

# THE FOUNDATIONAL GIFTS OF APOSTLE AND PROPHET IN EPHESIANS

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## INTRODUCTION

### Cessationism vs. Continuationism

Nothing has divided the Church of Jesus Christ more than different views on spiritual gifts. Christians hold to cessationism or continuationism (sometimes called the Charismatic movement).<sup>1</sup> Some cessationists believe that all of the spiritual gifts have ended. Other cessationists believe that there are permanent spiritual gifts and temporary spiritual gifts today. The foundational gifts of apostles and prophets along with their miraculous gifts (tongues, healing and miracles) were for the apostolic age of the first century A.D. church. Cessationists believe that there are no apostles or prophets today. John was the last apostle to live and he wrote the last New Testament book: the book of Revelation. John warned about adding to the book of Revelation. The New Testament canon is closed. It took the church many years to recognize that there were only 27 inspired books in the New Testament canon. Cessationists emphasize that the Church does not need any further revelation from God. There are no prophets today being given by the risen Christ to His Church. The sign gifts of miracles, healing and tongues have ceased. Cessationists are not against miracles and healing. God still performs miracles today. God still heals people in answer to prayer and in his providence. But God sometimes chooses not to heal his people who call on Him for healing (i.e. Joni E Tada). Cessationists believe that the miraculous sign gifts of tongues, healing and miracles have ceased.<sup>2</sup>

Continuationists differ as well on their views of spiritual gifts. Pentecostals believe that speaking in tongues is the sign of the baptism of the Spirit which they think all Christians should pray for and seek after their conversion. Charismatics do not think that every Christian should speak in tongues but they believe that tongues can be a private prayer language to enhance one's spiritual life. The Third Wave (Wimber; Deere) taught that signs and wonders authenticate the truthfulness of the gospel and provide opportunities for the lost to see the power of the gospel.

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Grudem, ed., *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today?: Four Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement* (Presbyterian and Reformed) wrote a detailed exposition of the biblical use of tongues and critiqued the modern Pentecostal/Charismatic movement.

## Apostles and apostles in the New Testament

An “apostle” (ἀπόστολος) was a messenger, a delegate, envoy.<sup>3</sup> The word “apostle” is used in the New Testament to refer to the Twelve men chosen by Jesus to follow him: Simon Peter, Andrew, James the son of Zebedee, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Lebbeus also called Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot (Matthew 10:2-4). All of these men were with Jesus during his ministry, were sent out by him to do miracles and preach the gospel of the kingdom to Jews in Israel (Mk.6:7; Lk.9:1-6; Mt.10:1). The risen Lord Jesus Christ appeared to all of these men (except for Judas) and gave them the Great Commission to go into all the world and make disciples (Matt 28:16-20; Luke 24:36-53). The apostles were to be Christ’s witnesses in the world (Acts 1:8).

After the death of Judas, Peter explained the qualifications of an apostle to the 120 who met in the upper room for the 10 days between Christ’s ascension and the day of Pentecost . An apostle had to have been with Jesus from the baptism of John and he had to have seen the risen Jesus. After prayer Matthias was chosen by lot over Joseph called Barsabbas. Both Matthias and Barsabbas were qualified to be apostles but only Matthias was numbered with the eleven other apostles (Acts 1:20-26).

Paul called James (the Lord’s brother) an Apostle (Gal.1:19). James became a believer after he saw the risen Jesus (1 Cor.15:7).

Paul identified himself an Apostle in his epistles (Rom.1:1; 11:13; 1 Cor.1:1, 9:1f, 15:9; 2 Cor.1:1; Gal.1:1; Eph.1:1; Col.1:1; 1 Tim.1:1, 2:7; 2 Tim.1:1; Titus 1:1). Paul saw the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus (1 Cor.9:1; 15:8). Paul insisted that he was an Apostle because he was directly commissioned by the risen Christ to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Rom.1:1, 5; 1 Cor.1:1; Gal.1:1, 15; Eph.3:1-13). Paul did not appoint himself to the position of Apostle. He was chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ to be His Apostle.

In the list of spiritually gifted leaders for the Church, Paul placed Apostles as first on the list. “And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues” (1 Cor.12:28). Paul also placed Apostles first on the list in Ephesians 4:11: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.”

The Apostles wrote some books of the New Testament. Matthew wrote the gospel of Matthew. John wrote the gospel of John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John and the book of Revelation. Paul wrote Romans-Philemon. Peter wrote 1 and 2 Peter. James saw the risen Christ and wrote the epistle of James.

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<sup>3</sup> BDAG, 122.

The Apostles performed signs and wonders (miracles) in the early church (Acts 2:43; 2 Cor.12:12). The apostle Peter raised a lame man (Acts 3:1-11) and raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:36-42). The apostle Paul also raised a lame man (Acts 14:8-12) and raised Eutychus from the dead (Acts 20:7-12).

The Apostles preached the gospel and helped to establish churches. The apostle Peter preached the gospel in Jerusalem and 3000 Jews were converted, baptized and joined the church in Jerusalem (Acts 2). Peter preached the gospel to the Gentile centurion Cornelius and his household and they were converted (Acts 10). The apostle Paul preached the gospel in a synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:15-41) and to Greek philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:16-34) started churches in Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth and Ephesus during his three missionary journeys (Acts 13-20).

