

# What??!! No Hierarchy??!!

## A Brief Discussion on Leadership in the Body of Christ - Part 2 -

Throughout the history of the Body of Christ, there has been much discussion and teaching concerning the role model of leadership that is to be followed within the Body of Christ. Up until the time when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, the Body of Christ had functioned in a much different way.

As discussed previously in Part 1, the “hierarchal” role model of leadership has been a mainstay within the Body of Christ over the centuries. Throughout church history, from the time Christianity became the “official religion” of the Roman Empire until today, this system of government within the Body of Christ has caused problems and schisms more than it has helped. Denominations have risen up and have come into existence because of this role model of leadership. The split between Catholicism and Martin Luther’s Reformation was caused in part because of the leadership system, as well as the faulty doctrines that were allowed to enter into the Body of Christ because of corrupt leadership. Even within the Protestant movement schisms arose leading to what was became known as “denominations.”

The term “denomination” itself is a term that comes from the mathematical function of division. Denominational churches and organizations see terms such as “pastor, elder, bishop, presbyter, etc” in the scriptures and take them out of their intended usage by the writers of the New Testament to “prove” that the Body of Christ was meant to have a “hierarchal” system of leadership.

Recently, in the “apostolic” and “prophetic” movements we have seen a move to shift away from such traditional “hierarchal” system to a different “hierarchal” system using such scriptures as Ephesians 4:11 and 1Corinthians 12:28 as a basis for their position. We hear terms such as the “Five Fold Ministry” concept of leadership.

In Part 1 of this discussion, we discussed what Paul’s intention was as he mentioned the “gifts” or functions that were to be bestowed upon believers. We discussed that he was teaching that the main purposes of each of the gifts found within the New Testament were for the purpose, primarily for the purpose of keeping and maintaining a relationship of “oneness” between all the believers with the Father, the Son Jesus, and with each other in the Body. Another primary purpose was to keep and maintain a “oneness” concerning the basic fundamentals of the faith leading each believer to live the lifestyle role modeled by Jesus as He walked the earth.

As we continue in Part 2, I would like to go back to Ephesians 4:11 and share some thoughts pertaining to our discussion concerning the “hierarchal” leadership model as well as briefly take a look at those “gifts” and functions found in Ephesians 4:11. Ephesians 4:11 states “*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers...*” I believe to do this we need to look at it from the perspective that Paul was writing from. We must understand that these were not new “Christian terms” that Paul decided to just make up. On the contrary, these were all Greek words used to describe Jewish functions found in Judaism. Of course, now through the power of the Holy Spirit within the believer, these “functions” are taken to another level. You will see what I mean as we continue.

- The gift or function of “apostle”  
The word “apostle” comes from the Greek root word “*apostello*” which means “to be sent; one who is sent.” From this root word we get the Greek word “*apostolos*” translated to the word “apostle,” which has a stronger meaning. It refers to one who is sent as a “special messenger sent on a mission.” The Hebrew word for apostle is “*sheliach*” which also means “to be sent or one who is sent.” We do not see the word “apostle” in the Jewish scriptures obviously because it is a Greek

word. You would see the word "*apostolos*" in the Greek version of the Jewish scriptures called the Septuagint. However, in the original Jewish scriptures we do see the concept of "one who is sent" or "sent one" using the Hebrew word "*sheliach*." It does not necessarily signify being sent by God but the usage implies being sent on a mission by a higher authority such as a priest or government official.

One usage of the term "*sheliach*" and its function would be found in Jewish synagogues of those days. A "*sheliach*," a "sent one," would be an important function within the local synagogue. These "*sheliach*" would carry collections taken by the synagogues of the Jewish colonies in the Roman Empire to be brought to Jerusalem for the support of the Temple. Every Jew was obligated to give every year for the expenses incurred by the Temple and its sacrifices. This should bring to mind the collection that Paul took on his missionary journey to bring back to the Jerusalem assembly. He was performing a function that a Jewish "*sheliach*" (apostle) would do.

