

Distinction, Authority, and the Unity of the Church

Ephesians 4:7-16

November 11, 2007

John 17:22-23

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

The Main Issue of Verses 7-16:

If we're all one in Christ and we all have an equal share in one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, then how are we to understand and deal with distinction, authority, and unity in the church?

A Brief Sketch of Verses 7-16:

1. As Jesus Christ has saved each person in the church, so he has gifted each person in the church. (vv. 7-10)
2. Jesus Christ appoints relatively few to be leaders in the church and he vests them with authority. (v. 11, Heb. 13:17)

A Brief Sketch of Verses 7-16:

3. Jesus Christ commands these leaders to be humble servants of the church and not to lord it over the church. (vv. 1-3)
4. Jesus Christ uses these leaders to equip the rest of the church with gifts for ministry. (v. 12)

A Brief Sketch of Verses 7-16:

5. As the whole church is equipped and utilizes their gifts for the good of the whole, the body of Christ is built up in love. (vv. 12 & 16)

A Brief Sketch of Verses 7-16:

1. Jesus gifts every person in the church;
2. Jesus appoints leaders in the church;
3. Jesus commands those leaders to be humble;
4. Jesus uses those leaders to equip the whole church;
5. Jesus uses the whole church to build itself up in love!

The Office of Apostle:

“Apostle” means messenger or one who is sent, usually in an official capacity

Does the office of Apostle still exist in the church today, or is it reserved only for the twelve Apostles?

The Office of Apostle:

- *The word is used 83 times in the New Testament*
- *It is used 70 times to refer to the twelve apostles, and 1 time to refer to Jesus Christ*
- *It is used 4 times to refer to five apostles who were not of the twelve (Acts 14:14, Philippians 2:25, 1 Thessalonians 2:6, and 2 Corinthians 8:23)*

The Office of Apostle:

- *It is used 7 times in an ambiguous way (Luke 11:49; 1 Corinthians 12:28, 29; 2 Corinthians 11:13; Ephesians 4:11; Revelation 2:2, and 18:20)*

Even if there are apostles today...

- *They are involved in large scale missions or evangelism;*
- *They have been well-tested and found to be faithful;*
- *They are well-known and respected among a wide circle of the church;*
- *They have been appointed by the church.*

Other apostles differ from the 12...

- *In that Jesus directly appointed the 12;*
- *In that the 12 served alongside Jesus in his earthly ministry (except Paul);*
- *In that the apostles, or those closely related to them, wrote the New Testament.*

The Main Point:

*Distinction and authority in the church work
for the unity of the church and not against it
because Jesus uses each and every part to
build the body up in love*