

The Meaning of the New Testament Evangelist

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Global ministry suffers from a significant lack of definition on questions such as: Who is a missionary? Who should the church take responsibility to support? What kind of relationship should the church have with the missionary? How should the support be raised? Where are the lines of authority? The lack of definition produces confusion, which ultimately results in separation and disassociation.¹ It is hoped that this paper will contribute to the overall goal of a comprehensive biblical theology of these matters by studying the meaning of εὐαγγελιστής. In this short introductory chapter I will explain not only the need for the study, the purpose of the study, but also the methodology employed.

Need for the Study

The average independent church considers missions or Global ministry a crucial endeavor. In fact, there have been churches that have withheld their pastor's salary while still supporting their missionaries and any challenge to this notion would have met strong resistance. Some churches have developed clear-cut strategies in the hopes of being most effective. Some have chosen to only support 'church-planting missionaries.' Yet there has not necessarily been a biblical theology that drove these particular choices. In fact, one wonders whether there is justification for these types of restrictions. Whether there is justification or not, the agencies, in

¹ This does not imply that all churches are confused; many have not wrestled with some of the difficult questions and thus produced a clear procedure for decision making. However, in the vast majority of churches the question of who should be supported garners difference of opinion and potentially division—especially if one member has a personal relationship with a missionary considered for support.

turn, have responded by affirming that even support missionaries aid church planting efforts and therefore it justified adding ‘church planting’ to their job description; therefore blurring distinctions even further. As a result, a power struggle was created. On one side are those calling for reform, mostly those who have struggled dealing with the system, and on the other side the agencies themselves backed by the rank and file in the pew who want to feel good about their missionary efforts. This lack of biblical theology removes the excitement and joy from global ministry. The system becomes frustrating to those who are forced to deal with it and churches are encouraged to evaluate their global ministry effectiveness by how much they give, without asking questions like, “Should we support a person to do that particular task?” or “Is there any Biblical warrant for our decisions?”

The lack of biblical theology has been in part facilitated by the lack of definition in the terminology used. This is clear for at least the following three reasons. First, the terms ‘missions’ and ‘missionaries’ are so broad they become meaningless. It is not uncommon to hear ‘everyone is a missionary,’ which proves the point. The second reason for the lack of definition is related to the first. ‘Missionaries’ today perform extremely diverse tasks. It is hard to believe that Carey could have imagined how the movement he began would change in the last century. Modern-day missionaries participate in direct evangelism, health care, serve as school teachers, work in construction, and serve in janitorial roles, and this simply names a few. Third, the global ministry movement has struggled to clearly define the Biblical role and position of a missionary in the New Testament (NT). ‘Missionaries’ have been readily identified with the apostle Paul, especially by mission agencies. Even though they take a minimalist approach to the differences between modern-day missionaries and Paul’s apostolic authority, others are not so sure.²

² This statement does not necessarily eliminate the possibility that a modern-day missionary could be an apostle. Hoehner writes, “Regarding the gift of apostle for today, it would seem that those who have that gift would

Similarly the terms for ‘pastor’³ seem inappropriate for those serving in places where a church does not exist, not to mention the fact that few international churches have actually called an American missionary to their staff before he arrived. In addition, there is little if any discussion that the term *διακονος* would be an appropriate term for missionary. Others have concluded that the *εὐαγγελιστης* is the NT missionary.⁴ However, there are some significant questions that must be answered before final judgment can be rendered here.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is not to provide a full Biblical theology regarding the appropriate NT place for the missionary for such a task far exceeds the boundaries of this work. However, it is hoped that this paper will add to the discussion by providing helpful insights into the nature of the *εὐαγγελιστης* so that they may be applied to Global ministry. In particular, are they the NT equivalent of all modern-day missionaries, some modern-day missionaries, or are they unrelated?