The Apostles had authority over local churches. The first Christians were committed to the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). Peter announced God's judgment on Ananias and Sapphira who lied to the apostles about how much money they gave to the church in Jerusalem (Acts 5:1-11). Paul told the church of Corinth to discipline a sinning member (1 Cor.5).

The word "apostle" (ἀπόστολος) is also used to refer to those who were sent on a mission by local church. The little a "apostle" in this sense is a missionary. Barnabas was an apostle who along with Paul was sent out by the church at Antioch on the first missionary journey (Acts 14:14). Andronicus and Junia are called apostles (Rom.16:7). Epaphroditus was an apostle (messenger) sent by the church at Philippi to help Paul in Rome (Phil.2:25). Paul identified a group as apostles (messengers) of the churches (2 Cor.8:3).

### ***Prophets***

A prophet (προφήτης) was "a person inspired to proclaim or reveal divine will or purpose."<sup>4</sup> Prophets were spokesmen for God who gave new revelation from God to the Church. Prophets had the gift of prophecy for the purpose of edification, comfort and encouragement of the early church during the time before the completion of the New Testament (1 Cor.14:3, 31). Prophets communicated mysteries of God and revelation from God (1 Cor.12:10; 13:2; 14:6, 22, 30-31). Prophets predicted the future (1 Thess.3:4; 4:6, 14-18; Gal.5:21). Agabus was a prophet who predicted a famine in Israel that came to pass (Acts 11:27-28). As a result of Paul's ministry in Ephesus some former disciples of John the Baptist were converted, spoke in tongues and prophesied (Acts 19:6). Some prophets were women: the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9). The prophets were to judge one another's prophecies so no false teaching/prophecy would be permitted in the church (1 Cor.14:29-30). The Church was not to despise prophecies but to test them (1 Thess.5:20-22).

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<sup>4</sup> BDAG, 890.

## APOSTLES AND PROPHETS IN EPHESIANS

The spiritually gifted leaders called “apostles” and “prophets” appear together in three texts in Ephesians. (1) Apostles and prophets are the foundation of the Church which is compared to a temple (Eph.2:20). (2) Apostles and prophets received the revelation of the mystery by the Spirit that saved Gentiles would be co-heirs and of the same Body of Christ with saved Jews (Eph.3:5). (3) Apostles and New Testament prophets are among spiritually gifted Christian leaders (which include evangelists and pastors and teachers) given to the Church to equip the saints for the work of ministry and the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph.4:11-12).

### APOSTLES AND PROPHETS IN EPHESIANS 2:20

**19** Ἄρα οὖν οὐκέτι ἐστὲ ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι ἀλλὰ ἐστὲ συμπολίται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ, **20** ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν, ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, **21** ἐν ᾧ πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ συναρμολογουμένη αὖξει εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ, **22** ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς συνοικοδομεῖσθε εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι.

“Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (NKJV).

### Context of Ephesians 2:20

In Ephesians 2:1-10 Paul shows how God solved the problem of spiritual death. God made spiritually dead Gentiles to be alive in Christ (2:1-10). Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. In Ephesians 2:11-22 Paul shows how God solved the problem of spiritual distance. God made far off Gentiles near through the death of Christ on the cross (2:11-22).

Paul told the Ephesians to remember their past separation from Christ (2:11-12). Paul told the Ephesians to realize the reconciliation accomplished by Jesus Christ on the cross (2:13-18).

In Ephesians 2:19-22 Paul emphasizes the changed identity for saved Gentiles. Saved Gentiles are no longer strangers (to the covenants of promise) and foreigners (outsiders in relation to Israel) (2:19). They are fellow citizens with the saints (Jewish believers) (2:19). Saved Gentiles are members of the household of God (2:19). Saved Gentiles are now part of the holy temple in the Lord (a picture of the universal Church). They are like “stones” being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone (2:20).

### The Identity of the Apostles and Prophets in Ephesians 2:20

Who are the apostles and prophets in Ephesians 2:20? Bible teachers differ on their interpretations. I believe that the apostles in Ephesians 2:20, 3:5 and 4:11 were capital A

Apostles rather than little a apostles. Paul emphasized that the Apostles made up the foundation of the early church (2:20) and received the revelation regarding the mystery (3:1-5).

Some Bible teachers of the past (Chrysostom, Theodoret, Calvin, Lenski) identified the prophets in Ephesians 2:20 as Old Testament prophets. I believe that the prophets referred to in Ephesians 2:20 were New Testament prophets. First, the word order argues for NT prophets. Notice that Paul wrote “apostles and prophets” and not “prophets and apostles.” Second, the Old Testament prophets did not receive the revelation of the mystery regarding the church. Paul makes it plain that the mystery was not revealed in the past ages to the sons of men. Third, Paul wrote that the risen ascended Jesus Christ gave the apostles and prophets to the church (Eph.4:11). Old Testament prophets could not be the prophets of Ephesians 4:11 because they lived prior to the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus and prior to the birth of the Church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

Wallace writes, “If the OT prophets are in view, then obviously two distinct groups are meant. But if NT prophets are in view, this would favor the apostles as being a subset of the prophets. In favor of this second view: (1) If OT prophets were in view, it seems unnatural that they would be mentioned second. (2) Whenever apostles are in a TSKS plural construction they always come first and the semantic value of the construction involves the first group as a subset of the second. (3) Since the picture of a building which apparently consists of the true Church is what is being described here, and since the apostles and prophets are viewed as foundational to this building, it seems hardly conceivable that OT prophets would be in the author's mind here. (4) The same construction occurs in 3:5 in which it is declared that the mystery has now been revealed 'to his holy apostles and prophets'; thus, the NT prophets are clearly in view there. Since the context is still about the foundation and beginning of the Church, it would be consistent for the reference to be about the same group of prophets in both 2:20 and 3:5. Our conclusion, then, is that Eph 2:20 speaks of 'the apostles and [other] prophets.'”<sup>5</sup>

