve temporarily as the "leaders of congregations" (by natural default so to speak), this was never demonstrated as a long-

<sup>43</sup> *Revision comment #4 for this edition.* The italicized phrases have been added for clarity.

term objective of their ministry. However, there might have been a role change at a later time in their lives (i.e., became *elders* of a particular local congregation—i.e., *Peter* in 1 Peter 5:1; *John* in 2 John 1; 3 John 1).

- 3) Just as it was necessary for the apostles to appoint and train “evangelists” to carry on the “universal” work of preaching and planting, on a local level it was sometimes necessary for apostles or evangelists to train and appoint “shepherd-teachers” that would carry on the work of bringing the church to maturity. Therefore, on a local level, apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherd-teachers all shared the same objective: to raise up and appoint “elder-overseers” and local ministers.
- 4) When the apostles and prophets had finished writing down the foundational revelation necessary for supporting the church universally, those miraculously empowered roles would eventually vanish, since evangelists and shepherd-teachers could now fulfill God’s plan “to prepare God’s people for works of service [*diakonia*], so that the body of Christ might be build up” (Ephesians 4:12), using the already accredited teaching.

It would appear that in a similar way in which *spiritual gifts* [*charisma*] were initially manifested miraculously for the purpose of equipping “speaking and serving” [*diakonéō*] to build up the church, these different ministry roles listed in Ephesians 4:11 were given as gifts by Christ to model how this “speaking and serving” should be done, thereby setting the standard for the training up and eventual appointment of local *elders-overseers* and *ministers*. It would also seem to follow that, parallel to the cessation of *partial* prophecy, *partial* knowledge and tongues, “when the perfection comes” (1 Corinthians 13:9-10), the immediate need for these specific roles of apostles, prophets, and evangelists would also pass as the local churches (body of Christ) “reached unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and became mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). Consequently, a mature congregation led by capable elders/overseers and served by qualified deacons would be able to fulfill God’s plan as described in the next three verses of Ephesians 4:14-16:

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Therefore, as we consider the specific ministry of the “shepherd-teacher” among all the ministry roles listed in Ephesians 4:11 in the building up of the church, it seems that their ministry resonates the most with the mandates and objectives of the local church leadership and ministry.<sup>44</sup>

Although the New Testament clearly states the commission to build a worldwide brotherhood, there is no indication that the roles listed earlier in Ephesians 4:11 were ever intended to maintain unity through a “universal” structure of human leadership. Undoubtedly, the relationships of that initial group of disciples in Jerusalem gave the early church a natural sense of history, familial connection and partnership as the apostles spread out across the world, but the fact remains that no directives nor example was given in the New Testament that this “launching pad” of ministry roles and structure was ever meant to be permanent. Instead, the Scriptures emphasized that Jesus gave these roles to certain individuals to lay a foundation for all the churches through a universal standard of truth, love and

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<sup>44</sup> *Revision comment #5 for this edition.* The concluding sentence of this paragraph has been added for clarity and is an iteration of the opening paragraph of the following chapter.

dedication to works of service, together with a shared experience of growth and maturation into the full character of Christ.

## 7 – A NOBLE AMBITION

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On a local level, all the previously described ministry roles (apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherd-teachers) would have modeled the character qualities necessary for mature leadership when they were present and active in a local congregation – in fact, many of the shepherd-teachers may have naturally evolved into elder-overseers. Paul demonstrated this idea of “establishing the pattern for local ministry with the intent for the elders to imitate it” in his final farewell speech to the leaders of the Ephesian church:

You know how I lived the whole time I was with you... I served the Lord with great humility and tears... I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house... I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus... Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears... Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified... In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:18-21, 31-32, 35)

Although Paul served as an apostle, he expected the Ephesian elders to follow the personal example that he had set for them in both character and local ministry. After spending three years in Ephesus, Paul acknowledged that his work there was complete and announced to the elders that they would never see his face again (Acts 20:25, 38). According to Paul’s words, these elders had been fully entrusted with the well-being of the Ephesian church – the Holy Spirit had made them “overseers”; they were “to shepherd the church of God” (Acts 20:28). A similar sense of completion was also demonstrated in Paul’s directives to Titus: “The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you” (Titus 1:5). The establishment of functional elderships not only implied that a certain level of maturity had been reached in the local congregations but was also an indicator that the “apostolic” mission had now been completed in that region (cf., Romans 15:23).

### THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE “ELDER-OVERSEER”

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The fact that the ultimate role of leadership in the local congregations of God’s people would be called “elders” or “overseers” illustrates that God’s plan for the church on earth was to be a fully functional community – truly “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God” (1 Peter 2:9).<sup>45</sup> As discussed earlier in Chapter Three, “elders were by definition the natural leaders of large families and clans.” They were recognized through a natural process of earning respect and honor because of their embodiment of that society’s ethics and value system. Groups of elders were continually identified throughout the Old Testament narrative in different cultures and times without ever making mention of any specific criteria necessary to be recognized as such. This was also

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<sup>45</sup> There was also another word that strongly supported this idea of being the community of God’s people. The word “church” (Gr., *ekklēsia*) carried with it historical context and associations since it was used about 100 times in the Septuagint (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. translation of the Old Testament into Greek) for the “assembly of Israel” – an official gathering of the people of Israel. Of special interest were occasional phrases like “assembly of the Lord” – Deuteronomy 23:8, and “assembly of the saints” – Psalm 89:5, that sound very similar to the New Testament usage.

the case with the people of Israel. It is safe to assume that they were to be respected and men of integrity because of God's stated expectations of the way in which they should fulfill their role in society. As noted earlier, they were responsible to instruct the people, assist God's chosen leadership, represent the people (before God and man) and judge community issues at local levels. God held the elders of Israel responsible for fulfilling these duties. Whenever the leaders of Israel were brought into account before God for their leadership, the performance of the elders in these areas was often included in that judgment.