function similarly to those in the early church by establishing churches in areas not reached by the gospel. Possibly this would include missionaries who are involved in establishing churches. The danger is to equate this gift with the office (i.e., one who had been with Jesus and seen his resurrection body) with an attempt to exert the same authority as those in the NT who qualified for apostolic office.” Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 547. Hoehner believes that that apostleship was a gift and seeing the resurrected Christ was not a requirement for the gift, although it was for the office. However, Grudem would disagree and argue that there are no apostles today. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 905-912. Christian is equally dogmatic when he writes, “Cross-cultural missionaries are vital to the continued proclamation of the new covenant gospel. Missionaries, however, do not have, and must not claim apostolic authority over the churches they found.” Timothy K. Christian, “Are Missionaries Apostles?” www.gtpe.org/gtpe/articles/papers/APOSTLES.pdf accessed August 26, 2004, 42.

³ The purpose of this paper is not to prove that the terms *ἐπισκοπος*, *ποιμαινω*, and *προσβυτερος* are three different aspects to the same office although such proofs are easy to find.

⁴ Since the whole of this paper will take a careful look at this term, the different approaches will be discussed throughout the paper.

Methodology for the Study

The final introductory matter is that of methodology. This paper will begin with a discussion on the range of meaning for the term from both a synchronic and diachronic approach. It will then provide an exegesis of the three crucial passages in which the term is found. These results will effectively establish the biblical guideline, or boundaries, around which the term can appropriately be applied. In particular this paper will consider the following questions: (a) Does the NT teach a gift of evangelism? (b) Is the εὐαγγελιστής a person and do they fill an office in the church? (c) Can we identify a job description for them and are they roughly equivalent to a modern-day missionary or itinerant evangelist? and (d) Can a layperson in the church be one? Finally, the paper will conclude with the applications to global ministry and to the development of a system of definition for global ministry.

CHAPTER II SYNCHRONIC & DIACHRONIC APPROACHES TO THE MEANING OF ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΣΤΗΣ

It seems appropriate to begin by giving brief definitions to the respective approaches to word study. First, synchronic approaches describe the language in the way it is used at a particular chronological stage.⁵ Because languages are always changing, this approach requires the time period to be sufficiently short that the language remains relatively static – for some languages in some periods this may be a few hundred years and other languages it may be decades. Diachronic approaches describe the language in the way it is used over time.⁶ In other words, there is concern for how a word developed and eventually was assigned particular meanings.

The relative value for each approach can be seen in the following example: a modern-day English speaker understands the semantic range of both the terms *glamour* and *grammar*. The former term would normally be associated with beauty, charm, or attraction while the second term would focus on how words and sentences are formed (synchrony). However, this was not always the case. Diachronically these terms are linguistically related.⁷ Since few if any modern-day English speakers would make these connections this demonstrates why the synchronic approach to word studies is clearly superior. As Silva explains, “historical

⁵ Moises Silva, *God, Language, and Scripture in Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 218-9. Thus, one could speak of studying the meaning of the word “trunk” in English from 1950-2000.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., see especially n.4.

considerations may be of synchronic value, but **only if** we can demonstrate that the speaker was aware of them. (*emphasis added*)”⁸

It should be noted that both types of word studies require instances of actual usage. Therefore, should sufficient data be available in a given time period synchronic studies will be sufficient. However, students are well aware that when one studies ancient languages, such as *Koine* Greek, one is at the mercy of the available data. Since εὐαγγελιστής only occurs three times in the NT and not at all in the LXX, it will be necessary to investigate the meaning diachronically as well as synchronically. Thus, this chapter will probe the lexical evidence using both approaches.