### **The Relationship of Apostles and Prophets to Foundation in Ephesians 2:20**

There are three possible grammatical syntactical options for the genitives “of the apostles and prophets” and their relationship to the word “foundation” in Ephesians 2:20:

- (1) Possessive genitives: The apostles’ and prophets’ foundation.<sup>6</sup>
- (2) Subjective genitives: The foundation laid down by the apostles and prophets.<sup>7</sup>
- (3) Genitives of apposition: The foundation consists of the apostles and prophets.<sup>8</sup>

The third view is most consistent. Christ as a person is the cornerstone. The apostles and prophets as people make up the foundation. And the saints as people make up the “stones” in

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 284-286.

<sup>6</sup> Alford, 3:100. But Ellicott points out that this view would mix up the foundation and cornerstone (53).

<sup>7</sup> Ellicott, 61. But Hoehner points out that Ellicott is inconsistent to make Christ personal and the apostles and prophets impersonal by saying that they refer to the teachings about Christ (398).

<sup>8</sup> Snodgrass, 137.

the building built on Christ and the apostles and prophets. In the metaphor of the Church described as a temple, the Apostles and New Testament prophets would make up the foundation. Hoehner writes, "In the end, it seems best to view these genitives as appositional, indicating that the apostles and prophets are the historic persons who first formed the universal church."<sup>9</sup>

No attempt should be made to make all the foundation passages in the New Testament agree. At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus predicted that he would build his Church on this rock (Matthew 16:18). Scholars differ in their views on the meaning of "this rock." I think that Jesus was referring to himself or to Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ. The Matthew text does not teach that the Church is built upon Peter. And the text cannot be used to argue for apostolic succession with Peter being the first pope.

The building metaphor is used to describe Paul's planting a church in Corinth. The apostle Paul called himself a master architect and builder who laid the foundation of the church at Corinth (1 Cor 3:10). Paul said that Jesus Christ was the foundation that he laid (1 Cor 3:11). Paul warns the builders who follow him in their ministry at Corinth about building upon the foundation of Christ with gold, silver and precious stones and not wood, hay and straw. The building materials refer to the works of the pastors of the church of Corinth because Paul later states that the works of the laborers will be evaluated on the (Judgment) Day: a reference to the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The specific details of the building metaphors in Matthew 16 and 1 Corinthians 3 are different from those in Ephesians 2. In Matthew 16 the Lord Jesus Christ is the rock foundation on which the universal Church is built. In 1 Corinthians 3 the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation on which the local church in Corinth is built. In Ephesians 2 the Lord Jesus Christ is the cornerstone and the apostles form the foundation of the temple (a picture of the universal Church). In Matthew Christ is the builder of his Church. In 1 Corinthians Paul is the master architect who laid the foundation and the pastors of the church of Corinth are the builders. In Ephesians 2 God is the builder of the new temple (the universal Church). The Gentile Christians have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The building is still going up. God is the one who fits Jewish and Gentile Christians together (Eph.2:21) and is building them together for a dwelling place of God by the Spirit (Eph.2:22).

### ***Grudem's View: The foundation is the Apostles who are also prophets***

In his book *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* Wayne Grudem argues that Ephesians 2:20 teaches that the Church is built on the foundation of the Apostles who were also prophets.<sup>10</sup> Grudem believes that Ephesians 2:20 indicates that the foundation of the church is found in one group of men: the Apostle-prophets. The Apostle-prophets wrote the

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<sup>9</sup> Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 399.

<sup>10</sup> Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1988), 57.

New Testament. He does not think that there is any need for additional scriptural revelation today since we have the completed New Testament canon.<sup>11</sup>

Grudem thinks that New Testament apostles (the Apostles who were also prophets) were counterparts to the Old Testament prophets and spoke the very words of God. He writes, "We all agree that these prophets are ones who provided the foundation of the Church and therefore these are prophets who spoke infallible words of God....Whether we say this group was only the apostles, or was a small group of prophets closely associated with the apostles who spoke Scripture-quality words, we are still left with a picture of a small and unique group of people who provide this foundation for the Church universal."<sup>12</sup>

But Grudem distinguishes between two types of prophecy in the New Testament: authoritative prophecy given by the Apostle-prophets and non-authoritative prophecy given by congregational prophets in the local churches (i.e prophecy in Corinth). Grudem says that the congregational prophets did not speak the very words of God. He states that "prophecy in ordinary New Testament churches was not equal to Scripture in authority but was simply a very human sometimes partially mistaken report of something the Holy Spirit brought to someone's mind."<sup>13</sup> Grudem claims that "there is little if any evidence for a group of prophets in the New Testament churches who could speak with God's very words (with absolute divine authority that could not be questioned) and who had the authority to write books of scripture for inclusion in the New Testament."<sup>14</sup> Grudem believes that some Christians are still being given the gift of prophecy today but the prophecies given in the local church do not have the same authority as Scripture and may even contain errors in them.

### ***Critique of Grudem's View***

There are several problems with viewing apostles and prophets in Ephesians 2:20 as one group: the Apostle-prophets. First, Paul distinguishes between the apostles and prophets in Ephesians 4:11: "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." Paul also distinguishes between apostles and prophets in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30: "And god has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?"

