

Welcome to the training program for “Kingdom of God” dwellers. During these next few lessons, we will learn about God’s army. We will learn about God, His attributes, His will and His way. We will study His purpose for us. We will also learn about His enemies, which are also our enemies.

Kingdom Rank

Our Focus:

In all armies, there are ranks of officials who receive delegated authority and functions from the Commander-in- Chief. The army of the Lord is no exception. God has put in place a command structure which He expects to be followed. Disobedience to those who God calls to leadership is disobedience to God Himself. All of the positions we will study in this lesson are functional. The emphasis is on doing the will of the One who called. This means that God calls the person and it’s up to him or her to obey. So let’s study the rank of God’s army.

Scripture Setting

Ephesians 4:11 *KJV*

11. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.

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Summary

Introduction

In this lesson, we will examine the God-given leadership structure of the Church. We will note its history, see what the New Testament has to say about it, and attempt to shed some light on what the function should be today. This is not a treatise on the offices and officers of the Church. It is just an overview of what the Bible portrays as the make-up of the command structure that God gave to the Church. Positions and functions which are called by men, i.e. deacons, missionaries, mothers, etc., are not covered here. God did not call any one to those functions according to the Holy Scriptures. So let's see how this army is led.

I. Apostles

A. Background

“Apostolos,” the Greek word used in our lesson text, comes from the verb *apostello*, which is a combination of the preposition *apo*, “from, off,” and the verb *stellomai*, “keep away, stand aloof, avoid, put in order.” *Apostello* means to “send off” people or things.

In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word *apostolos* occurs once; while the verbs *apostello* and *exapostello* occur some 700 times. These words translate the Hebrew *shalach*, “send” (with emphasis on the authority of the messenger [literally “the one sent”]). The authority does not come from an office or a position, but from a specific, limited duty.

In the Diaspora, a *shaluach* (Hebrew word) was associated with the Greek word *apostolos*. The rabbis did not use this Greek term, which became to be used only by Christians. The church father Jerome said that the Hebrew word, *shaluach*, was a Jewish title comparable to apostle (To the Galatians 1.1). But a Jewish *shaluach* and a Christian apostle are not the same. A *shaluach* was sent by men, but an apostle was commissioned by the Lord himself.

B. New Testament Apostles

“And he gave some, apostles.” “Apostle” denotes a ministry and an office Jesus instituted: *“And when it was day, he called unto him the disciples: and of them he chose*

twelve, whom also he named apostles” (Luke 6:13). In apostolic ministry, one is sent to accomplish a mission. The apostles were sent to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

The New Testament Apostles established the apostolic doctrine. The Church is “*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [stone]*” (Ephesians 2:20). The apostles personally witnessed the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament prophets in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They also explained what those events meant in salvation history. Not only did they testify that Jesus died on the Cross (John 19:35), but they preached that He died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3). They testified that Jesus rose from the dead, and they preached that He was “*raised for our justification*” (Romans 4:25). It is through the word of the apostles that we believe in Jesus.

The apostolic calling of Paul was no less significant than the calling of the Twelve. In Galatians 1:12 we read: “*For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught [it], but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” Jesus called Paul to be His apostle to the Gentiles. He saw Jesus on the Damascus Road (1 Corinthians 9:1). Paul saw Him “*last of all*” (1 Corinthians 15:8). As the final eyewitness, he became the last great apostle of the Apostolic Age.

C. Apostles Today

In early Christianity, the term “apostle” was not used as it is today. In the New Testament, the technical term “apostle” is almost never used. It is reserved for the original apostles. Today, any apostolic ministry using the term of “apostle” as a title, involves a type of ministry inferior to the original founding apostolate. All too frequently today, some charismatic ministers who were called to special ministries have called themselves apostles; but they have not been given the authority equal to the initial apostles. The Bible also cautions us about those who “*say they are apostles, and are not*” (Revelation 2:2).

II. Prophets

A. Old Testament Prophets

“**A**nd he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets.” A prophet proclaims the Word of God to the people in response to a call from God. In Old Testament times, a prophet was usually called to speak for God concerning a circumstance of his own time that God was addressing. God used the prophet to bring the people in line with His will. Foretelling is an important part of prophesy, but a prophet in the Biblical sense is someone who does more than prophesy the future. However, God’s word often has future relevance.