In strong contrast to the Old Testament's silence on the criteria and selection process to become an elder, the New Testament gives a very clear picture of both the character and abilities necessary for fulfilling such a role. Paul's detailed instructions to Titus and Timothy are the main source of instruction regarding these character requirements:

An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (Titus 1:6-9)

Now the overseer must be above reproach, *the husband of but one wife* (lit., one-woman man), temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. (1 Timothy 3:2-7; italics mine)

I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! (Acts 20:29-31)

As the elder in general society represents the ethics and values of his community, the elder-overseer of the church must be an exemplary citizen of God's kingdom, indisputably displaying the character of a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

The preceding passages could be summarized by the following qualities of the elder-overseer:

- 1) *Respectable & Proven*. The church (and even outsiders) should know him as a trustworthy person of character. This reputation should be well-established and not simply the opinion of a few, so that he will not be tempted to pretend to be more righteous than he really is.
- 2) *Spiritual*. He should be disciplined and uncontrolled by chemical addictions, materialism or his own emotions. His disposition should be encouraging, patient, upright, and holy.
- 3) *Successful Family Man*. He must manage his household well and be visibly generous and hospitable. He must be the "husband of one wife"<sup>46</sup> and manage his children in such a way

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<sup>46</sup> To the Western mind this Greek phrase "one-woman man" is taken immediately to mean *monogamous*, which is a well-supported concept in the Scriptures as being the ideal state for marriage (i.e., creation of Adam and Eve, example of Christ and the church, etc.). There is, however, a possibility that this Greek phrase "one-

that they are both believing and obedient. (The present tense of this verb seems to indicate that they were quite possibly still in his home – it was a description of the process, not just the result).

- 4) *Capable Teacher & Leader*. He must be able to teach and have a full understanding of sound doctrine, being able to answer questions and handle opposition with a gentle spirit and nurturing attitude. He must also guard the flock (church) as a shepherd and forcefully deal with wolves (false leaders) that will inevitably come and try to draw away disciples after them.

The elder-overseer must possess such good character that respect and admiration would come naturally to those both inside the church and outside the church.

With so much emphasis on possessing tremendous Christian character, Paul's opening statement about being an overseer is almost an understatement:

It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. (1 Timothy 3:1, NASB)

Surely any family man wanting to be his best for God would agree that fulfilling the qualifications necessary to be an overseer would be an encouraging acknowledgement of his devotion to Christ and witness as a true disciple.

## THE MINISTRY OF "ELDER-OVERSEER"

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Whereas the NIV translates Titus 1:6, "Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless," the NASB reads "For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward." This word *steward* [Gr., *oikonomos*, literally "household manager"] takes us back to the parable that Jesus used to teach Peter about God's accountability for leadership in Luke 12:42ff. Spiritual service [*diakonia*] in its purest sense is the responsibility to address spiritual needs – i.e., to be "put in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time." Paul further explained to Timothy, "I am writing you these instructions [in the context of congregational ministry roles] so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God" (1 Timothy 3:14-15). This emphasis on the nature of the church being God's household logically explains why elder-overseers must be excellent managers of their own families – "if anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?" (1 Timothy 3:5). God does not primarily see the church as an organization or an institution – it is his family and those in leadership *had better take care of it!*

The responsibility and authority vested in the elder-overseer of the local congregation (and resultant accountability to both God and man) is clearly demonstrated by Paul's admonition in 1 Timothy 5:17-22:

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others

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woman man" may be simply a reference to *fidelity* in marriage since: (1) Roman society was already monogamous; (2) a similar Greek phrase for the eligible widows for benevolence "one-man woman" is translated "faithful to her husband" (1 Timothy 5:9); and (3) sexual purity and fidelity in marriage are not directly addressed by any other of the characteristics mentioned in the list.

may take warning. I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality and to do nothing out of favoritism. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

This passage gives us a number of important insights into the position and work of the elder-overseer:

- 1) The elder-overseers were definitely expected to direct the affairs of the local church. This verb "direct" is translated in the NASB as "rule" in this passage, and was translated earlier as "manage" in 1 Timothy 3:4-5 in regard to the elder-overseer and his family. It was also one of the gifts [*charisma*] of Romans 12:6-8 and was to be exercised with diligence.
- 2) The elder-overseers apparently served in different capacities, since only some were focused directly on *preaching* (literally, "working hard in the word") and teaching. There is no indication that the elders were differentiated from each other by various titles but it would seem clear that they had varying functions in directing the church – probably according to the different areas of ministry (consider the possibilities given in the list of Romans 12:6-8). At some level, all the elder-overseers needed to be "able to teach" since it was one of the prerequisites given in 1 Timothy 3:1ff.
- 3) Although the NRSV footnotes the double "honor" that elders who direct well are to receive with the word "compensation," and the NASB occasionally translates the same word as "proceeds" (i.e., Acts 4:34), "price" (i.e., Acts 5:2; 1 Corinthians 6:20; etc.), it seems doubtful that this particular verse was referring to doubling financial compensation for certain elder-overseers. Paul does affirm that "elder-overseers" had the right to receive support from the church: he used same quote here from Deuteronomy 25:4 that he had used earlier to justify the payment of full-time ministers (1 Corinthians 9:9) and a similar quote from the teaching of Jesus that "the worker deserves his wages" (Luke 10:7).
- 4) The elder-overseers were definitely not above the law; if a substantiated accusation came against them, they were to be rebuked publicly. This can only be considered fair when the integrity and honor associated with the qualifications of being an "elder-overseer" would naturally be imputed to anyone so designated – "no comment" would be interpreted as continued endorsement and affirmation of the necessary qualities. The challenge in maintaining this kind of standard and idealism was emphasized all the more by Paul's admonition to Timothy to "keep these instructions without partiality" and "do not be hasty in the laying on of hands." The "laying on of hands" implied a sharing and giving of authority. If it was done hastily and with the wrong people, those who made that decision would also end up sharing in the sins of those inadequately vetted and appointed.

Although in this particular instance Paul clearly addressed Timothy as the one having the responsibility of knowing "how people ought to conduct themselves in the God's household," the publication of this letter would have also confirmed the standard of being an overseer as general knowledge, so that the church community itself could operate according to these principles as well.

The universality of the qualifications and role of being "elder-overseers" is shown by the parallels given in Paul's admonition to the elders in Ephesus in Acts 20 [58 A.D.] and Peter's admonition to the elders throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia in 1 Peter [64 A.D.]:

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood... I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. (Acts 20:28, 33-34)



Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money but eager to serve... (1 Peter 5:2-3)

The elder-overseers were to shepherd God's flock, which ties into powerful imagery found in Old Testament prophecy, as already discussed. The shepherds of God's people were to take care of the weak, the sick and the injured, as well as search for the lost and bring back the strays. They were to imitate God's heart and be willing to serve as overseers – it was a service that needed to come from the heart. They were absolutely not to be like the hired hands that Jesus spoke about in John 10, serving for financial gain.

Another connection of serving as an elder-overseer and the teaching of Jesus about leadership is made by Peter's words in 1 Peter 5:3-4:

Be shepherds of God flock... not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. For when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

Jesus challenged his disciples not to be like "the rulers of the Gentiles [who] lord it over them and their high officials [who] exercise authority over them" (Matthew 20:25; Mark 10:42). Instead, he told them "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be your slave" (Matthew 20:26-27; Mark 10:43-44). In other words, if you want to be first then *go first* – i.e., set the example. If an elder-overseer demands that people do things that they themselves are not doing, not only are they hypocrites but they are also "lording it over those entrusted to [them]." Paul admonished both Titus and Timothy to be examples in their character and conduct for the disciples around them (Titus 2:7; 1 Timothy 4:12) and often used himself as an example that he called others to imitate (1 Corinthians 4:16, 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9). In this way, the ministry of an elder-overseer was no different than that of an apostle or evangelist since he was to lead by example and not simply by words. Leadership roles in the church were never meant to confer privileges on any one individual but instead were given to provide specific opportunities for service [*diakonia*] for the edification of the whole church.

James also indirectly added an interesting detail to this discussion about the ministry of elder-overseers through a general admonition he wrote to disciples scattered among the nations:

Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:13-16)

James described a service performed by the elders in this passage that has no other parallel reference in the New Testament involving elders: the anointing of the sick with oil and prayer for healing.<sup>47</sup> Considering the early date of this letter and the fact that James was a significant leader among the

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<sup>47</sup> The parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:34) demonstrates that *anointing with oil* was part of the common Jewish medical practice at this time, and Mark 6:1-13 also reported that it was practiced in conjunction with healing by the Twelve when Jesus sent them out to preach.

Jewish disciples, this practice may have been unique to the Jewish sector of the church.<sup>48</sup> Since James emphasized that it is the prayer offered in faith that is effective, there is no reason to assume that this text demands that the gift [*charisma*] of healing was essential in the elder role. The focus of this passage is the “prayer of faith” and not the miraculous ability of the elders *per se*. The fact that some instances of physical illness are in conjunction with sin in the heart is established by a number of Old Testament passages (Psalm 31:9-10; 32:3-5; 38:1-22; 102:1-7; Proverbs 17:22; 18:14; etc.) so it makes sense that people prayed not only for the physical healing of the sick, but also for their spiritual well-being. This possible association between physical sickness and sin led James to his main point – that everyone should confess their sins to each other and pray for each other. This reference to the elders appears to have been made mainly as an illustration of the kind of righteous person who could offer the necessary prayer of faith, and then that these prayers of faith could bring true spiritual healing.<sup>49</sup> The elders of the church were to be righteous men of prayer – men whose prayers were powerful and effective!