Another usage of the term "*sheliach*" in Bible times would be that it was used in reference to those who were looked upon as sages or rabbis. We hear mentioned in the scriptures of a well known sage or rabbi by the name of Gamaliel (Acts 5:34, 22:3) in whom Paul had trained as a Pharisee under. These rabbis ("*sheliach*") such as Gamaliel, would travel the through Judea teaching Judaism and gathering "disciples." There would usually be twelve "disciples" that the "*sheliach*" would let in to their inner circle. These "learning communities" of these rabbis were called "yeshivas." The number twelve came about, traditionally, because the High Priest was served by twelve priests in his Temple ministry. This was symbolic of the twelve sons of Jacob, thereby representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Besides the twelve immediate followers, these rabbis traditionally had seventy-two followers, symbolic of Noah's grandsons who were considered as the fathers and founders of the nations of the world according to Jewish tradition. As One who was the only true Rabbi (John 1:49), Jesus followed this custom as He traveled throughout the region gathering His twelve disciples, as well as, seventy two others as we read of in Luke 10:1.

Another, aspect of "sent ones" would be that of which the Temple priests each year would also send "*sheliachs*" as a representative or "ambassador" of the High Priest" from Jerusalem to the different synagogues of the world. They would bring greetings from their fellow Jews in Judea, as well as the High Priest, and make sure **that each synagogue's worship was rightly observed in these distant lands.** This is an important point and an important aspect to the function of an "apostle." Notice, that these "*sheliachs*" or "sent ones" were "sent on a mission" to make sure that all the synagogues were worshipping and keeping the same fundamental doctrines of Judaism. It was the function of the "*sheliach*" to make sure that all the synagogues were all saying and doing the same thing concerning their faith - Judaism. They were used to maintain a unity, or we can say "oneness" between all those of the Judaic faith and their assemblies, no matter where they were located.

This is the context in which Paul was using and explaining what the gift or function of an "apostle" was to now be within Body of Christ. This gift of "apostleship" is bestowed by Jesus (the true High Priest – Hebrews 3:1) to individuals to go forth and make sure that all the assemblies and all the believers are being taught and following the same fundamental doctrines of their faith in Christ. It was for the purpose of making sure that those in the Body of Christ were all keeping and saying the same things, the same basic fundamentals of the faith, that the original 12 Apostles, who were "special messengers and sent ones" sent by Jesus, taught from the very beginning. It goes back to what Paul was teaching us in Ephesians 4:4-6 concerning "oneness" in the basic doctrines of the faith.

If we look closely at the function of both Timothy and Titus as seen in the scriptures, even though they were not called “apostles” by either themselves or anyone else, we would see that they actually worked in the function of the “gift of the apostolic.” They were “sent ones” sent by Paul to represent his apostolic function as his representative or ambassador, while he was in prison. In his letters to both Timothy and Titus we read that Paul continually encouraged both Timothy and Titus to make sure that the assemblies they were visiting on his behalf were doing things in the way in which Jesus taught concerning the basic fundamentals of the faith. They were to lay down the specific principles regarding the structure of the local assembly concerning the qualifications of elders. They were to teach the local assembly how to handle any misconduct of believers within the assembly. Most importantly they were to expose and resist the teachings of the false teachers that were infiltrating the assembly and trying to taint the truth and misguide believers in the fundamentals of the faith and bring them into deception (doctrines of devils).

We must also realize that this is why Jesus is referred to as the “**Apostle** and High Priest of our profession.” (Hebrews 3:1) It was because Jesus was the **special messenger sent by the Father** on the specific mission to restore and bring us back into oneness with the Father through the work that the Father sent Him to accomplish and complete. This is why we read over and over again in the Gospels that Jesus tells His listeners whenever He was asked where He was from, He always told them that He was “sent” or in other words, “the sent one”(Hebrew – *sheliach*) sent by the Father.

Jesus was the role model of what the function of the apostolic was and is now to be within the Body of Christ. It is all about oneness. Oneness with the Father and Jesus; oneness with each other and oneness concerning the fundamental doctrines of the faith – “...*one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all...*” It is not about position, status, spirituality or leadership. It is not about bringing forth “new doctrines” and new revelations. It is all about the function of the “gift” of “apostleship” in which Jesus bestows upon an individual. It is all about bringing and keeping the Body of Christ into every aspect of “oneness.”

- The gift or function of “prophet”

The Hebrew word for prophet is *naba'*. In the Jewish scriptures the term “prophet” is used in reference to a person who either speaks under a divine influence (a true prophet of God) or one who speaks under the influence of a false or demonic god (false prophet). It can refer to a person who, when speaking under divine influence, is speaking an utterance or oracle from God. It is one who carries or lifts a burden off the people through their inspired utterance. It is also one who bears a load for the people. It can refer to one who would be speaking for the purpose of giving praise and honor to Yahweh, Adonai - the one, true God, on behalf of the people. The Greek word for prophet is *prophētēs*. To the Greeks the word “prophet” refers to an interpreter of oracles or other “hidden” things.

