

***and some as prophets, (4:11b)***

In the New Testament, the term “*prophets*” (Ephesians 4:11) has two applications: (1) individuals who foretold the future (Acts 11:27-28) (2) individuals who taught God’s Word for the purpose of encouraging and strengthening the church (Acts 15:32; 1Corinthians 14:3). A prophet’s message was to be disregarded should it contradict the apostles’ doctrine (1Corinthians 14:37), for the apostles carried more authority than the prophets (1Corinthians 12:28).

The “*prophets*” addressed in Ephesians 4:11 were spiritually gifted men responsible for equipping and maturing the saints (Ephesians 4:12-13). God used these men to simplify what the apostles expounded doctrinally (Acts 13:1; 15:30-35, 1Corinthians 14:3). They seemed to differ somewhat from men with the gift of prophecy (1Corinthians 12:10). They were designated leaders who were recognized as men of authority, men, who outside of the apostles, had the final say in regard to doctrinal matters within the church.

Does the office of “*prophet*” exist today? Individuals who think not use Ephesians 2:20 to support their position, arguing that the apostles’ and prophets’ responsibility of establishing the church in truth (along with writing the New Testament canon) fulfilled these offices. Also, in 2Peter 2:1, Peter seems to indicate that the teacher replaced the prophet—the prophet’s message coming by direct revelation from God, the teacher’s message consistently based on truth gathered from the Scriptures. Unquestionably, the office of “prophet” was mightily used in the formative years of the church.

Individuals who view the office of “prophet” as functioning today normally cite 1Corinthians 12:10 for support:

*and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. (1Corinthians 12:10)*

These persons usually perceive the gifts recorded in Romans 12, 1Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4 as functioning today. If, indeed, the office of “prophet” remains today, those who serve in this capacity must make certain that their words (and lives) agree with the doctrine recorded in the full counsel of the Scriptures. Many “self-proclaimed” prophets have done significant harm to Christ’s body by leading the immature down a path of error and deceit.