Synchronic Approach

Technically speaking, this approach will not be completed until chapter III when a detailed explanation is given for each of the three NT uses of the term. For now, however, the lexicons can be surveyed to discover the meanings they assign to the term. BGAD explains the meaning as “a proclaimer of the gospel, evangelist.”⁹ Obviously the second definition is just a transliteration and says nothing about either who that person is or what he does. The first definition is more helpful, but extremely broad. After all, if an evangelist is simply a person who proclaims the gospel then this provides few limits and may in fact describe a rather sizable

⁸ Moises Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meanings*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 48. In another work he assumes that most speakers of a language are completely unaware of the historical development of word meanings. Silva, *God, Language, Scripture*, 219-20.

⁹ W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. “εὐαγγελιστής” p 318.

portion of the Christian population.¹⁰ This definition is fairly consistent with other Greek Lexicons.¹¹ While the LXX would provide synchronic help, the term is not used. From the lexical evidence it appears that εὐαγγελιστής is a person that proclaims the gospel. Since the lexicons were working with few resources to draw their conclusions, the paper will now move to a diachronic approach to the meaning of the term.¹²

Diachronic Approach

The diachronic, or through time, approach still requires actual word usage to determine meaning. Εὐαγγελιστής is found only one time in non-Christian writings.¹³ Christian usage outside the NT yield two meanings associated with the term. First, it was used for those who were successors to the apostles. In fact, some even appointed shepherds over the church as part of their responsibility. This would imply a level of authority of an apostolic delegate, such as

¹⁰ The writer is aware of the recent statistics that suggest most people do not share their faith. However, even if the statistics are not exaggerated, it would still represent a sizable group (much larger in fact than apostles, prophets, or pastors).

¹¹ Timothy and Barbara Friberg, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), Electronic Edition BibleWorks 6.0, s.v. “εὐαγγελιστής”. J.P. Louw, and E.A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the NT Based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), Electronic Edition BibleWorks 6.0, s.v. “εὐαγγελιστής”. Henry George Liddell, and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* Abridged Electronic Edition BibleWorks 6.0, s.v. “εὐαγγελιστής”. Previous lexicons express the meaning in similar if not identical terms. Thayer expands slightly saying, “The name is given in the NT to those heralds of Salvation through Christ who were not apostles.” Joseph Henry Thayer, *Thayer Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Electronic Edition BibleWorks 6.0, s.v. “εὐαγγελιστής”.

¹² Issues of Lexicography and the challenging task of defining terms is far beyond the reach of this paper. However, one should note that the writers of BDAG had an immense challenge with so few instances to work with. Those interested in more information on lexicography should consult Bernard A. Taylor, John A.L. Lee, Peter R. Burton, and Richard E. Whitaker, *Biblical Greek Language and Lexicography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), esp. F. W. Danker, “Lexical Evolution and Linguistic Hazard” 1-32.

¹³ Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Kittel, s.v. “εὐαγγελίζομαι, εὐαγγέλιον, προεὐαγγελίζομαι, εὐαγγελιστής, 2:736 [hereafter cited as TDNT]. Friedrich writes, “Except in ecclesiastical literature this is a rare word. In a non-Christian sense it is attested only on a poorly preserved inscr. from Rhodes, IG, XII, 1,675, 6, where it means “one who proclaims oracular sayings.” However, this one usage has been thrown out by the objections of Spicq who concludes, “nothing certain can be drawn from it.” Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. James D. Ernest (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), s.v. “εὐαγγελίζομαι, εὐαγγέλιον, εὐαγγελιστής,” 2:91.

Timothy, rather than a person who shared the message of Christ.¹⁴ Second, it was used for those who wrote the gospels.¹⁵ This is a much later meaning established only after εὐαγγελιον became well known as another word for the written gospels.¹⁶ It is also necessary to consider both the etymology of the term and the usage of both the term itself and the terms from which it was derived.