In the Jewish understanding of prophecy, the purpose of these divinely, inspired messages **was not meant to** reveal some new purpose or reason for their existence or to supersede or change their laws of life. Their reasoning was that everything they needed to know concerning such things was already found within the Torah – God’s Word.

The purpose of the prophetic according to Jewish understanding was, first, to prophecy concerning the coming of Messiah and secondly, to exhort and encourage the Jewish people to make “course corrections” or in other words “consider their ways” concerning their thoughts and behavior which were taking them “off course” from God’s plan and purposes for them - both personally and as a nation. According to the Jewish understanding of the prophetic, a prophet would be inspired by God

to foretell the future only when God deemed it necessary so that they would know what was to come in order to encourage them in their “mission in life” as being God’s people on this earth – hence the Messianic prophecies.

Other times it was to remind them that they were getting away from what God had desired for them and warned them of the dire consequences this would bring if they did not repent and “change their ways.” It is interesting to note that in Jesus’ time, most all of the Jewish leadership, the Pharisees, Sadducees and Scribes, believed that “prophecy departed from Israel” after the generation of Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi. Their thinking was that “prophecy” was no longer needed. Unfortunately, they never heeded the prophecies of those prophets found within their own scriptures. They were so blind and stiff-necked that when the ultimate Prophet of God came in their midst to encourage them to “consider their ways” and repent, they would not heed Him either. Hmmm!!!

Paul would have used the term “prophet” from more of this Jewish understanding. He would be expressing that the “gift of the prophetic” bestowed upon an individual would be more of one who receives a message or word that is inspired under the divine influence of God (the Holy Spirit) and then spoken to the people. Paul in his teachings concerning the “gift of the prophetic” was stating that Jesus was reinstating this function as it was now to be bestowed upon individuals for the purpose of bringing “course corrections” to the Body of Christ and exhorting them “back on course.” These “course corrections” were to be given to the Body of Christ to keep them “on course” concerning the basic fundamentals and teachings of their faith as first established by Jesus and then passed on by the 12 Apostles. It goes back to Paul’s original theme concerning that all in the Body of Christ should be as one.

Jesus role modeled what the true concept and function of the prophetic was by obviously speaking under the divine influence of God. (Luke 1:76) After all, He is God. The scriptures refer to Jesus as that “**Prophet** like unto Moses” that was to come. (Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:22, 23) He was that “Prophet like unto Moses” who spoke and brought an exhortation, encouragement and comfort to all who had “ears to hear” that God the Father has kept His promise and sent His Son to save them from their sins and from eternal separation from their God. Just as Moses declared physical deliverance from the bondage of Egypt through the salvation of the Lord, Jesus declared spiritual deliverance from the bondage of sin that would bring those who received that prophetic word of the fulfillment of God’s promise, into an eternal relationship of oneness with the Father (eternal life). He also, encouraged and exhorted all those who had “ears to hear,” to “consider their ways” and make some “course corrections.” The “course correction” was to “repent” from their wayward ways and turn again towards the Father.

The individual to whom Jesus would bestow this particular “gift” or function would be inspired by God to **exhort, encourage, edify (build up) and bring comfort** to the Body of Christ. (1Corinthians 14:3) The Body of Christ is to be exhorted and encouraged to be “as one.” In doing so this actually brings comfort to the believers. There is comfort when there are no schisms or divisions within the Body as the believers are to be at peace (set as one) with each other. In Paul’s understanding of the prophetic, and therefore his teaching of the prophetic, it would be understood that this function of the prophetic was not to bring forth new doctrines or anything that would be additional or contrary to the basic fundamentals of the faith. It goes to the premise that Paul laid out for us in Ephesians 4:4-6, “*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all...*”

- The gift or function of “evangelist”

The Greek word used is “*euaggelistēs*” which means “a messenger of glad tidings or good news.” It comes from the root word “*euaggelizō*” which simply means “glad tidings” or “good news.” The Hebrew equivalent of the Greek word “evangelist” is “*basar*” which means “to bring glad tidings or good news of victory.”