The final proof of the definitive status of the role of elder-overseers is made clear by the account of the Jerusalem conference. When the question arose in Antioch over whether the Gentiles should follow the law and be circumcised, it was decided that Paul, Barnabas and some others should go up to Jerusalem and see the “apostles and elders” about this issue (Acts 15:2). When they arrived in the city, the church and the “apostles and elders” welcomed them (Acts 15:4), and then the “apostles and elders” met together to consider their question (Acts 15:6). After much discussion, Peter addressed the group and made a statement; Paul and Barnabas then testified about God’s work among the Gentiles through them; and then James made a summary statement and recommendations to the assembly – these three men possibly representing the groups involved (i.e., Peter as the apostles to the Jews, Paul as the apostles to the Gentiles, and James speaking for the Jerusalem eldership).<sup>50</sup> Then the “apostles and elders” with the whole church decided to send some of their own leaders back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, with a letter sent from the “apostles and elders.” It is noteworthy that this letter was referred to as “the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey” (Acts 16:4). This scenario captured a moment of transition between the charismatically-based role of the apostle, and the maturity-based role of the elder – a moment of overlap that was probably experienced in varying degrees by numerous cities as the church grew and spread throughout the Roman Empire. Although these two ministries shared the distinction of being the only two ministries (i.e., *apostleship* – Acts 1:20, *eldership* – 1 Timothy 3:1) referred to as roles of “oversight” [Gr., *episkopē*] in the New Testament writings, their objectives were different in scope – the apostles were given the charge to oversee the laying of a foundation for the church universally (both doctrinally and geographically), and the elders were given the charge to oversee the health and maintenance of already established local congregations.<sup>51</sup> The fact that in this one instance the elders in Jerusalem seemed to legitimately exercise influence over a larger geographic area was probably due to the co-

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<sup>48</sup> If James wrote c. 48-49 A.D., this scenario would have described the church in a very early stage even before the establishment of the church in Corinth and the inspired writing of letters. Since many of the elders appointed up until that moment may have received *the laying on of the apostles’ hands*, it is quite possible that a number of them had actually received spiritual gifts, which would have included *healings* among them.

<sup>49</sup> Jesus also used physical healings as an illustration of a spiritual “healing” when he said “But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (Mark 2:10), and then healed the paralytic.

<sup>50</sup> Although James, the half-brother of Jesus, is never called an elder in the New Testament directly, it was quite possible, since Paul reported that he was married (1 Corinthians 9:5) and he was constantly included in this decision-making group that was referred to as the “apostles and elders.”

<sup>51</sup> That both Peter and John referred to themselves as “elders” in the latter part of their lives may indicate that they had settled into that particular ministry role in a local situation (1 Peter 5:1, 2 John 1:1, 3 John 1:1).

authorship of the apostles and their historical relationship with these mission points, as well as the fact that James (and maybe others of the elders) were established sources of “prophetic writing” and prophecy in this period predating the New Testament scripture.

Although Jesus was never called an ‘elder’, his sovereignty alone established his role of oversight, and he would always be the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep:

For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Peter 2:25)

God’s plan for the church was that it should be a spiritual community of his people; men of godly character were to shepherd and lead that community according to his will – after the pattern of Jesus. As Paul wrote to Titus, “the overseer is entrusted with God’s work” (Titus 1:7).

## THE QUALIFICATIONS AND MINISTRY OF “LOCAL MINISTERS” (AKA DEACONS)

Paul not only instructed Timothy in both the qualifications and work of the elder-overseers, but also directed Timothy in the appointment of *local ministers*, historically referred to as “deacons.” Their presence is affirmed in the salutation of Paul’s letter to the Philippian church:

Paul and Timothy, servants [Lit., *slaves*] of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: Grace and peace to you from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:1-2; c. 62 A.D.)

Although this word “deacon” [a transliteration of the Greek word *diakonos*] is the same word used to describe the person of the apostles, teachers and evangelists in other places in the New Testament (translated “servant(s)” or “minister(s)”), the context of this passage signifies congregational responsibility and not the broader roles defined earlier. In much the same way that the “apostolic” ministry was supplemented by the work of prophets, evangelists and shepherd-teachers, the ministry of the local eldership was to be assisted by the work of local ministers. Paul outlined the qualifications of these men in 1 Timothy 3:8-10:

Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

Paul wrote this passage directly after his description of the elder-overseers and made it clear that these men were also to be respectable, proven and spiritual. Since deacons needed to “keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience,” their responsibilities must have held spiritual significance within the congregation and were not simply something merely administrative. The fact that the ministry of the elder-overseers was so clearly defined probably explains the lack of definition given to the work of the deacons, since they were servants who would fulfill needs within the congregation under the direction of the elder-overseers (again consider the possibilities given in the list of Romans 12:6-8).

After discussing the qualifications of the elder-overseers and of the deacons, Paul went on to discuss a third group:

In the same way, their wives (footnote: *deaconesses*) are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. (1 Timothy 3:11, NIV)

It is obvious from the NIV footnote that there is some question as to whom this verse is actually referring, but the NASB gives a truer translation of the Greek text:

Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. (1 Timothy 3:11, NASB)

That this verse is describing a third category of persons is evident in the Greek text because of a repetitive grammatical structure.<sup>52</sup> If this verse was meant to signify *women in general*, then the two preceding groups of elder-overseers and deacons should also include all men in general, which is not the case. If this verse was referring to *wives*, then it is also “unbalanced,” since there was yet to be a connection made between deacons and marriage (that follows in the next verse). The most straightforward reading is simply that these were women serving the church under the established leadership; they were required to be women of character and recognized as responsible in some area of service to the saints. This possibility is also reinforced by a real-life example of commendation by Paul:

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant [Gr., *diakonos*] of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me. (Romans 16:1,2)

This sister Phoebe was called a servant of the church and was a great help to many people. The context provided by Paul’s comments implies that she was also the bearer of his letter (compare these comments to what Paul said about Zenas and Apollos in Titus 3:13-14). In the same way as the deacons, these women would minister according to the needs of the church under the direction of the local leadership. The only definite restriction given to this ministry for the women is reflected in 1 Timothy 2:12, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.”<sup>53</sup> Again, as with the deacons, the lack of definition given to the work of these women is probably due to the fact that they were servants who would take care of needs within the congregation under the direction of the elder-overseers (again consider all the possibilities given in the list of Romans 12:6-8).

