
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: ***Is it necessary to have living apostles and prophets today?***

Some religious groups today claim to have living apostles and prophets, and others claim that their leader is a direct descendent of the apostles. To them this is proof positive that they are the true church of Jesus Christ. Conversely, if a church does not have living apostles, that is proof positive to them that such a church is not the Lord's true church. Because of this, we are asking the question this week, "Is it necessary to have living apostles and prophets today?"

THEIR FAVORITE PASSAGE

To begin our study let us look at a passage which these religious groups use to "prove" that living apostles and prophets are necessary.

Ephesians 2:19-20

¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,
²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

Here is the proof-text that many use to "prove" that living apostles and prophets are necessary. According to this passage the foundation of the church is the apostles and prophets. It stands to reason, they say, if we remove living apostles and prophets from the church we have removed the foundation upon which the church is built and by removing the foundation, we have destroyed the Lord's church completely.

But let us analyze this passage carefully and see if it is teaching that we today must have living apostles.

ANALYZING THE PASSAGE

FIRST: Notice carefully, the passage does not say the church is built upon a foundation of LIVING apostles!

It is assumed that living apostles are being spoken of, but this is not a necessary conclusion to make. Indeed, the passage is actually teaching that the Lord's church is built upon the work and teachings of the Lord's original apostles and prophets!

(The Lord's church is dependent upon what those original apostles and New Testament prophets revealed as the inspired word of God.)

To His original apostles Jesus said the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth (John 16:13). When the Spirit revealed to them God's truth they would write those truths down with words supplied by the Spirit Himself (1 Corinthians 2:13). Jesus promised that their Holy Spirit inspired writings would outlast the world itself (Matthew 24:35). Because the apostles were inspired by the Spirit of God, the things they taught and wrote were authoritative:

1 Corinthians 14:37

³⁷ If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

Luke 10:16

¹⁶ He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, ...

Because the original apostles were the official spokesmen of the Lord and their words were authoritative, the Lord's church is absolutely dependent upon their writings and teachings. This is why Ephesians 2:19-20 teaches that the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, but it does not say that the church is founded upon and dependent upon men living today who claim they are apostles. This passage is referring to the original apostles which the Lord chose in the 1st century.

SECOND: Notice carefully that Jesus Christ Himself is the chief corner stone in the foundation, yet He is not alive on the earth.

In other words, everyone can clearly see that Jesus is part of the foundation of His own church, but He doesn't have to be alive on the earth to serve in that capacity!

Q: If the Lord Jesus Himself doesn't have to be alive on the earth to be part of the church's foundation, why do men think that the apostles and prophets have to be alive on the earth today to serve as the church's foundation? Conversely, if there must be living apostles and prophets in the church today, because they are the foundation of the church, why doesn't Jesus Christ have to be alive on the earth today, for after all, He too is part of the foundation?

NO LIVING APOSTLES TODAY

In spite of what men may say, there are no living apostles today. The Lord gave no instructions to the church to elect new apostles when the old ones died off.

Someone may argue that a new apostle was chose in Acts chapter one to replace Judas Iscariot who had died. But if you will read the chapter carefully you will discover that Judas ceased being an apostle, not because he died, but because he transgressed!

Acts 1:24-26

²⁴ And [the apostles] prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen

²⁵ to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."

²⁶ And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Do you see that? Judas fell from the apostleship, not because he died, but because he transgressed! He ceased being an apostle and had to be replaced, not because he died, but because he sinned.

When James died in Acts 12, the church did not elect and ordain a new apostle to take his place! James did not cease being an apostle just because he died. The truth he had revealed and taught was just as authoritative as when he was alive and the church was just as dependent upon what he had revealed as if he were still alive saying the same things with his own mouth.

We would all do ourselves a big favor by reading Revelation 2:2 where Jesus praised a congregation that had uncovered "false apostles":

Revelation 2:2

² "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

Listen to that! There were men way back then in the 1st century that claimed they were apostles, but they were not; they were liars! My friend, if it happened back then you can rest assured that it can, and in fact does happen today!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well ... thanks for listening to our message this week. We invite you to visit our website www.WillOfTheLord.com. There you may download the notes and the audio file of the message you just listened to.

Call again next week when we consider a new subject on ***Bible Talk***.