In the Old Testament, there were prophetic guilds (1 Kings 22:6), or “schools of prophets.” Not only were there prophetic companies, but the Old Testament tells of remarkable single prophets. Samuel was linked to such a group in Ramah (1 Samuel 19:20-24); yet he was distinctly separate from them. Elijah thought he was the only prophet of the Lord left when he challenged the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:22), but God had 7000 prophets who never bowed to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). Second Kings chapter 2 puts Elisha with the “*sons of the prophets*” and the “*disciples of the prophets*”

(2 Kings 2:15). The prophet knew his message was the “word of God.” Throughout time there were false prophets that had to be denounced. In the Books of Hosea and Isaiah, false prophets got drunk and “*looked the other way*” at injustice (Hosea 4; 5; Isaiah 3:1-3; 9:14f.; 28:7f.; 29:10). Micah proclaimed that the false prophets caused God’s people to err, they oppressed the poor, announced “*peace*” to those who could pay, but war to those who could not (Micah 3:5). Jeremiah condemned false prophets because they prophesied lies (Jeremiah 5:31). They had no commission or message from God (Jeremiah 14:14). They spoke from their own hearts rather than God’s Spirit.

B. New Testament Prophets

Prophets and the prophetic gift, in the New Testament, operated differently from those in the Old Testament. Still, they shared many features as well as the same title. They spoke as inspired by the Holy Ghost. God’s plan to save the Gentiles was preached by the Old Testament prophets even before the New Testament. Prophets of the Old Testament foretold “*the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*” (1 Peter 1:11).

Prophets in the New Testament proclaimed God’s will in particular situations. Paul’s outline of the gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14:3 stressed the functional nature of prophecy as “*edification, and exhortation, and comfort.*” This was the same goal of prophecy found in the Old Testament. As a word of judgment, prophecy also exposed the hidden sin of the heart (1 Corinthians 14:24f.). Prophecy inspired by the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament was limited to certain individuals, but in the New Testament all of God’s people may prophesy (Acts 2:17). On the Day of Pentecost, Peter said the events of the day was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon all flesh: young and old, male and female (Joel 2:28).

Although some people are specifically used in the gifts of prophecy, not everyone is a prophet in that sense of the word. The New Testament writings picture the significance of the prophet in the Early Church. However, false prophets diminished the authority of the prophetic gift, and these gifts grew to be understood more in terms of teaching.

C. Prophets Today

Prophets are gifts to the Church in the same manner that apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are gifts from God. Prophets, together with the apostles, were instrumental in revealing the mystery of the gospel with a rich revelation not previously known. Prophecy does not involve the giving up of the prophet’s own personality and will. The prophet is responsible for the words he brings to the church. Prophets are expected to control themselves (1 Corinthians 14:29-33). However, the message of the prophecy is not determined by the prophet. He or she speaks only what “thus says the Lord.”

The church is responsible to determine whether or not the prophetic message is reliable (1 Thessalonians 5:20f.). False prophets must be distinguished from genuine prophets. The First Epistle of John warns against blindly accepting a message claiming to be Spirit-inspired. John goes on to offer criteria for trying spirits (1 John 4:1,2).

It is true that the prophet’s role has declined in the Church today. The Church has become more institutional and less charismatic. But when the

Church today learns to respond to the word of God as the believers of the Early Church responded to the Word, it will find that the gifts are still there.

III. Evangelists

A. Background

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists.” There are three times in the Bible that the word “evangelist” appears. In our scripture text, it appears in the plural. In the other two instances, it is singular. The Greek word “*euangelistes*” means “preacher of the gospel, evangelist.” It is related to the Greek word “*euangelizo*,” which means “to announce good news.” Originally, “evangelist” described a function rather than an office. An evangelist went out and preached the word of God; much like what missionaries are doing today.

B. New Testament Evangelists

The Bible refers to Philip as “*the evangelist*” (Acts 21:8). Philip was one of the deacons elected by the church (Acts 6:5). He was led by the Spirit to go to Samaria. There he began to preach Christ, the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus (Acts 8:4-24). He also introduced the Ethiopian eunuch to Jesus Christ (Acts 8:26-39). Luke further tells us in Acts 8:40 that Philip went to Caesarea, settled there and continued the work of an evangelist.