In the Jewish scriptures the verb “*basar*” is used many times. However, it is never translated into the English word which we are discussing – evangelist/ evangelism. Usually, it was used in the historical Jewish scriptures in referring to military matters. To the Jewish people, to “evangelize” meant to bring “good news of victory” concerning the army of Israel being victorious over their enemy. (1Samuel 31:9; 2Samuel 18:31; 1Kings 1:42). The messenger of this “good news of victory” would be considered an “evangelist.” Since Israel’s destiny as a nation was considered to be in God’s hands, and He fights the nation’s battles for her, any announcement of a military victory would be tied to a deeper spiritual meaning. In other words the “good news of victory” was really the good news of God vindicating Israel and its people from the hands of their enemies. It was bringing the “good news” of declaring deliverance and victory over the enemies of God and His people by God, Himself.

Unfortunately for Israel, many of the kings forgot that it was God who gave them the victory. They became prideful and arrogant and “forgot about God.” This was where the “prophets” would come, inspired by God, to try to bring a “course correction” to the leadership and the people. We know the ultimate fate that happened because of their forgetfulness of what God had done for them. As a side note, we need to learn from this valuable lesson. We must never forget that it is God, through the saving work of Jesus, who has given us the ultimate victory over our enemies, over the forces of wickedness, over all darkness, over sin and death. It was nothing in our selves. Hmmm!!!

As we continue with this function of “evangelist,” we see that Isaiah, throughout the Book of Isaiah, uses the concept of “evangelism” as He declares and proclaims prophetically, the “glad tidings” and “good news” of God’s ultimate victory over all the spiritual forces of darkness that oppress His people. He declares the final and ultimate victory – not just victory over our enemy in the “natural realm,” but the ultimate spiritual victory – salvation through the Messiah, the Son of God - Jesus. Actually, in Isaiah 52:7, we are given a perfect definition of the function of an evangelist and what the “evangelist is to proclaim – *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”*

Jesus was the perfect role-model concerning the function of the evangelist within the Body of Christ – Luke 4:18, 19 (quoting from Isaiah 61:1-3) *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel (Good News) to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”* Jesus proclaimed the Good News of salvation and being healed and set free from the ultimate enemy – sin and death. The “Good News” was, is and always will be – Jesus!!!

Each writer of the Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are considered evangelists. We call their writings – gospels. The word “gospel” means “glad tidings” or “good news.” Each Gospel records the Good News of Jesus’ life, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension – the ultimate victory over the greatest enemy of all – spiritual death, separation from God. Each writer of the Gospels declares victory by Jesus, in Jesus and through Jesus to all who believe. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were messengers (evangelists) of the Good News of God’s total and ultimate victory over all His enemies!!!

Therefore, the function of the evangelist today, is to simply proclaim the accomplishment of Jesus' ultimate victory over every enemy, including spiritual death (separation from the Father because of our sin), through His crucifixion, His resurrection and His ascension to the Father. All who believe in Jesus and what He did can now partake of that ultimate victory over spiritual death and rejoice because now we are brought back into relationship with the Father and His son, Jesus. That is what eternal life is – John 17:3. That is the Glad Tidings!!! That is the Good News!!! That is what the function of the gift of the evangelist is all about. It is not about a title or leadership position. It is about continually proclaiming to the Body of Christ, **as well as to the lost**, that there is victory in Jesus!!! Jesus brings us into “oneness” with the Father and with each other – that is victory in Jesus!!!

We must remember that “oneness” in the Body of Christ is a key to effectively evangelizing the world. Jesus expresses this in His prayer in John 17:21 - *“That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us **so that the world may believe** that you have sent me.”* Again, this goes to the premise that Paul laid out for us in Ephesians 4:4-6, *“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all...”*

- The gift or function of “pastor-teacher”

You may have noticed that I connected what may seem to be two different functions. In the original language, which was Greek, these two functions are actually connected in Ephesians 4:11. As we have been discussing, Paul, in Ephesians 4 is literally discussing “gifts” and functions that Jesus bestows upon those in the Body of Christ to bring the Body into “oneness” of the faith. We must differentiate what Paul is teaching in Ephesians 4 with the actual role of the “pastor” within the Body of Christ.