Second, the Granville Sharp rule is a Greek grammatical argument against Grudem's view. The Granville Sharp rule states that when two nouns are connected by kai and the article precedes only the first noun, there is a close connection between the two. The Granville Sharp rule only applies to personal nouns in the same case that are singular in number. Since apostles and

<sup>11</sup> Grudem argues for the sufficiency of scripture in appendix C of his book *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*.

<sup>12</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 10-51, n.4.

<sup>13</sup> Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, 14.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

prophets are both plural, the Granville Sharp rule does not apply. Therefore, the apostles and prophets could not refer to one group. If Paul wanted to show that the apostles and prophets were one group, he could have done so by inserting a clause: the apostles who are also prophets.

Wallace writes, “This text has become something of a theological lightning rod in conservative circles in America in the past several years, largely due to the work of Wayne Grudem. Grudem argues that the apostles and prophets are identical here. This is essential to his view of NT prophecy: on the one hand, he holds to a high view of scripture, viz., that the autographs are inerrant; on the other hand, he believes that non-apostolic prophets both in the early church and today mixed error with truth. If in Ephesians 2:20 the Church is built on the foundation of apostles and other prophets, then it would seem that Grudem either has to deny inerrancy or affirm that non-apostolic prophets only spoke truth (and were thus on par with OT prophets). Hence, he spends much ink arguing that in this text the prophets are identical with the apostles, while elsewhere in the NT the prophets are a separate class of individuals. This distinction allows him the luxury of embracing an inerrant NT while admitting that today's prophets (as well as first century non-apostolic prophets) can commit error in their predictions. We must refrain from entering into the larger issues of charismata and fallible prophecy in our treatment of this text. Our point is simply that the syntactical evidence is very much against the 'identical' view, even though the syntax has been the primary grounds used in behalf of it. As we have seen, there are no clear examples of plural nouns in TSKS fitting the 'identical' group in the NT, rendering such a possibility here less likely on grammatical grounds. The strongest possibilities are either that two distinct groups are in view or the apostles are seen as a subset of the prophets.”<sup>15</sup>

### ***Ruthven’s View: The foundation is the apostolic and prophetically inspired confession***

Charismatic theologian Jon Mark Ruthven has written on “The Foundational Gifts of Ephesians 2:20” in his third appendix in his book *On the Cessation of the Charismata*.<sup>16</sup> Ruthven writes, “This appendix would suggest that the foundation of Eph.2:20 represents the recurring apostolic and prophetically inspired foundational confession as Peter’s great confession (Mt.16:16-19) which is revealed to and confessed by all Christians at all times.”<sup>17</sup> He also writes: “the foundation of the apostles and prophets symbolizes a way by which everyone on earth may enter into God’s temple/kingdom/covenant/citizenship/household, that is by the Spirit revealed confession of Jesus Christ.”<sup>18</sup>

Ruthven says that the cessationist argument by analogy fails because (1) the foundation indicates a pattern to be replicated, not a generation frozen in time, (2) the foundation represents both Christ himself and the recurring apostolic and prophetically inspired

<sup>15</sup> Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 284-286.

<sup>16</sup> Jon Mark Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata* (Tulsa: Word and Spirit Press, 2011), 203-219.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

foundational confession as Peter's great confession, (3) traditional Protestantism sees a NT apostle as a 16<sup>th</sup> century pope rather than an ongoing ministry function within the church, (4) the cessationist metaphor is an illogical question begging move, confuses the death of early apostles and prophets with the death of their gifts, and (5) the metaphor is destroyed if Christ the cornerstone is the capstone or long high cornerstone holding the walls together like intersecting fingers who is also in contact with each stone.<sup>19</sup>

### **Arguments Against Ruthven's View**

(1) Ruthven claims that Ephesians 2:20 is a pattern to be replicated. But nowhere in Ephesians 2:19-22 does Paul give an imperative to show that Christians must follow the example of Peter in Matthew 16 and confess that Jesus is the Christ. The apostles and prophets formed the foundation in that they wrote the New Testament Scriptures (cf. 2 Tim.3:16-17; 2 Pet.1:19-21).

(2) Ruthven is wrong to state that the foundation of the Church in Ephesians 2 is a person (Christ) and a confession (Christians today must make the same confession about Christ that Peter made in Matthew 16 and the apostles and prophets made). Ruthven has taken Peter's confession of Jesus being the Christ in Matthew 16 and read it into his interpretation of Ephesians 2:20.

(3) The early Church did not see the apostle as a pope figure. First, there was a group of apostles who led the early church and not just one man (the pope) as in the Roman Catholic Church. Second, the apostles did have authority over the local churches but with the death of the apostles that authority came to an end. There are no apostles today. Those who claim to be apostles do not meet the major qualification of an apostle. They have not seen the risen glorified Jesus Christ (though some have claimed to do so).

(4) John was the last apostle and prophet. He wrote the book of Revelation around A.D. 95 from the island of Patmos. He warned that nothing should be added to his final book (Rev.22:18-19). With the completion of the New Testament canon (books written by the apostles and NT prophets) there was no further need for the foundational gifted leaders of the apostles and prophets.

(5) Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone in God's Temple (2:20). The cornerstone was set before the foundation was laid. The cornerstone was the measure for the rest of the building. The cornerstone was the key stone to holding the building together. The cornerstone was the first stone set in the foundation of the building.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 203.

