

Study 0071

Worship Under the New Covenant (7)

We looked at the first part of divine gifts available to both full-time and part-time new covenant priests, as we reviewed gifts for spiritual service, which itself can be further broken down to spiritual gifts (word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues) and serving gifts (helps, administration, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, and, mercy). We saw what these gifts are, and were able to identify them in operation in Scripture. By the grace of God, we are now able to apply ourselves to using the divine gifts for spiritual service unto God, and bring glory to Him. Let us now examine divine gifts for ministry office.

Texts: 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-16

Divine gifts for ministry office are given for the purpose of, (a) training and developing new covenant priests for divine service (the work of ministry), (b) building the church of God, (c) eliminating ignorance from the Body of Christ, and, (d) bringing all members of the Body of Christ (the kingdom of new covenant priests) into the fullness of the stature of Christ. Some peculiar aspects of divine gifts for ministry office are:

1. The gifts for ministry office are only given to some in the church, unlike the other divine gifts, which all new covenant priests have at least one of.
2. The gifts are not only in some men, but these gifted men are themselves, gifts to the church!
3. The gifts are nouns, rather than verbs; and to a large extent reveal the functions of those who occupy the ministry office, as well as, the roles these gifts play in the church.
4. All the men gifted with divine gifts for ministry office are chosen, called, and commissioned by God. The gifts for ministry office are therefore embedded essentially in full-time new covenant priests!
5. Notwithstanding that gifts for ministry office are, to all intents and purposes, for full-time new covenant priests, part-time new covenant priests may be appointed by men who occupy ministry offices, to function, albeit temporarily, as though they were in a ministry office. They can, however, not be recognized by God as belonging to such an office, because they were not chosen, neither were they called, nor commissioned by Him!

In essence, the gifts for ministry office are best regarded as gifts to the church. Hence, we can say that while gifts for spiritual service are given to individuals in the church, gifts for ministry office are individuals chosen, called, and, commissioned by God, and given to the church as a gift to build and establish believers in Christ in the church.

In **1 Corinthians 12:28**, we come across the mention of three gifts for ministry office (Apostle, Prophet, and Teacher). These gifts are mentioned along with other spiritual and serving gifts. To understand this verse of scripture, we must note that the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth chapters of 1 Corinthians, were written to enlighten the ignorant and very arrogant Corinthian church about spiritual gifts (**1 Corinthians 12:1-3**), and the place they occupy in the church of God. This was because some people in the church were trumping speaking in tongues over all the other gifts as though it was a mark of spiritual supremacy (**1 Corinthians 14:1ff**). Thus, when Paul, the Apostle mentions the order of the gifts in **1 Corinthians 12:28**, it was to let the believers in Corinth know that there are other gifts which play more prominent roles in the church than the one they were trumping; pre-eminent of which are the gifts to the church (of which the Apostle was the most pre-eminent, followed by the Prophet, and thirdly, the Teacher). The next set of gifts he mentioned are gifts to

individuals; of which there are, more eminently, the power gifts (working of miracles and gifts of healings); then, the serving gifts (helps and governments), before mentioning the gift of divers kinds of tongues which they were trumping up. Thus, the Apostle was letting the Corinthian church know, as is also relevant for today's church, that there are more eminent gifts in the Body of Christ, chief of which are the gifts to the Body. The Apostle therefore counselled the church in Corinth, as he is counselling us in today's church, to seek the gifts which will build up the church (**1 Corinthians 12:31**), such as prophecy (**1 Corinthians 14:1, 5**), and interpretation of tongues, which makes tongues to become useful to the church (**1 Corinthians 14:13**); yet, we are not to neglect or abandon speaking in tongues (**1 Corinthians 14:39**).

Contrary to **1 Corinthians 12:28**, which mentions three gifts to the church, **Ephesians 4:11**, gives us five such gifts to the church, which are: Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and, Teacher. In **1 Corinthians 12:28**, Paul, the Apostle, mentioned a sample of the gifts to the church, just as he did mention samples of spiritual gifts, as well as a sample of serving gifts. In most translations, the listing of the gifts in **Ephesians 4:11** suggests that the Pastor is also a Teacher, that is, that both gifts are rolled into one. Indeed, one translation uses the expression "*pastor-teacher*" (**The Message**). This may erroneously lead to the conclusion that there are four gifts to the church instead of five. However, there are five distinct gifts to the church, for while the Pastor may function also as Teacher, the office of Teacher is nonetheless distinct!

A superficial look at the gifts to the church can give us an idea of what they really are, and what they do in the church. The word 'apostle' means, 'sent one' or 'special messenger'; the word 'prophet' from the Old Testament Hebrew means, 'to bubble forth' indicating 'one who speaks forth the mind of God'; the word 'evangelist' denotes a 'publisher of glad tidings'; the word 'pastor' means 'shepherd' or 'provider of pasture'; and the word 'teacher' stands for 'an instructor'. To put it in a few words: the apostle is Christ's special envoy sent with the full authority of heaven to establish the kingdom of God on earth; while the prophet declares or proclaims God's mind to the citizens of the kingdom. The evangelist proclaims the good news of God's kingdom to sinners with a view to bringing them into it; the pastor is the care giver to the citizens in the kingdom, and the teacher instructs the citizens in the kingdom on how to relate with the Lord of the kingdom. If the kingdom of God were an organization, the Apostle would be like the General Manager sent to a location to establish a branch of the organization; the Prophet will be like the Legal Adviser/Corporate Affairs Manager who interprets organizational policies that all should follow; the Evangelist will be like the Sales Manager who seeks to sell the organization's products/services to prospective customers; the Pastor will be the Customer Service Officer who makes sure that the needs of customers are met; and, the Teacher will be the Operations Officer who teaches the customers how to use and enjoy the products/services. Put another way, the apostle is a special envoy, the prophet, an interpreter, the evangelist, an announcer, the pastor, a shepherd, and, the teacher, an instructor.

At the beginning of any major kingdom venture, like a new work or a new move of God, an Apostle would be chosen, called, and commissioned for the work. He will have to function in the interim, in all the Offices for some time, until the others are called, and commissioned. In the absence of other gifts for ministry office, however, individuals in the church, who have been endowed with spiritual and serving gifts, would function. For example, in the absence of a Prophet, prophecy would be received from individuals manifesting the gift of prophecy. In our next study, we shall take a closer look at these gifts to the body of Christ.

EXERCISE

Please answer 'True' or 'False' (*some of the statements below may not have anything to do with some of the subject matter above, because they are meant to test how much we already know*).

1. No church planting can take place unless an Apostle is on the ground.
2. The Prophet is present to give direction to the church on how it should go.
3. The Prophet's role is to prophesy to individuals about business opportunities available in the world.
4. You can be a gift to the church, i.e., a gift for ministry office, even if you are not a full-time new covenant priest.
5. There is a difference between having the title of a ministry Office and functioning in that Office.
6. All Pastors should be able to teach.
7. All Teachers should be able to pastor.
8. All the gifts to the church may exist in one gift (i.e., a person).
9. The gifts closest to the flock are Evangelist and Prophet.
10. The gift of evangelist and the Office of Evangelist are the same.