Paul told Timothy to “*do the work of an evangelist*” (2 Timothy 4:5). He was to be a messenger of the “good news” of Jesus Christ. With all of his other duties, Timothy was not to neglect being a preacher of the gospel.

All of the Apostles were evangelists. However, not all evangelists are apostles. It appears, from references to “evangelists” in the Bible, that evangelists were subordinate to the Apostles. An evangelist in the New Testament may or may not be a specialized form of ministry, because in the broader sense, all of God’s people are to share the Good News.

C. Evangelists Today

An evangelist should be trained to share the gospel. A witness tells his or her part in the good news of Jesus, however, an evangelist tells “the story” of the good news of Jesus. Training is required to preach the Word of God. Paul told Timothy to study God’s word so that people would know that he was sent, and approved of, by God (2 Timothy 2:15).

The evangelist shares a message of victory. The gospel is the message of Jesus’ victory over the enemy; the strong man has been conquered by the One who is stronger (Matthew 12:29). An evangelist preaches the gospel to the poor and to the captives who will be set at liberty by its power (Luke 4:18).

Today, we use the term “evangelist” as a title or an office. We give the title to women only and we call men preachers “elders.” This is not biblical. The Bible says Philip was an evangelist. Philip was a man. Timothy, another man, was to do the work of an evangelist; an evangelist had work to do! As far as the New Testament is concerned, an evangelist is one who preaches the Word of God; man or woman.

IV. Pastors

A. God's Shepherds

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” The word “pastors,” in our lesson text, is translated from the Greek word “*poimen*.” *Poimen* is the Greek equivalent of the Old Testament word *ra’ah*, “shepherd.”

The shepherd, the *poimen*, did not just feed the sheep, he cared for them and was considerate and protective of them. The shepherd had to tirelessly care for them (Ezekiel 34:1ff.). He guarded the flock at night against wild animals and especially against thieves. Hired shepherds often endangered their sheep by not caring properly for them.

Despite the hazards and difficulties they faced, shepherds were frequently looked down upon in Jewish society. Pharisees seemed to despise shepherds, putting them in the same category as publicans and depriving them of certain rights. They could not be used as judges or testify in a court of law. If David had lived in those days, he would have never been allowed to rise from shepherd to King. But when Jesus was born, it was the despised shepherds in the fields who first received the message from the angels and were the first to witness His glory (Luke 2:8-20).

B. New Testament Pastors

Jesus referred to himself as the “*Good Shepherd*” (John 10:11,14). He is the Messianic Shepherd promised in the Old Testament. He fulfilled the role by gathering the lost sheep of Israel, and of the nations; by giving His life for the sheep, unlike the hireling; and who will separate the sheep from the goats on the day of judgment. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus gathers His flock and loves them, He cares for them. The sheep know the Shepherd, and no one can snatch them out of His hands (John 10:27,28).

C. Pastors Today

Poimen, however, is not only used literally and metaphorically of Jesus as the Good Shepherd but also figuratively to describe the function of the spiritual leader of today's churches. The Good Shepherd will one day call His undershepherds, pastors, to account for the sheep they were to care for and protect (Hebrews 13:20; Jeremiah 17:16,17). “Pastors” are exhorted to be the “shepherds” of God's flock under their care and protection. Peter wrote: “*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight [thereof], not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lord over [God's] heritage, but being ensamples to the flock*” (1 Peter 5:2,3). God has given over for care, the sheep of His flock to the pastors. It is a privilege from God. The emphasis is on the fact that it is the flock of God. For the pastor, it is never “my” flock or “my” church. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and the pastors are merely undershepherds.

In order to be effective as an undershepherd, the pastor needs to be in close, continuous contact with the Good Shepherd, who is Lord of the Church. He must live under Jesus' lordship and lead the members of the flock in following Jesus as Lord. If they ever view the flock as “theirs” or the ministry as “theirs,” they are in serious trouble, and so are their congregations. To be the pastor of a church is more than just a job choice. It is a holy calling and a sacred trust given to a person by the Good Shepherd himself. Those not called and anointed by God, should not be pastoring a church.