Lenski writes, “The cornerstone was set at the corner of a wall so that its outer angle became important. The angle of the cornerstone governed all the lines and all the other angles of the building. This one stone was thus laid with special, sometimes with elaborate ceremonies.”<sup>20</sup>

The word ἀκρογωνιαίος is used in Isaiah 28:16 (LXX) and it is referred to as a sure foundation: “Therefore, thus says the Lord God: Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. . . .”

The Essenes who lived in Qumran viewed the “cornerstone” of Isaiah 28:16 as a foundation stone (1QS 9.5). The rabbis viewed the stone which was on top of the temple mount as a foundation stone. This stone took the place of the ark in the second temple according to the Mishnah (Yoma 5.2; Leviticus Rabbah 20.4).

Since the Church described as an unfinished building that is growing, it is more consistent to view ἀκρογωνιαίος as the cornerstone which is part of the foundation rather than a capstone used to complete the building.

### **APOSTLES AND PROPHETS IN EPHESIANS 3:5**

Τούτου χάριν ἐγὼ Παῦλος ὁ δέσμιος τοῦ Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ] ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν τῶν ἐθνῶν **2** - εἶ γε ἠκούσατε τὴν οἰκονομίαν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς δοθείσης μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς, **3** [ὅτι] κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν ἐγνωρίσθη μοι τὸ μυστήριον, καθὼς προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγῳ, **4** πρὸς ὃ δύνασθε ἀναγινώσκοντες νοῆσαι τὴν σύνεσίν μου ἐν τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, **5** ὃ ἐτέραις γενεαῖς οὐκ ἐγνωρίσθη τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὡς νῦν ἀπεκαλύφθη τοῖς ἁγίοις ἀποστόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις ἐν πνεύματι, **6** εἶναι τὰ ἔθνη συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμετοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, **7** οὗ ἐγενήθη διάκονος κατὰ τὴν δωρεάν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς δοθείσης μοι κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ.

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.”

### **Paul was a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the Gentiles (3:1)**

Ephesians 3:1 begins with the words Τούτου χάριν which are translated “For this reason.” Ephesians 3:1-13 is a unit of thought. Ephesians 3:1 is an epanalepsis. Paul breaks off his flow

<sup>20</sup> R. C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 400.

of thought and adds a long parenthesis (Eph 3:2-13). He resumes the thought again in Ephesians 3:14 with *Τούτου χάριν* .

Paul was the prisoner of Rome. He had appealed to Caesar (Nero) and was taken to Rome in chains. But Paul did not view himself as the prisoner of Rome, but the prisoner of Christ Jesus. Paul viewed Christ Jesus as sovereign over his circumstances. Paul explained the purpose of his imprisonment- for the Gentiles. Paul desired that the Gentiles hear the good news of the gospel.

### **Paul was a steward of the grace of God given to him for them (3:2).**

Ephesians 3:2 begins the protasis. Paul begins with a conditional clause “If indeed you heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you.” This conditional clause is a first class condition which means that the Ephesians had already heard and knew this fact. The apodasis is found in Ephesians 3:13: “Therefore, I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.” Paul did not want the Gentile believers in Ephesus to be discouraged because He saw the end result of his tribulations: it was for their glory.

God gave Paul a dispensation or stewardship of grace (3:2). Paul was given grace for service. Paul saw himself as a steward of God’s grace. God in his sovereignty saved and called Paul to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:1-19; 1 Tim.1:12-13; Rom.15:15-16; 1 Cor.4:1; 9:16-17; Gal.2:9). The Ephesians knew that Paul was made a minister for the Gentiles.

### **Paul was a recipient of the mystery (3:3).**

The mystery was made known to Paul by revelation. Paul received direct revelation from God about the mystery. Paul does not specifically tell us the time when he received this revelation. It may have been when he was in Arabia (Gal.1:17) after his conversion experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). Paul wrote “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal.1:11-12).

Paul uses the word mystery (*μυστήριον*) twenty one times in his epistles.<sup>21</sup> What is the meaning of the word “mystery”? A mystery is God’s secret which is hidden from human reason and revealed by God in his time.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> What are some of the mysteries revealed by Paul in his epistles? The mystery of lawlessness is that the tendency to break God’s moral laws is prevalent in society and is being restrained by the Spirit of God in the Church (2 Thess 2:7). The mystery of the Rapture is that Jesus Christ will come back for the Church and some Christians will not die (1 Cor 15:51–57). The mystery of Israel’s partial blindness is that right now most Jews do not believe in their Messiah Jesus. This has happened until the complete number of elect Gentiles have come to faith in Jesus as Messiah (Rom 11:25). The mystery of the indwelling Christ is that Jesus Christ lives inside each Christian (Col 1:27). The mystery of godliness is that God became incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ (1 Tim 3:16).