The terms “pastor/ shepherd/elder/ overseer/ bishop,” in the New Testament are the only terms used for the actual role of oversight to an assembly. They are actually all terms that describe the same leadership position and are used interchangeably throughout the New Testament. There are not terms that were meant to describe a “hierarchy of leadership.” If you look through the scriptures you will see that neither Paul nor any of the other writers in the New Testament teach of a hierarchy within the Body of Christ or its assemblies. When they teach concerning leadership they all speak of the leadership within each particular church or assembly. They also always use a pluralistic concept when they discuss the leadership within each congregation. When they teach on leadership they are assuming that their listeners understand this concept.

Church leadership was never intended to be a “one person” authoritative, corporate CEO structure. It was intended to be “corporal,” a living organism not an organization. In other words it was to be organic – a living Body with all its members being as one and on the same level, not a corporate structure. The only “head” is to be Jesus. With that being said, they understood that there was to be a general oversight of the congregation by what was referred to as “elders.” We see this referred to in Titus 1:5 where Paul directs Titus, *“...that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain **elders** in every city, as I had appointed thee.”*

The very word “elder” infers maturity – not necessarily in age but in the things of God. There may have been a “chief elder” of these elders in each assembly who would be one considered to be the one with the most experience and have a “track record” of wise and sound counsel based on His usage of the Word of God. We do see this in the New Testament assemblies.

This concept of leadership was the original role model for God's people. We see in the Jewish scriptures that God had originally instituted a system that used "judges." The Hebrew word for this type of leadership was "*shaphat*," which means one who makes sure the laws of the land are kept by the people in that land. We see that Moses had instituted this system when the Israelites were in the dessert. The judge was to decide any controversy or problems between the people based on the laws of the land. As it pertained to the Hebrews, it meant that God instituted this role model of using judges to settle any problems or questions that would arise based solely upon the Word of God – His statutes, commandments and precepts. They were to act in a benevolent way with the good of the people always in their heart and most importantly to invoke the ways that God had established. In particular difficult situations they yielded to Moses who was the chief of the judges. We can say that the "judges" of the Jewish scriptures were the pre-cursor to the "elder/pastor/shepherd" of the New Testament. The problem for the Hebrews was that unfortunately, they rebelled against God's role model and asked for a "king" just like all the other nations had. (1Samuel 8:5-20) We all know how well that ultimately worked out for them – not well because it was not what God had originally intended. Hmmm!!!

We do need to also mention that the only "leadership position" mentioned other than that of the pastor/elder is that of those referred to as "deacons." We sometimes refer to the seven men mentioned in Acts 6:5 as the first "deacons." It may seem that this may be correct. However, they were never referred to as such. The term or role of "deacon" is first and only mentioned, in 1Timothy 3:10, 13. It comes from the Greek word "*diakoneō*" which means "a servant or attendant." The Hebrew counterpart to the Greek word "deacon" is the Hebrew word "*shamash*" which means "a servant or attendant, the person who serves and attends to the day-to-day practical tasks of keeping a synagogue (or assembly) going." You may recognize this word "shamash" as it pertains to the menorah. It is the "servant lamp stand" that replenishes the other lamp stands with oil. This Jewish leadership role of a "shamash" within the synagogue is found in Luke 4:20 – "*And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister [Shamash] and sat down.*"

Returning to our discussion of "pastors" and "shepherds," these terms obviously present a picture of herding and caring for a flock. The term "pastor" is actually found in Jeremiah 17:16. It comes from the root Hebrew word "*ra`ah*" which refers to shepherding. The Greek word translated to "pastor" is "*poimēn*" which also refers to shepherding a flock. The term "elder" is more of a descriptive term (an adjective) which describes a specific role. For the Jewish people the term was used for members of the great council or Sanhedrin in Jerusalem as well as the rulers of the local synagogues. Mostly all of those who were on these councils were selected from elderly men. It also referred to elderly mature men who in cities managed public affairs and administered justice.

This term was well known by the writers of the New Testament and therefore used to refer to those who presided over the local assemblies and gatherings. The New Testament writers used the terms bishop, elders, pastors and presbyters interchangeably. These terms initially all had the same concept of leadership when used. It was more of a shared caring by these elders in being used to settling controversies and other such matters between the believers as well as overseeing the care of the believers within that assembly. Again, this points to Paul's premise for the purpose of all the "gifts" – to bring and keep the Body of Christ in "oneness" of the faith and in "oneness" with each other.

These elders and pastors were to do this through having a thorough grasp and understanding of the Word of God being led by the Holy Spirit. In bringing their decisions of disputes or helping and caring for the believers within their assembly through difficult times, etc. The elders would use those times as teaching opportunities to teach those entrusted to their care in the ways of the Lord.

