Question: Do the ministries of apostles and prophets continue to function in the church today? Some Christians argue that these ministries have ceased, often citing Paul’s words in

Ephesians 2:20

> “...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.”

Others believe these ministries are still active. What does Scripture actually teach?

Understanding the Ministries of Apostles and Prophets

To answer this, we first need to understand the roles and types of apostles and prophets in the Bible.

Old Testament Prophets: Two Categories

1. Prophets Who Laid the Foundation:
   These prophets were called and anointed by God to deliver His permanent revelation, much of which is recorded in Scripture. Examples include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Malachi, Joel, and others. Their prophecies laid a lasting foundation for

God’s people (cf. 2 Peter 1:19-21, which affirms Scripture as inspired by the Spirit).

2. Prophets Who Confirmed the Foundation Temporarily:
   These prophets spoke God’s Word relevant to specific times or events, whose messages were not necessarily permanent for all generations. Examples include Agabus (Acts 21:10-11) and others in the New Testament who served particular situations.

New Testament Apostles and Prophets

Similarly, in the New Testament:

- Foundational Apostles and Prophets:
  These include apostles like Paul, Peter, John, James, and prophets whose teachings and writings form the core of the New Testament canon (cf. Ephesians 2:20). They were eyewitnesses or directly commissioned by Christ to lay the foundation of the Church.
- Supporting Apostles and Prophets:
  There were also individuals appointed to confirm and build on that foundation, such as Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25), who did not bring new revelation but supported the mission.

What Does “Built on the Foundation” Mean?

Ephesians 2:20 teaches that the Church is built on the foundational revelation given through the apostles and prophets, with Christ Himself as the cornerstone.

This means:

- The revelation given to the apostles and prophets, now recorded in the Bible, is the permanent foundation of the Church.
- No new foundation can be laid beyond this (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:11 “For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”).

Are There Apostles and Prophets Today Like the Original Ones?

The original apostles and prophets received direct, foundational revelation for the Church and were instrumental in establishing its doctrine and structure. Today, there are no apostles or prophets who have this kind of foundational role.

However, ministries that serve to build upon the foundation—such as church planters or teachers—do exist but must always align with the original revelation.

The Importance of Building on the Right Foundation

Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 that:

- Christ is the only true foundation.
- How we build on that foundation matters.

- Our work will be tested by fire on the Day of Judgment.
- Only what is built according to God’s truth will endure and be rewarded.

This emphasizes that ministries today must be faithful to Scripture and not introduce new doctrines or revelations outside the biblical foundation.

The ministries of apostles and prophets who laid the Church’s foundation were unique to the early church era. Today, we build on that foundation—the Bible—through faithful teaching and ministry, without expecting new foundational revelations.

May the Lord bless you as you build on His eternal Word.

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