O'Brien reveals the cultural background behind the word "mystery": "The situation of perceived demonic hostility in western Asia Minor may have provided a partial motivation for Paul's emphasis on the cosmic aspect of the mystery in Ephesians. It could have stood in deliberate contrast to the Lydian-Phrygian "mysteries" which were so popular, so as to be a polemic against the possible influence of these mysteries in the churches. According to PGM I.128-32 a pagan mystery initiation involved receiving "the lord of the air" (cf. Eph 2:2) as the indwelling deity! The mystery revealed in Ephesians, however, was the opposite of the pagan mysteries. Christ bringing "all things" under his head implied the impending doom of the so-called deities invoked in magic and the mystery religions. It is inadequate to claim that the content of the mystery in Ephesians is defined solely in terms of God's acceptance of the Gentiles and their union with Jews on an equal footing in Christ (Eph 3:3-4). Christ is the starting point for a true understanding of the notion of "mystery" in this letter, as elsewhere in Paul. There are not a number of "mysteries" with limited applications, but one supreme "mystery" with a number of applications (Caragounis)."<sup>23</sup>

#### **Paul revealed the mystery in his letter to the Ephesians (3:4).**

The means by which the Ephesians can understand Paul's insight into the mystery was by reading the first part of his letter. Paul had previously discussed the mystery of God's sovereign will (his decree): that in the dispensation of the fullness of times God would gather together in one all things in Christ (Eph.1:9-10). Jesus Christ already is the sovereign Head of the universe and He has been given as Head of the Church (Eph.1:19-23). But all things have not yet been brought under his Lordship. This will happen in the dispensation of the fullness of times (a reference to the future millennial kingdom) (cf. 1 Cor.15:20-28). Paul also emphasized in the first part of Ephesians that God created in Himself one new man (a reference to the universal Church) from the two (saved Jews and saved Gentiles) and made peace through the cross of Christ (Eph.2:15).

#### **The mystery was not revealed in past ages but was now being revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets (3:5)**

The mystery was not revealed in other ages to the sons of men. If you read through the Old Testament you will not find the doctrine of the Church. The OT prophets predicted the first coming of Messiah, the tribulation period, the second coming of Messiah and the millennial kingdom, but they did not prophesy about the Church. The OT prophets predicted Gentile salvation and blessing (Gen.12:3; 22:18; 26:4; Amos 9:12) but they did not predict that saved Gentiles and saved Jews would make up one Body: the Church.

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<sup>22</sup> BDAG, 662.

<sup>23</sup> P. T. O'Brien, "Mystery" in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph Martin, Daniel Reid (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 623.

The mystery has now been revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets. God the Father revealed the mystery of Christ by the Spirit to his Apostles and NT prophets. The instrumental use of the preposition ἐν gives the means by which the mystery was revealed. The mystery was revealed by the Spirit = Holy Spirit.

Jesus predicted to his disciples in the Upper Room Discourse the revelatory ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would “bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (John 14:26). The apostles Matthew and John were able to remember the words of Christ when they wrote their gospels. The Holy Spirit would “guide you into all truth” and “tell you things to come” (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit was involved in revealing truth to the apostles and New Testament prophets as they wrote the New Testament. Peter later wrote “Knowing this first that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private origin, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

What is the significance of the ὡς clause in Ephesians 3:5? What is the nature of the comparison? Is it a comparison of degree or kind? The comparative ὡς can be used to compare either degree or kind. Here is an illustration that I like to use with my students. (1) a comparison of degree- “You are as good a student of the Scripture as I am” (meaning that we are both good students of the Scriptures) or (2) comparison of kind- “You are not a seminary professor as I am” (meaning that you are not a seminary professor at all).

Amillennialists believe that the comparison in Ephesians 3:5 is one of degree. They believe that the mystery was revealed in the Old Testament but not to the degree that it is revealed in the New Testament. Oswald Allis attacked the premillennial view of the Church as a “mystery parenthesis.” He says that Paul never viewed the Church as unrevealed in the Old Testament.<sup>24</sup> Allis argues that the comparative particle ὡς is used restrictively here. He concludes that the mystery was not made known as fully or clearly as it is today. Allis believes that the comparison is one of degree of revelation.

Dispensational premillennialists believe that the comparison in Ephesians 3:5 is one of kind. This is a descriptive use of ὡς. The mystery was never revealed in the other ages (OT time period), but it is now revealed to God’s holy Apostles and NT prophets (in the NT time period).

in other ages	was not made known	to the sons of men
now	has been revealed	to His holy apostles and prophets

The mystery was not made known in other ages to the sons of men. The sons of men may refer to OT prophets (view of Bengel) or the elect servants of God (view of Barth). But Hoehner says that the word is never used in the plural of OT prophets and should be viewed as a reference to human beings.<sup>25</sup> But the mystery is now revealed to God’s holy apostles and prophets (in the New Testament). God has revealed his secret to the Apostles and NT prophets.

<sup>24</sup> Oswald Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, 90-110.

<sup>25</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 438.

The context argues for a comparison of kind and not degree. Ephesians 3:9-10: “...the mystery which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ to the intent that *now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church.*” The mystery was hidden in God (in his sovereign decree). It reveals the manifold wisdom of God (cf. 1 Cor.2). This wisdom of the mystery is now made known by the Church. The Church is to proclaim the mystery of Christ to the world.

Cross references show that God has revealed the previously hidden secret. 1 Corinthians 3:7-8 says “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew for had they known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” The crucifixion of the Lord of glory is a part of this mystery. The rulers of this age (Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod Antipas) did not know the hidden wisdom of God. Romans 16:25b-26a says, “...the mystery kept secret since the world began *but now made manifest.*” Colossians 1:26 says “the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations *but now has been revealed* to His saints.”