Etymology of εὐαγγελιστης

The danger of etymology is explained by Silva when he quotes de Moor, “An explanation which rests on the sole basis of etymology can never be anything more than a plausible hypothesis.”¹⁷ Clearly one needs to be aware of the risks such as the misuse of “under rower” for ὑπηρετης in 1 Cor 4:1.¹⁸ However, when current usage is rare one is forced to consider etymology and other diachronic observations. Combs’ explained that the meaning ‘proclaimer of the gospel’ “is probably derived as much from the meaning of the cognate verb as the three

¹⁴ Quote from Eusebius of Caesarea quoted in James King, *World Missions in the Local Church*, unpublished class notes distributed for MP3-Seminar in Global Ministry, Summer 2004, 2:14.

¹⁵ *TDNT*. This second definition is interesting but not helpful. It is hard to imagine the NT uses of the term referring to men that had not yet written.

¹⁶ U. Becker, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) s.v. “Gospel, Evangelize, Evangelist,” 2:114 [hereafter cited as NIDNTT].

¹⁷ Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meanings*, 44.

¹⁸ It is surprising that MacArthur enjoys making full use of this etymology in his commentary, but even more astonishing that Gordon Fee does the same. See John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 96; and Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1987), 159 n.6 respectively. Carson objects rather strongly saying, “Yet the fact remains that with only one possible exception-and it is merely possible, not certain- ὑπηρετης is never used for “rower” in classical literature, and it is certainly not used that way in the New Testament.” D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 29. Unfortunately such abuses are not only common in churches, but also in scholarly literature. One would be wise to consider the work of Silva that provides a very helpful section on the danger of etymology listing four important considerations: (1) words can lose their motivation if one or more of their elements fall into disuse, (2) it is possible for a word to undergo semantic changes without phonetic ones, (3) over time some words may become associated with other words that are not phonetically related and (4) etymological observations may not make sense in the usage of a word in a particular context. Silva, *Biblical Words and Their meanings*, 49-51.

NT uses of εὐαγγελιστής.¹⁹ This procedure may seem a bit suspect on the methodological level, however, assuming one keeps the proper cautions regarding the development of words, it can prove helpful. As Metzger explains, “Words do not grow haphazardly or in isolation from the rest of the vocabulary.”²⁰ Rather, words are formed when either noun-stems or verb-stems are added to the root, which conveys the basic meaning or idea of the word.²¹ Metzger further explains that these stems can either be formed by a suffix or by an internal change. This is important to our discussion because both the verb εὐαγγελίζω and the noun εὐαγγελιστής are derived from the identical stem. The suffix –της denotes agency.²² Thus it seems that a εὐαγγελιστής is one who performs the action of the verb εὐαγγελίζω.

Significance of εὐαγγελίζω

Since the evangelist is the agent of the action it is necessary to consider the meaning of the verb. In the previous section, the paper argued that εὐαγγελιστής was derived from εὐαγγελίζω. Εὐαγγελίζω in turn was well attested not only in the LXX, but also in the other Greek literature.

In classical Greek, the term was used to bring a message of victory or bring news that would cause joy.²³ Thus, the term could be used in a wide variety of situations including political, personal or religious contexts.

¹⁹ William W. Combs, “The Biblical Role of the Evangelist” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* Vol 7 (2002), 25.

²⁰ Bruce M. Metzger, *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 41.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

²² *Ibid.*, 42. Metzger uses βαπτιστής as the illustration rather than εὐαγγελιστής although the similarities are obvious. Here he simply defines a βαπτιστής as one who baptizes. See also J.H. Moulton and W.F. Howard, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. ii, *Accidence and Word-Formation* (Edinburgh, 1929), 268-410.

In the LXX, the term narrows a bit and is used to translate *basar*. *Basar* in turn has a general sense of proclaiming good news.²⁴ It is used to announce the news that David made Solomon king (1 Kings 1:42). Isaiah uses the term to describe Yahweh's victory over his enemies (Is. 52). In addition, chapter 61 describes the ministry of Messiah as the one who is sent to preach good tidings. When Jesus reads this passage in the synagogue he explained, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:18-21). In other words, the general sense of εὐαγγελίζω is to proclaim the good news.