Pastors don't tend the flock because they "have to." There is no "religious duty" to become a pastor. Peter said: it's "*not by constraint, but willingly.*" Pastors are not imprisoned by their calling to ministry. Those who would prefer to be somewhere else, doing something else, really need to go there and do it. Pastors serve willingly, voluntarily. The Lord doesn't force or coerce anyone to serve Him. He calls them and invites them to ministry, but they have the freedom to say "yes" or "no." Pastors do not serve for monetary or personal gain. They don't serve in a spirit of greediness. If their motive for ministry is money, they should not be pastoring. The blessing of God will not be upon one who pastors for personal gain. Personal recognition and personal power are forms of personal gain. Serving to be the center of attention with great power and authority is evil. Good pastors serve for what they can put into the ministry, not for what they can take out of it. Pastors should not be dictators, not even benevolent ones. It may seem efficient, but it can be devastating. It is never the leadership style of Jesus for pastors to lord over the people of God (1 Peter 5:3). Jesus practiced a "servant style" of leadership. He entrusted that same style to the pastors God calls to tend His flock.

V. Teachers

A. Background

"*Didaskalos*," means "*the teacher*." "Teaching" is defined as "knowledge of God." God uses people as teachers of His will. Parents are to teach their children in the knowledge of God and are to instruct them as to His ways (Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:6, 7). Moses was commanded to teach the Israelites the commandments, laws, and judgments of the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:1f.). Israel was to teach mankind of God.

B. New Testament Teachers

No less than 41 times in the gospels is the term "teacher" applied to Jesus. Teacher, in the New Testament, is equivalent to the Hebrew *rabbi* - master, lord, teacher. Even though *didaskalos* functions as an equivalent for *rabbi*, there is a big difference between the Greek and Hebrew understanding of the role of the "teacher."

Jesus came from God as "The Teacher." Nicodemus said: "*Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God*" (John 3:2). Other than Lord, Teacher is the primary address to Jesus. But Jesus was not educated as a *rabbi*, or teacher, in the traditional formal sense: "*And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?*" (John 7:15). Jesus did not follow traditional schools of thought. He did not teach in the traditional rabbinical methods. He taught in the power and authority of His messianic being. He usually based His arguments on an interpretation of the Holy Scriptures because they spoke of Him. Although He would challenge tradition by saying, "*You have heard it said. . . But I say to you*" (see Matthew 5:21,22; 27,28; 33,34; 38,39; 43,44). He taught of His own authority.

The apostles were to be teachers above all else (Matthew 28:20; Acts 6:4). Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles was a "*teacher of the Gentiles*" (1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11). The apostles taught as bearers of revelation on a level equal to the Old Testament prophets. The Holy Spirit taught through them (John 14:26; 16:12-15). Through the Spirit, Jesus himself teaches through the apostles: "*He that heareth you heareth me*" (Luke 10:16).

C. Teachers Today

Today, the Holy Spirit is the Divine Teacher. He brings to us, remembrance and enlightenment of, the teachings of Jesus (John 14:26). The teachings of the Holy Spirit and the teachings of Jesus are one and the same.

The teaching in the Church should not be something brand new. No one has the authority to teach anything but the doctrine of Jesus and the apostles. The leadership of the Church must be able to teach. Bishops are to be apt to teach (1 Timothy 3:2). The servant to the Lord (including Deacons) is to be apt to teach (2 Timothy 2:24). The duty of the teacher is to express the “*unsearchable riches in Christ*” (Ephesians 3:8). The teacher is also responsible for protecting the Church from any false teachings that may threaten it (Ephesians 4:12; 1 Timothy 4:13,16).

Teachers are personally held responsible for their teachings. They are also called to be accountable to God (James 3:1). Only the one called by God should exercise the gift of teaching.

Summary

God gave His army structure and order. He gave us leaders who were to edify the body of Christ. These leaders are servants. They minister to God as they minister to His people. The terms we studied today are not position oriented, but function oriented. God’s leaders perform a function.

These leaders are not the only leaders of the Church. But they are the ones which were given by God. The Church elects other leaders and men desire other positions of leadership, but these are the functions and offices that God has given His Church.

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