This is why Paul links these two “gifts” of pastor and teacher here in Ephesians. There is a separate “gift” of a teacher that is expressed in the scriptures. (Romans 12:7) While not every person gifted in teaching is a pastor, every pastor is called to be a teacher. We can think of it in this way - the “teacher” in the New Testament is equivalent to the Jewish “scribes.” The Scribes literally wrote the scriptures. They knew every “jot and tittle.” They became the teachers in the Law. They were considered “experts,” or we can say “professors,” in the Word of God.

Therefore, Paul was stating in Ephesians 4:11 that the basic function of the dual “gift” mix of “pastor/elder – teacher” was to be a “shepherding” aspect of caring for the believers and teaching them the practical applications of the Word of God in their everyday lives along with the fundamentals of faith in Jesus as established by Jesus and His original Apostles. Again, this is all for the purpose of keeping the Body of Christ in “oneness” with the Father, Jesus and each other.

As discussed previously concerning shepherds, elders and pastors -the Body of Christ was meant to be individual, local gatherings of believers with elders anointed to shepherd the believers in those local gatherings. The “oneness” aspect of the community of believers comes into play and was designed originally so that no matter which local gathering you would enter into, they would **ALL** be saying the same things concerning the basic fundamentals of the faith given by Jesus, passed onto His 12 Apostles in the anointing of the Holy Spirit who brought them into all “truth.” They in turned passed it on to each local gathering in each city where there were believers.

In other words, if there was a local assembly of believers in Antioch, Syria and a local assembly in Corinth, Greece, a believer from Jerusalem would be able to go to both and hear the same exact fundamentals of the faith in both of these local assemblies even though they were located in different cities. Yes, there, would be a difference in culture and presentation however, the doctrines of the faith would be the same in both assemblies. That is the Body of Christ being in “oneness.” It would also mean that if a need rose up in one assembly, the other assemblies would reach out and help out that assembly because there is a genuine Christ-like love with the believers of all the assemblies to love as Jesus loved. This is what Jesus meant in John 17:21-23, *“That they all **may be one**; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also **may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they **may be one, even as we are one**: I in them, and thou in me, that **they may be made perfect in one**; and that **the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.**”*** Paul says it this way in 1Corinthians 12:24, 25 – *“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.”*

I would like to interject here that I am not saying that each local assembly needs to have those who function in the gifting of apostle, prophet, evangelist, etc. There are those in the Body of Christ that these gifts are bestowed upon who were meant to travel and visit from assembly to assembly in the function of that gift that was bestowed upon them by Jesus. For example, a person within whom the gift of “apostleship” is bestowed would visit these local assemblies to make sure that all the assemblies would be saying and presenting the basic fundamental doctrines of the faith. It would be the same for a person who has been giving the “gift” of the “prophetic.” They may visit an assembly to be used by the Lord to bring encouragement, edification and comfort to these assemblies as well as possibly bring some “course corrections” to those assemblies. One who has been bestowed with the “gift” of an evangelist my visit each assembly for the purpose of declaring victory in Jesus to both the believers in those assemblies as well as to preach the glad tidings and good news of total victory and salvation through Jesus to the unsaved in those cities.



Those that have been called to function in that manner sometimes are referred to being in the “office of an apostle,” or the “office of a prophet” or evangelist, etc. However, even in saying this, it does not infer an authoritative or hierarchy of leadership. These “offices” are all for the main purpose of, as we have been discussing, maintaining and keeping “oneness” in the Body of Christ and in the doctrines of the faith.

As I mentioned in the beginning of this Part of our discussion, I would like to touch on what has commonly become known as the “five-fold ministry.” It is a teaching that is very heavily taught within the “prophetic” and “apostolic” movements found within the Body of Christ today. But where did this term “five-fold ministry” originate. It is interesting to note that this term has only been in use for the past 180-200 years and that it is never mentioned anywhere in scripture or previously in church history. Let’s take a brief look at this term’s origin and history.