The NT use of εὐαγγελίζω yields similar results. Evans argues that in the epistles all but four occurrences have the meaning to proclaim the gospel to unbelievers (1 Thess 3:6; Rom 1:15; 1 Pet 4:6; Rev 10:7).²⁵ Even though Evans is willing to exclude four it should be noted that first, that still represents the vast minority of NT uses and second, some of these passages are disputed possibly reducing the number of exceptions further.²⁶ What Paul is saying is that his apostolic commission and subsequent ministry are "good news," and so euangelizesthai is appropriate.²⁷

²³ *TIDNTT*, 107

²⁴ F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 142. Admittedly, the Hebrew root can be used for evil tidings as well (1 Samuel 4:17), but this is not the dominant meaning.

²⁵ Craig A. Evans, "Preacher and Preaching: Some Lexical Observations," Vol. 24 (1981) *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 317.

²⁶ Note especially the discussion in Combs, "The Biblical Role of the Evangelist," 26-28. Combs argues that Romans 1:15 involves the initial proclamation to unbelievers and thus removes this verse from the exception category.

²⁷ Craig A. Evans, "Preacher and Preaching: Some Lexical Observations," Vol. 24 (1981) *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 317. It is also significant that according to Evans this definition carried beyond the NT, giving additional evidence that the analysis is correct. He adds, "There are only five occurrences of euangelizesthai in the apostolic fathers, and each refers to the aspect of evangelizing the lost (*Barn.* 8.3; 14.9; *I Clem.* 42.1, 3; *Pol. Phil.* 6.3), (p. 319)."

Conclusion

In sum, after evaluating the term from both a synchronic and diachronic approach, factoring in the challenge of limited occurrences in extant literature, it seems that εὐαγγελιστής in its basic definition simply means a “proclaimer of good news.” While the root could denote good news of virtually any kind, εὐαγγελιστής seems to be limited in two different ways. First, there was a limiting factor on the type of message. Good news of any kind would not be sufficient, rather it must be the good news related to the gospel message. Second, at least some in the early church limited the meaning to those who were particularly engaged in the ministry of the apostles. Due to the seemingly close tie between them, they were ascribed apostolic authority and worked specifically evangelizing the lost primarily in locations without a gospel presence. While this data provides some answers, there are still a number of significant issues that remain unanswered. First, if Eusebius of Caesarea and his colleagues are correct, namely that evangelists carried apostolic authority, then does that imply the same is true today? Does it imply that the evangelists were removed from the picture shortly after the apostles? Could it be true that some evangelists carried that authority while others did not? Ultimately, these questions and the final judgments must be held until the actual NT usage is carefully evaluated.

CHAPTER III SURVEY OF THE NT USES OF ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΣΤΗΣ

The paper now turns to a detailed study of the three uses in the NT with an eye to narrow the definition. This chapter will study each of following passages in turn: Acts 21:8, Ephesians 4:11, and 2 Timothy 4:5.

Contribution of Acts 21:8

The text reads, “On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him.” The passage directs our study in three different directions. First, what is the significance of Philip being one of the seven? This question will ultimately deal with the contribution of Philip’s background. Second, what is it about his ministry that allows him to be called an evangelist? This question will focus on Acts 8 and the ministry of Philip. Third, what is the significance of calling Philip an evangelist in Acts 21?

There are three very significant facts concerning the historical background of Philip that contribute to the boundary conditions of an evangelist. First, in this passage, Luke not only describes Philip as an evangelist, but also as one of the seven. “One of the seven” is a clear reference back to Acts 6:1-5 and the selection of seven men who would serve as helpers to the Apostles, specifically responsible for the distribution of aid to the widows being neglected.²⁸ Therefore an evangelist is not an apostle. Philip is not designated as an apostle and clearly the

²⁸ The argument that suggests these are the first deacons would raise a few additional questions that must be left unexplored by this work.

seven men in Acts 6 are distinct from them.²⁹ This does not mean that an apostle could not be an evangelist, but this text clearly explains that there are no exegetical ties linking them. Despite the fact that some wish to conclude that at least some of the apostles were also evangelists these links are based on tenuous theological deductions and not on the clear teaching of the text.