### **Paul defines the mystery (3:6)**

Paul defines the mystery in Ephesians 3:6: “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ through the gospel.” The mystery is that through the gospel saved Gentiles are heirs together with saved Jews in the Church. They are co-members of the Body of Christ. Both saved Gentiles and saved Jews are God’s inheritance (Eph.1:11) and have been given the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of their future inheritance (Eph.1:14). Unbelievers do not have an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God (Eph.5:5). The mystery is that saved Jews and saved Gentiles share together in the same promise in Christ Jesus. The promise refers to the Holy Spirit who is given to each person who trusts in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior (cf. Acts 1:4).

Paul Benware writes, “The church, then, is a partaker of the spiritual blessings of the new covenant, enjoying regeneration, the forgiveness of sin, and the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit. The church is primarily Gentile in its makeup—those who have been graciously grafted in by God until their number is completed. Multitudes of Gentiles experience the wonderful blessings of the new covenant. But the church is not national Israel, the people with whom God made this covenant. The church does not and cannot fulfill the new covenant. Its fulfillment awaits the arrival of Jesus the Messiah. When He returns at the Second Coming, all the spiritual and material blessings promised Israel will be received.”<sup>26</sup>

### **APOSTLES AND PROPHETS IN EPHESIANS 4:11-13**

11 Καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους, 12 πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 13 μέχρι καταντήσωμεν οἱ πάντες εἰς τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ,

<sup>26</sup> Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 73.

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (NKJV).

### **Christ has given gifted Christian leaders to the church (4:11)**

The ascended Christ has given gifted men (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) to the Church. Christ is the He (αὐτός) who gave some to be leaders. Christ is the one who descended into the lower parts of the earth and ascended far above all the heavens (4:9-10). The purpose of Christ’s ascension is that he might fill all things. The risen, exalted Christ is the one who distributes the spiritual gifts. The Greek verb ἔδωκεν translated “gave” is used in the other texts related to spiritual gifts (Rom.12:3, 6; 1 Cor.12:7-8).

The ascended Christ has given Apostles and prophets to the Church. Notice that Paul distinguishes between Apostles and prophets in Ephesians 4:11. Though some Apostles were chosen before the death and resurrection of Jesus, they were not given to the Church until after Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension. This is a strong argument that the Church did not begin until Pentecost. Since the prophets were given to the Church, these men must be New Testament prophets and not Old Testament prophets.

Christ has given evangelists (εὐαγγελιστάς) to the Church (4:11). Evangelists announced the good news to lost people. Philip was a New Testament evangelist who preached the gospel in Samaria (Acts 8:5) and to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:35). Paul told Timothy to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim.4:5). Evangelists are Christian leaders who tell lost people the gospel. The work of an evangelist is to preach the gospel that Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and rose again to give eternal life and forgiveness of sins to all who trust in Him alone for salvation (Luke 24:45-49; 1 Cor.15:1-11). An evangelist also equips Christians to share the gospel with lost people. He trains people in how to share their testimony or how to give a gospel presentation.

Christ has given pastors and teachers to the Church (4:11). Pastors (ποιμέννας) are shepherds of local churches. A pastor leads the flock by his godly example, feeds the flock the word of God, intercedes for the flock, cares for his flock and protects his flock (cf. 1 Peter 5:1-3). Paul commanded the Ephesian elders at Miletus to “shepherd the church of God” (Acts 20:28).

Teachers (διδασκάλους) are those who accurately explain the truths of God’s word to Christians (1 Cor.12:28; Romans 12:7; 1 Tim.2:7; 2 Tim.1:11). The word teachers occurs 59 times in the NT and 7 times in Paul’s letters (Rom.2:20; 1 Cor.12:28-29; Eph.4:11; 1 Tim.2:7; 2 Tim.1:11; 4:3). Teachers use their spiritual gift of teaching in the church to clearly and accurately communicate the truths of the Bible in such a way that people learn and apply the truth to their lives.

Pastors and teachers are two groups that are joined together. Debate has occurred through the centuries as to whether they represent two groups (pastors and teachers) or one group with a combination of two gifts (pastor-teachers). The Greek construction (article-noun- καὶ -noun) is not a Granville Sharp rule since the nouns are in the plural, but the Greek construction shows that pastors are a subset of teachers. All pastors are teachers, but not all teachers have to be pastors.<sup>27</sup>

### **The risen ascended Jesus Christ has given gifted spiritual leaders to the Church to equip the saints for the work of ministry and the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph.4:12)**

Why did the ascended Christ give gifted spiritual leaders to the church? There are three major views regarding the responsibilities of the apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers in Ephesians 4:11-12. The relationship of the prepositions *πρός* , *εἰς*, *εἰς* in Ephesians 4:12 determine the interpretation of the verse and its relevance for a biblical philosophy of ministry.

#### **(1) Christian leaders do all three things: equip the saints, do the work of the ministry and edify the body of Christ**

The first view is that the Christian leaders do all three aspects of church work. They equip the saints. They do the work of the ministry. They edify the body of Christ. The Greek prepositions *πρός*, *εἰς*, *εἰς* are interpreted as semantically parallel in this view.

#### **(2) Christian leaders equip the saints to do the work of ministry and to edify the body of Christ**

A second view is that the gifted leaders equip the saints to do two things: to do the work of ministry and to edify the body of Christ. Christ gave the church gifted leaders for the purpose (*πρός*) of equipping the saints. The saints then are responsible to do the work of ministry and build up the body of Christ. The Greek prepositions *εἰς* .. *εἰς* are displayed as semantically parallel and modify equipping the saints.