In concluding his directives to Timothy regarding the qualifications needed for those serving in local ministry roles, Paul appended some further qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:12-13.

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<sup>52</sup> The verb translated in 1 Timothy 3:2 for “must be” is unusual because the subject of this verb takes the accusative case (whereas most subjects take the nominative case) therefore it reads “the overseer *must be ...*” (italics mine). In 1 Timothy 3:8 the word “deacons” is in the accusative case but this time there is no verb. In Greek, this repetitive structure simply means that the preceding verb is implied, so it reads, “In the same way deacons *must be...*” (italics mine). In 1 Timothy 3:11 there is the same scenario as 1 Timothy 3:8: the word “women” is in the accusative case and the verb is missing, therefore it reads, “In the same way women *must be ...*” (italics mine).

<sup>53</sup> This verse helps explain the directives of 1 Corinthians 14:33-35:

As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

The context of these verses in 1 Corinthians 14 was the public assembly of the church where “speaking” specifically referred to *authoritative* teaching given through a word of instruction, prophecy, and interpreted tongue-speaking. That women were to remain silent under these circumstances was a matter of propriety similar to the instruction that the man who speaks in a tongue should also keep quiet if there was not one to interpret (1 Corinthians 14:28).

A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Verse 12 again affirms that Paul was not referring to the person of the apostles, teachers and evangelists (also referred to as “servants” or “ministers” [Gr., *diakonos*] in the New Testament) since marriage and household management were never given as prerequisites for those ministries.<sup>54</sup> Since these qualities have already been discussed in the previous section on “elder-overseers,” there is probably not much need for further comment, except to say that typically the standard to which a deacon was held in the area of raising his children to be believers has been understood as being somewhat less than that which was expected for elder-overseers. This understanding is probably due to fact that the phrase “he must ... see that his children obey him with proper respect” (1 Timothy 3:4), used in regard to the elder-overseer was not repeated later with respect to the deacon; also, the additional emphasis found in Titus 1:6, “an elder must be ... a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient,” was not followed by any specific instructions concerning the deacon’s qualifications.<sup>55</sup> The fact that Paul’s letter to Titus does not even mention the role of deacons in the local churches may simply imply that their appointment and deployment was an issue that the established local leadership (i.e., elder-overseers) could capably organize and manage.

The final sentence in this passage must have provided great encouragement to the deacons in the congregation in Ephesus, “Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.” Although it has been suggested by some that “this excellent standing” may have been the eventual promotion to the role of elder-overseer,<sup>56</sup> it was at the very least an affirmation of the words of Jesus, “... whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant [Gr., *diakonos*]” (Matthew 20:26). In contrast to secular society, greatness in God’s kingdom will always be dependent on the extent of one’s service and not the extent of one’s authority.

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<sup>54</sup> *Revision comment #6 for this edition.* I made this revision just a few months after the initial publication, therefore many people since 2003 have read the paper with the revision already present. In the original version a possibility for deacons to be “unmarried” was proposed based on my incorrect reading that v. 12 was possibly *conditional* in nature. This idea sprang from the unusual position of v. 12 which would more intuitively have followed v. 10, as well as my personal preference for the NASB and the suggestive tone of the English phrase “*Let deacons be...*” which seemed to suggest “allow” or “grant permission.” (Thanks to Dr. Glen Giles for his feedback). At the same time, this does not mean that “unmarried” men (or women) cannot serve in “recognized” roles as determined by the local congregational leadership to supplement the biblical pattern where deemed necessary.

<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, it could be argued that the phrase “manage his children and household well” is a general description, and the additional phrases used to describe elder-overseers, “he must ... see that his children obey him with proper respect” and “a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient”, are simply positive examples demonstrating the management of his family. Nevertheless, whether or not the requirement for the deacon was to be as stringent as that of the elder-overseer, it still remains that the deacon must manage his children and household well, and the local congregation and leadership would need to agree as to what exactly that would mean in practice.

<sup>56</sup> This eventually became the case in the West, but there is no evidence that it was an understanding that was held by the early church – ambition for and service in the role of deacon seems to have been separate from that of an elder-overseer. “It was not until the fourth century or later that the diaconate became in the West just a first step to the presbyterate (which it did not become, to the same degree, in the East) ...” Roger Beckwith, *Elders in Every City*, pp. 65-66.

## 8 – EQUIPPING THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

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### THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

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As cited numerous times already in this study, Jesus gave various ministry roles to men “to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12; RSV). The book of Acts not only describes how God worked powerfully through the preaching and teaching of men, like Philip in Samaria, and like Barnabas and Paul in Antioch, but also confirms that these trained ministers were not the only ones responsible for sharing the gospel message. When ordinary disciples (both men and women) spread out from Jerusalem after the persecution broke out in connection with the stoning of Stephen, Luke simply stated:

Those who had been scattered *preached* [Gr., *euangelízomai*] the word wherever they went. (Acts 8:4; italics mine)

And then later:

Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, *telling them the good news* [Gr., *euangelízomai*] about the Lord Jesus. The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. (Acts 11:20-21; italics mine)

“Telling the good news about the Lord Jesus” was not a matter of a specific ministry role but of conviction – the disciples of Jesus simply could not keep quiet; they preached the word “wherever they went.”