Second, the apostles laid their hands on all seven of these men. In the NT, the “laying on of hands” was part and parcel with imparting authority and often involved the ability to do the miraculous.³⁰ Thus, one might expect signs, wonders, and miracles. In Acts 6, Stephen appears to be emphasized since the description ‘a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit’ applies to him. The emphasis exists either because he was the leader of the seven or based on the events about to ensue. Stephen was, of course, singled out and ultimately executed (Acts 7). However, it appears from this text that all seven had been capable of performing miracles and perhaps had testified many times before.

Philip’s move from Jerusalem to Caesarea is the third crucial piece of background information. According to Acts 6:7, this strategy proved to be quite fruitful as the Word of God spread and individuals were converted. One should not jump to quickly to conclude, however, that the evangelistic efforts of the seven including Philip would account for this growth. Although Stephen’s stoning would certainly suggest that these seven had a part in that ministry, the reason seven were selected was to enable the apostles’ greater time and attention to the Word of God and to prayer. Stephen’s execution apparently begins a broader, much more intense

²⁹ *TDNTT* 114. This can be seen clearly both in this text where the apostles were not going to take responsibility for this area of ministry and Acts 8:18-24, where the apostles confirm the work of Philip the evangelist.

³⁰ Marshall says, “The rite indicated a conferring of authority, and the accompanying prayer was for the power of the Spirit to fill the recipients.” I. Howard Marshall, *Acts, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* ed. R.V.G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 127. The text explained Stephen’s ability to do signs and wonders in v. 8, Philip in 8:6, and one would assume the others had the same capacity even if there is not specific mention of them in particular areas.

persecution of the church at Jerusalem (8:1-3). The pressure on the church reached the level where it was necessary for some to scatter and Philip was one of the ones who traveled elsewhere (8:5).

With the background in mind, attention can now turn to the second issue, that of Philip's ministry. His ministry must be evaluated by the two episodes in Acts. Acts 8:1-14 describes the first episode. Philip begins sharing Christ with those in Samaria (8:5).³¹ Similar to Stephen and not surprisingly, Philip is able to perform signs and miracles. According to v. 7, he had tremendous power and authority for exorcism, healings of various kinds, and other miracles.³² The people of Samaria, including Simon, a worker of magic, who had a following of his own, turned and believed. The number of converts is not given but the number seems substantial (vv. 12-13). Thus, Philip's ministry in Samaria was sharing the gospel, confirmed by the ability to do signs and miracles, with those who had not heard. The text does not describe any formal structure of a church (similar to Acts 2:42-47), nor is there any indication of leadership, but it is not unreasonable to surmise that some structure similar to his own experience in Jerusalem would have been present. After a brief interlude, vv. 14-24, Luke explained the second episode of Philip's ministry. Philip is sent on a divine mission to evangelize the Ethiopian eunuch (v. 26). Not only does Philip share how the OT Scriptures point to Christ, how Jesus died for sin, but he also baptizes him in a location between Jerusalem and Gaza (v. 26). Interestingly enough,

³¹ In v. 5 the term is κηρυσσω but as others have suggested it is a close synonym with εὐαγγελίζω. In any case the latter term is used in vv. 4, 12, 35, 40. Without question, proclaiming the message of Christ is a primary element for an evangelist.