#### **(3) Christian leaders equip the saints to do the work of ministry which results in the body of Christ being edified**

A third view is that gifted leaders equip saints to do the work of the ministry which results in the edifying of the body of Christ. Christ gave gifted leaders for the purpose (*πρός*) of equipping the saints. The purpose (*εἰς*) of the leaders equipping the saints is for the saints to do the work of the ministry. The purpose/result (*εἰς*) of the saints doing the work of the ministry is the body of Christ will be edified. This is my interpretation of these prepositions and biblical view of ministry.

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<sup>27</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 284.

## The Meaning of Equipping

The word “equipping” (καταρτισμὸν) in Ephesians 4:12 only occurs once in the New Testament as a noun. The verb καταρτίζω means to put in order, to restore to a former condition, to mend, prepare, to complete, to furnish and to perfect.<sup>28</sup> Equipping involves repairing and preparing Christians for ministry. It refers to restoring something to its original condition, or its being made fit or complete. The word was used of fishermen who mended their nets (Mt.4:21). The word was also used of doctors who set a broken bone (Apollonius, *Citiensis* 1.1,2; 2.1, 4; 3.4; 4.2). Spiritual Christians have a responsibility to “restore” Christians who have fallen into sin (Gal.6:1). Equipping involves “repairing” spiritually broken Christians (2 Cor.13:11).

Equipping involves preparing Christians for service. 1 Thessalonians 3:10 says that Paul prayed “exceedingly that we may see your face and *perfect* what is lacking in your faith.” Equipping involves a personal ministry of teaching the word to God’s people and helping them know what they believe and how to behave. 2 Corinthians 13:9 says “For we are glad, when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made *complete*.” The word “complete” is the same word as equip. 2 Timothy 3:17 says that the word of God “equips” us for every good work. Pastors and teachers prepare Christians for ministry by preaching and teaching the word of God (2 Tim.4:2). Hebrews 13:21 says that God can “make you *complete* in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

## The time during which the risen Christ gives gifted leaders to the Church is until the Church reaches maturity (Ephesians 4:13)

The risen glorified Christ gives His Church apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Christ desires that his Church be unified and mature. When does the Church reach this goal?

The Church reached a level of maturity at the end of the first century with the completion of the New Testament canon. So the foundational gifts of apostle and prophet are no longer needed since the New Testament canon is complete and sufficient for salvation and spiritual growth. The risen glorified Christ continues to give the spiritual gifts of evangelists, pastors and teachers to the Church since the Church has not yet reached complete unity and maturity.

In 1 Corinthians 13:11 Paul wrote “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” The analogy could be applied to the spiritual maturity of the church. When the Church was a child (first century) the Church spoke as a child (spiritual gift of tongues), understood as a child and thought as a child (knowledge and prophecy as spiritual gifts). But when the Church became a man (at the end of the first century with the completion of the New Testament canon), the Church put

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<sup>28</sup> BDAG, 526.

away childish things (there was no further need for the spiritual gifts of tongues, prophecy and knowledge =revelation knowledge).

Lincoln writes, “τέλειος has the nuance of mature rather than perfect (cf. also 1 Cor.2:6; 14:20; Heb.5:14), while ἄνδρα denotes here an adult male, a full-grown man. The emphasis is on the mature adulthood of this person in contrast with the children to be mentioned in the next verse. The Church, which has already been depicted as one new man in Christ (2:15) is to attain to what in principle it already has in him—maturity and completeness. ...The standard for believers’ attainment is the mature proportions that befit the Church as the fullness of Christ. Again, we should recall that this is a continuation of the discussion of Christ’s gifts and that is through his gifts of ministers that Christ enables the Church to attain to the complete realization of what it already is. Ministers are important for the period of the “not yet” in which the Church has to be helped to progress toward the eschatological goals of unity and maturity.”<sup>29</sup>

Hoehner writes, “Thus Christ gave foundational gifts in order to prepare all the saints in ministry to edify the body. Further, the corporate body is to reach or attain the unity of faith and the knowledge of God, to a mature person as a corporate entity, and to Christ’s full stature. This can be accomplished because believers who function in the body have the foundational gifts to prepare them and also because each individual believer has been given a gift in measure (v.7). Hence, if every individual believer allows the Spirit to use that gift to the measure given to him or her, then all the body of Christ will grow to the measure of Christ’s full stature.”<sup>30</sup>

The Church has not yet reached complete unity of the faith, knowledge of the Son of God or complete maturity. The Church will reach this state at the Rapture of the Church. Since the Church has not yet reached this state, then the risen Christ must still be giving gifted Christian leaders (evangelists, and pastors and teachers) to the Church. Cessationists and continuationists agree that the ascended Christ is not giving Apostles today. They would disagree about whether the ascended Christ is giving prophets to the Church today.

## CONCLUSION

As a cessationist I believe that the gifts of apostle and prophet were foundational to the Church. The texts in Ephesians are key texts to argue for the fact that the gifts of apostle and prophet are no longer needed. The apostles and NT prophets formed the foundation of the early church (2:20). The apostles (including Paul) and NT prophets received the revelation of the mystery by the Spirit and wrote down that revelation in the New Testament (3:5). The ascended Christ gave the Church apostles and prophets in the first century until the Church reached a level of relative maturity by the end of the first century (4:11-13). The ascended Christ continues to give the Church evangelists and pastors and teachers until the Church reaches complete maturity- at the Rapture of the Church.

<sup>29</sup> Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians* Word Biblical Commentary (Word, 1990), 256-257.

<sup>30</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 558.