Paul explained this enthusiasm for every Christian to share the good news about Jesus in 2 Corinthians 5:17-20:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Since the disciples had a personal message of reconciliation with God, the *gospel* (lit., “good news”) was on their hearts and lips. These two powerful forces of gratefulness to God and compassion for the lost souls of humanity transformed every day into an opportunity for becoming “the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). The great commission of Matthew 28:19-20 would never be fulfilled by merely a few ministers sharing their faith and preaching the word, but through the building of mature congregations in key centers that would then carry out their “works of service” [*diakonia*] in their own respective geographic areas. It is through the church that God has chosen to minister to the spiritual needs of the world. And the world will truly be evangelized only when every community on earth, whether city, town, village or countryside, has a congregation of God’s people “declaring the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:10).

### SERVING ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE

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The process of building up the body of Christ is so much more than just a measure of numerical growth and/or geographic expansion; it is fundamentally based in the collective growth of Christ-likeness within the church. In fact, whereas numerical growth guarantees nothing in the area of

maturity and the forming of Christ in the church, the scriptures promise that godly character growth will result in great blessings for each disciple.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-11)

The essence of discipleship is growing in our imitation of Christ which means measurable change in character, attitude and action. By means of this spiritual focus, God will grant us effectiveness and productivity in our knowledge of Christ, and ultimately, permanence in our relationship to him.

In the same way that world evangelism requires the participation of every disciple to truly fulfill God's plan, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ demands that each member of the church devote themselves to:

... speaking the truth in love, [so that] we will grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:15-16)

Building up the character of the church was not meant to be limited to the work of a few designated *ministers*, but it is the responsibility of every disciple: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34).

Our emphasis on the importance of specific ministry roles can unfortunately reduce the expectation of the way in which each member of the church can *minister* and meet the needs of others. Peter clearly stated that:

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)

Some of the gifts [*charisma*] of Romans 12:6-8 were clearly intended to be exercised within the fellowship by one member to another, without the need of special appointment or designation. For example:

#### 1) *Prophecy & Teaching*

Therefore *encourage each other* with these words [i.e., preceding words of instruction in the letter] (1 Thessalonians 4:18; italics mine).

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to *instruct one another* (Romans 15:14; italics mine).

Likewise, *teach* the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to *teach* what is good. Then they can *train* the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God (Titus 2:3-5; italics mine).

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you *teach and admonish one another* with all wisdom (Colossians 3:16; italics mine).

2) *Exhortation (also translated encouragement)*

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us *encourage one another*—and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:25; italics mine).

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But *encourage one another* daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness (Hebrews 3:12-13; italics mine).

This commitment to exhortation/encouragement is vital for nurturing solid spiritual formation, as well as safeguarding the congregation from detrimental influences and predatory behaviors:

*So watch yourselves.* If your brother sins, *rebuke him*, and if he repents, *forgive him* (Luke 17:3; italics mine).

If your brother sins against you, *go and show him his fault*, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that "every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector (Matthew 18:15-17; italics mine).

But now I am writing you that *you must not associate* with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to *judge those inside*? God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you" (1 Corinthians 5:11-13; italics mine).

3) *Service (Benevolence) & Giving*

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but *they shared everything they had*. ... There were no needy persons among them (Acts 4:32-34; italics mine).

*Share* with God's people who are in need. *Practice hospitality* (Romans 12:13; italics mine).

*Offer hospitality to one another* without grumbling (1 Peter 4:9; italics mine).

4) *Service (Ministry) & Leadership* – the central theme of this study

5) Showing mercy

Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh (Jude 22-23; italics mine).

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Ephesians 4:32; italics mine).

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God (Romans 15:7; italics mine).

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed (James 5:16; italics mine).



The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to *forgive and comfort him*, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow (2 Corinthians 2:6,7; italics mine).

Although this short survey is in no way exhaustive, it demonstrates the power of the fellowship within the church “to serve [*diakonéō*] others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:10). The many “one another” passages of the New Testament make it clear that God never intended for the needs of the church to be met by just a few people but for each member of the body to do its work. Every part is needed:

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve [lit., *slave for*] one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Galatians 5:13-14)

## THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD

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In summary, the New Testament paradigm of ministry and ministry roles can only be truly understood when the primary purpose is recognized: “to prepare God’s people for works of service [*diakonia*], so that the body of Christ might be built up” (Ephesians 4:12). It is, in fact, these very works of service that truly define ministry roles in the church, since ministers need to be personal examples of this ministry of Christ, and then be devoted to teaching and training each member to do likewise. Although God gave gifts (and roles) to individuals, the purpose was always for the benefit of the whole church. As already noted, Jesus defined service [*diakonia*] by his life and every disciple has been called to imitate him – beginning with his heart to be both servant and slave of all. As Jesus said:

Who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22:27)

Jesus came to build his church and proved through his resurrection that even death and Hades could not overcome it.

The church is the body of Christ, the household of God, the bride of Christ – it is the fulfillment of God’s eternal plan for every nation, tribe, people and language:

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)

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ephesians 3:10-11)

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen! (Ephesians 3:20-21)

The fulfillment of the ages has come and the mystery of the gospel has been revealed—there is nothing more glorious for us to do than to serve our God and to serve his people in the power of his love!