In 1824, Edward Irving, a Presbyterian pastor in Scotland, began teaching that “the five-fold ministry” of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers had disappeared from the church and was in need of restoration. According to Irving, the restoration of these ministries would usher in the Millennial Kingdom of Christ on the earth. Irving and his followers began the Catholic Apostolic Church in 1832. Its chief purpose was to restore “the five-fold ministry” and usher in the Millennial Kingdom. The Church ordained twelve “apostles” who were to be the equivalent of the original twelve Apostles for these last days. It was “prophesied” that these “twelve apostles” would be the last apostles to appear on earth before the return of Jesus. Eventually the twelve apostles of the Catholic Apostolic Church died (the last one dying in 1901) and obviously, Jesus had not returned during their lifetime. Upon their death, the Church expired in England. In Germany, however, the Catholic Apostolic Church continued and ordained twelve more apostles and took the name the “New Apostolic Church.”

In the years that followed, the concept of the “five-fold ministry” went back and forth between fading away and trying to be restored and instituted by various people and denominations.

Following the well known Azusa Street revival in 1906 in Los Angeles, California, the emphasis on the restoration of “the five-fold ministry” as well as “a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit just before the return of Christ” began to spread. A new generation of “apostles” emerged. However, as the years went on, the restoration of “the five-fold ministry” doctrine again began to fade.

The concept of the “five-fold” re-emerged with the revival at Sharon Orphanage in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada in 1948. This movement became known as the “New Order of the Latter Rain.” It was again “prophesied” that there would be the restoration of “the five-fold ministry” to prepare for “the manifestation of the sons of God” on the earth. However, when that “revival” began to wane, the idea for restoration of “the five-fold ministry” doctrine faded with it. It resurfaced briefly during the Charismatic Movement of the late 1960s but it again it quickly faded.

In 1996, Peter Wagner led a conference at Fuller Theological Seminary entitled the National Symposium on the “Post-Denominational Church.” This conference produced a new movement called the “New Apostolic Movement,” which Peter Wagner claimed would spread throughout the earth. He said that it would bring forth a “new way of doing church.” The churches that became a part of this movement are referred to as “New Apostolic Churches” under the umbrella organization that is named the “International Coalition of Apostles” with Peter Wagner as the “Presiding Apostle.” This movement claims to be restoring “the five-fold ministry” upon the earth today.

The above was a brief summary of the history of the concept of the “five-fold ministry.” It was not meant to be anything else but informative as pertaining to our discussion.

As we have discussed, much of the leadership role model instituted within the Body of Christ has not been necessarily scripturally based but rather it has been corporate minded with a hierarchy of leadership governing from top (leadership) to bottom (congregants). Its roots are found from the pagan cultures of having a king or an emperor. We must remember that we have no other king than Jesus. There is no other head to the Body of Christ but Jesus. The role model given in the New Testament is that of One Body in which the only head we hear of is Jesus. Everyone in the Body has a specific function that is bestowed by Jesus for the purpose of keeping the Body healthy and as one.

I believe that the Lord is moving the Body of Christ back to our roots in this hour. There is a shaking that is taking place that will shake the foundations of some of our leadership and assemblies. Those that are not built upon the “rock” will fall. The “rock” throughout the scriptures is referring to the Word of God – His precepts and principles. Those that are built upon the sand of incorrect doctrinal truths as well as faulty leadership models that have been role modeled and influenced by and from the world’s system will crumble.

The scriptures tell us that in the “end times” there will be a remnant and that unfortunately, many will fall away. I encourage every believer to seek the truth found in the Word of God. There have been many things that I thought was truth only to find out, through truly seeking the scriptures and their **correct contextual usage** that they were not what the scriptures truly are saying. I, like many others, had taken scriptures out of their correct context and placed them with other scriptures taken out of their correct context and came up with something that God had never intended those scriptures to say or be used for. Paul exhorts Timothy, as well as all believers, in 2Timothy 2:15-16, *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth**. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.* Jesus tells those that believe on Him, *“...If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall **know the truth**, and the truth shall make you free.”* - John 8:31-32

The Lord has me on a journey of truly seeking His truth. I have not “arrived” in this. However, the Lord has connected me with other believers who also have come to the place in their lives where they desire to simply seek the simple truths of the foundations of our faith. We are seeking the “oneness” that the scriptures tell us that we as the Body of Christ are to be walking and living in. Oneness with the Father, His Son Jesus and with those of similar and like faith – the fundamentals of the faith as taught by Jesus and passed on by His Disciples/Apostles to all those who believe. As I mentioned earlier, God is moving and shaking the foundations of the “organized church.” Be ready!! He may be starting to “shake” you!!