

April 22

**Ephesians 4: 11: And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12: For the perfecting of the saints, for the perfecting of the saints...**

The Lord Jesus gives ministers for his body, the church. All prophecy is written concerning Christ. Christ must fulfill all things that are written of him. So he must and is fulfilling these scriptures. He said, "I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." (Jer 3: 15; 23: 4; Is 30: 20)

Apostles were the first and chief office in the church. They were called by Christ, had their doctrine directly from him, and had power to work miracles to confirm their doctrine (Heb. 2:3, 4). This office is ceased. There are no apostles in our day. No one has power to work the miracles that they had. Prophets had a particular gift to interpret scripture (especially the prophecies of the Old Testament) and of foretelling things to come. (Acts 11:27-30). There are no more prophets. Christ gave and continues to give evangelists. These are traveling missionaries such as Timothy and Titus. He gave and continues to give pastors and teachers. Every pastor is a teacher of the scriptures. But there are teachers in the church who are not pastors. Pastors are the shepherds of the flock. Teachers are brethren gifted to teach the word and assist the pastors.

One purpose for which Christ gives his ministers is for "the perfecting of the saints." This does not mean that believers will grow to be perfect in sanctification while in this sinful flesh. Paul had been in the faith a long time when he said that he was the chief of sinners. (1 Tim 1: 15) It means "perfect in Christ." (Col 1: 28) In Christ the believer is as complete as Christ is the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Note the words "complete" and "fullness" are translated from the same word—Col 2: 9-10) The word "perfecting" signifies "restoring" or "setting of dislocated joints" like a surgeon sets a dislocated shoulder. Each member of Christ's body became dislocated when we sinned in Adam. All God's elect, all Christ' redeemed, in our lost and dead condition, is the valley of dry bones. Read Ezekiel 37: 1-14. The Lord uses this passage to illustrate what he does through the preaching of the gospel. Notice the LORD commands his preacher to preach to dry bones, calling on them to hear. Then the LORD commands his preacher to declare what the LORD will do for his people to give them life and join the members of his body into one. Our message is not of man's works but of Christ's works. The LORD also tells his preacher to pray that the LORD will bless the word preached. (Acts 6: 4) It is because the preacher has no power to effect life or obedience in those to whom we preach. Christ sets the members in his body through the word he speaks effectually in the heart, through the Holy Spirit, through his preacher preaching "thus saith the LORD." "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." (1 Cor 12: 18)

If we would repair our bodily health then we must wait on the doctor and follow the doctor's orders. We keep going again and again to the doctor's appointment until we are well. The preaching of the gospel is the means the Great Physician has chosen to use. The Balm of Gilead will be given through the preaching of the gospel. We must come again and again and again. "As many as ordained to eternal life" shall believe. (Acts 13: 48)