## APPENDICES

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### APPENDIX 1 – PAUL’S “UNRECORDED” SECOND VISIT TO CORINTH

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It would appear that shortly after sending the letter of 1 Corinthians, Paul changed his mind and made a second passing visit to Corinth (2 Corinthians 13:1-2) – a visit that he later referred to as painful (2 Corinthians 2:1). Although Paul had wanted to send Apollos to Corinth, Apollos was unwilling to go (1 Corinthians 16:12). It was Titus who next appeared on the scene as Paul’s coworker in dealing with the Corinthian church, by the time of his writing 2 Corinthians, which preceded Paul’s third visit (2 Corinthians 13:1). Since Apollos is never mentioned again in the Acts narrative after the brothers in Ephesus had sent him to Corinth (Acts 18:27), Titus’ appearance in Corinth and Apollos’ absence from Ephesus (and lack of further mention in the Acts narrative) perfectly coincide with some narrative details found in Paul’s letter to Titus: Apollos delivered the letter on his way to an unnamed destination; Paul requested that Titus meet him in Nicopolis, which was on the west coast of Greece, not far from Corinth (Titus 3:12-13). Although Timothy most likely accompanied the delivery of 1 Corinthians to Corinth, Paul made it clear that he was to return to Ephesus quickly (1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10-11).

This “missing” second visit of Paul to Corinth provides the correct setting for the writing of 1 Timothy since Paul began the letter with: “as I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus ...” (1 Timothy 1:3). Also, Timothy was to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture, to teaching and preaching until Paul returned (1 Timothy 4:13) – very possibly referring to the continuation of the ministry that Paul had begun in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-10). Paul also instructed Timothy about the qualifications of overseers and ministers (1 Timothy 3:1ff), public honor for elders who serve well and rebuke for those that sin (1 Timothy 5:17-20), and an admonition to not lay hands on anyone too quickly (1 Timothy 5:22). Since the elders were well established as the church leaders in Ephesus by Acts 20:17ff, the writing of 1 Timothy seems to fit best into the narrative framework of Acts 19:9-10.

## APPENDIX 2 – GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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### INTRODUCTION

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The only time the complete phrase “gifts of the Holy Spirit” is found in the NIV Bible is Hebrews 2:4. The actual Greek word translated “gifts” here means “portions” or “distributions” of the Holy Spirit. This is significant since some may be surprised to think of the “gifts of the Holy Spirit” being available in the Old Testament. God gave “portions” of his Spirit to certain individuals so that they might miraculously lead the people of Israel. This is described in a number of different ways in the Hebrew text: the Spirit *coming over* someone; the Spirit *being in* someone; the Spirit *falling over* someone; the Spirit *clothing* someone; or the Spirit *filling* someone. It was God's Spirit that ordered the natural laws of the universe – and God's Spirit can easily contradict these laws through miracles.

### 1. MOSES – THE FIRST PROPHET TO PERFORM SIGNS, WONDERS AND MIRACLES

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- 1) Exodus 3:1-4:17\*
  - a) God enabled Moses to perform miraculous signs and wonders involving the forces of nature so that the people would believe that he was sent from God.
- 2) Deuteronomy 34:9
  - a) Moses laid his hands on Joshua and he received the Spirit of wisdom. This is unique in the Old Testament with the possible exception of Elisha receiving a double portion of Elijah's spirit. (2 Kings 2:9-14)
- 3) Numbers 11:17-29
  - a) The Lord took of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on seventy elders of Israel and they received the gift of prophecy.
- 4) Numbers 12:4-8\*
  - a) God normally revealed himself to prophets in visions or dreams.
  - b) Moses spoke to God “face to face,” clearly and not in riddles, seeing the form of God.
- 5) Deuteronomy 18:14-19\*
  - a) The Lord would raise up a prophet like Moses who must be listened to.
  - b) The Lord would put words in his mouth, and he will say everything the Lord commands him.
  - c) Those that do not listen will be judged by God.

### 2. TYPES OF GIFTS

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- 1) Leadership
  - a) The Holy Spirit came over *Othniel* (Judges 3:10), *Gideon* (Judges 6:34), *Jephthah* (Judges 11:29), *Samson* (Judges 13:25), *Saul* (1 Samuel 11:6), and *David* (1 Samuel 16:13; Psalm 143:10) and inspired them to lead the Israelites to war.
- 2) Prophecy
  - a) In Zechariah 7:12 we read that the word of the Lord Almighty was sent by his Spirit through the prophets. Certain prophets are mentioned as having the Holy Spirit *coming over* them: *Saul* (1 Samuel 10:6, 10); *Amasai* (1 Chronicles 12:18); *Azariah* (2 Chronicles 15:1); *Jahaziel* (2 Chronicles 20:14); *Zechariah* (2 Chronicles 24:20); *Ezekiel* (Ezekiel 11:5). *Micah* was *filled* with the Holy Spirit and thus enabled to prophesy (Micah 3:8; 1 Kings 22:24). *Balaam*

(Numbers 24:2) and *Saul and his men* (1 Samuel 19:20, 23) are also mentioned as having the Holy Spirit *come over* them and prophesying, although they did not function as regular prophets of God at the time.

- 3) Wisdom and Knowledge
  - a) The Holy Spirit filled Bezalel and he received skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts (Exodus 31:3; 35:31). God gave wisdom (Heb. "spirit of wisdom") to certain skilled craftsmen (Exodus 28:3).
- 4) Supernatural Power (Miracles)
  - a) The Holy Spirit *came upon* Samson and he killed a lion barehanded, killed 30 men, broke the ropes when he was bound unawares and killed 1,000 men with the jaw-bone of an ass (Judges 14:6-15:14). The Holy Spirit *came in* a prostrate Ezekiel and not only lifted him to his feet, but carried him around to different locations in the Middle East such as Tel Abib, Jerusalem, the temple, Chaldea and a valley full of dry bones (Ezekiel 2:2; 3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 37:1; 43:5). Some, if not all, of these trips were literal and not just visions. Twice were people suspicious that this same phenomenon might occur or had occurred with the prophet Elijah, although we have no actual account of it happening to him (1 Kings. 18:12; 2 Kings. 2:16).

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### 3. THE GIFTS WERE NOT NECESSARILY PERMANENT

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- 1) Judges 16:20
  - a) The Spirit left Samson without Samson even knowing it. When Samson arrogantly tried to exercise God's gift of strength, he was surprised to find that it had disappeared, resulting in his capture and torture.
- 2) 1 Samuel 16:14
  - a) Saul's disobedience was so abominable that God took away his Spirit from Saul and sent him a tormenting evil spirit instead.
- 3) Psalms 51:11
  - a) After David's sin with Bathsheba he prayed that God would not take the Holy Spirit away from him — most likely thinking of what he had personally seen happen in the life of Saul.

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### 4. THE MESSIAH

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- 1) Isaiah 11:1-3
  - a) With *wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge.*
- 2) Isaiah 42:1-7
  - a) To bring justice to the nations, be a covenant to the people and a light to the Gentiles (*prophecy*).
- 3) Isaiah 48:17
  - a) *To teach* the people what is best for them and *to lead* them in the way they should go.
- 4) Isaiah 59:20,21
  - a) *To teach* those in Jacob who repent of their sins and the word of the Lord will not depart from them (*prophecy*).

5) Isaiah 61:1

- a) To preach good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (*prophecy*).

### OBSERVATIONS

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- 1) Some prophets were instrumental in miraculous healings: Moses (Numbers 21:4-9); Elisha (2 Kings 5:14); Isaiah (2 Kings 20:7). The idea of 'laying hands' on someone to heal them was never mentioned.
- 2) There are two examples of physical resurrection: Elisha raised the Shunammite's son to life (2 Kings 4:35) and a corpse thrown into Elisha's grave touched his bones and came back to life (2 Kings 14:21).
- 3) The purpose of the gifts was to verify prophecy and empower leadership. They were not available to the masses but only to key individuals whom God had chosen. God could also take back the gifts if he so desired.
- 4) No one would have a miraculous ministry that could compare to Moses except the Messiah. The Messiah would have all the gifts described in the Old Testament: leadership, prophecy, wisdom, knowledge, and miraculous power.

\* These Scriptures do not explicitly make reference to the Holy Spirit.

## APPENDIX 3 – OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES ABOUT FUTURE ACTIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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### INTRODUCTION

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Although the Holy Spirit played a major role throughout the narrative of the Old Testament, there remained two aspects of his working yet to be experienced: (1) the Holy Spirit being poured out on someone and (2) the receiving of spiritual renewal and life through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

#### 1. THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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- 1) Joel 2:28-32
  - On all people.
  - Sons and daughters ... prophesy, old men ... dream dreams, young men ... see visions.
  - Wonders in heaven and on earth.
  - Servants ... both men and women.
  - Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
  - On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance...among the survivors whom the Lord calls.
- 2) Zechariah 12:10-13:9
  - A spirit of grace and supplication poured out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
  - They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, ... for a firstborn son.
  - On that day a fountain will be opened ... to cleanse them from sin and impurity.
  - I will say, "They are my people," and they will say, "The Lord is our God."
- 3) Ezekiel 39:27-29
  - I will show myself holy through them (returned exiles) in the sight of many nations.
  - I will no longer hide my face from them ... the house of Israel.
- 4) Isaiah 32:14-17
  - The desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest.
  - Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field.
  - The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.

#### 2. THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (GOD PUTS HIS SPIRIT IN HIS PEOPLE)

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- 1) Ezekiel 11:16-21
  - God will give an undivided heart and a new spirit to the house of Israel.
  - God will remove their hearts of stone and give them hearts of flesh.
  - God's people will follow his decrees and laws.
  - The house of Israel will be God's people, and he will be their God.
- 2) Ezekiel 36:22-32, 37:11-14
  - The Jews will be gathered back to Jerusalem, not for their sake, but for the sake of his name and that the nations might know his holiness.

- God will cleanse them from their impurities.
- God will richly bless his people.
- The people will be convicted of their impurity.
- God will bring them up from the grave, put his Spirit in them and they will live.

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### 3. THE LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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1) Isaiah 34:16-35:10

- The Spirit will gather the redeemed together to enter into God's eternal joy.

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### OBSERVATIONS

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- 1) The outpouring and indwelling of the Holy Spirit are related to each other. On the day of the Spirit's outpouring a fountain of cleansing will be opened. The Spirit will be available to be put in men to cleanse them and bring them up from the grave.
- 2) As in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit will continue to lead God's people.