³² Combs suggests that evangelists did not have to be miracle workers because they were not apostles. See, "The Biblical Role of the Evangelist," 29. While this makes sense, much more can be said. Miracles are not directly tied exegetically to evangelists. Rather Philip is capable of miracles, as Acts 6 explains, because the apostles gave him that authority. Unless one is willing to conclude that (1) evangelism is a spiritual ability that required the 'laying on of hands' and (2) it had to be verified by the ability to do signs and wonders, then they must allow miracles and evangelism to stand separately.

not only does this baptism occur without any association of a church, but potentially in isolation! Once his divine calling is complete with the Ethiopian, the Spirit of the Lord physically places Philip in a town north of Gaza (vv. 39-40). He returned to Caesarea sharing the gospel as he passed through.³³ The ministry described in Acts 8:26-40 is not church planting in the normal sense, but rather evangelizing the lost. Obviously, evangelistic efforts should result in the establishment of local churches, but it is not certain that Philip's ministry could be entirely defined by church planting.³⁴

The third issue that must be addressed concerns Acts 21:8 itself. Here one must reasonably determine why Luke calls Philip the evangelist. Is it to distinguish this particular Philip from Philip the apostle or was the reason to explain the type of ministry? Combs rightly points out that the distinction, "one of the seven" would certainly identify the proper Philip. In fact, calling him one of the seven, explained earlier in his letter, would certainly be a narrower category than Philip the evangelist as if there were only one and everyone knew him. Thus, it appears that the added distinction is to explain his ministry.³⁵

³³ The text does not describe the route taken, but physically speaking Azotus and Caesarea were both coastal cities with the latter about 55 miles to the North. It is possible if not probable that Philip traveled roughly due north through the cities of Jamnia, Joppa, and Apollonia. Cities such as Lydda, Antipatris, Narbata would not have been far off the path. Harry Thomas Frank, *Atlas of the Bible Lands* rev. ed (Maplewood: Hammond, 1990), 26.

³⁴ Combs has admirably concluded that Philip's work is primarily the establishment of local churches. I fear that this is a theological deduction that the text simply will not support to that degree. There is evidence that a church existed in Caesarea both from Acts 9:31 and Acts 21, but it is certainly tenuous regarding the Eunuch and little is said about the cities he evangelized while making his way back to Caesarea. "The Biblical Role of the Evangelist," 30.

³⁵ Combs, "The Biblical Role of the Evangelist" 28-9. See also F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* rev ed *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* ed. Gordon Fee, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 399-400. Marshall thinks the title is simply to distinguish Philip the evangelist from Philip the apostle; See Marshall, *Acts*, 339. For those interested in pursuing this further F.F. Bruce cites several who believe they are one and the same person (see n.8).

It is possible now to synthesize the data and come to a clear conclusion regarding the contribution of Acts 21:8 to the understanding of εὐαγγελιστής. It is important to remember that we must only restrict the boundary conditions according to the information given in the text. It will not do for an interpreter to make them narrower simply to satisfy his own conscious. At this point, we may make the following four points.³⁶ First, we can conclude that evangelists were different from apostles and that miracles were not a necessary ability. Second, we can conclude that the evangelist was one who shared Christ with those who had not heard. Third, we may not conclude that the evangelist had to remain to establish a church. Fourth, this passage does not provide evidence that that their tasks went beyond evangelism.

Contributions of Ephesians 4:11

The second passage must also be studied to understand its contribution to the meaning of εὐαγγελιστής. Since this seems to be the dominant of the three passages, commentators focus more attention here than on the other two texts. The increased attention however, does not produce increased agreement. Rather, the ideas regarding the identity of the evangelist are not for want. Peters asserts,

“The New Testament thus distinguishes between the authoritative *apostolic office* bestowed upon the Twelve and Paul by the Lord Himself and the *apostolic function* which relates to the unique ministry of brethren designated and delegated by local churches for ministries outside of the specific churches. It is our impression that the latter apostles are closely related to or identical with the “evangelists” as mentioned by Paul in Ephesians 4:11.³⁷

³⁶ It should be noted that some of these conclusions can be modified or revised by our study of a later passage. These four statements are simply the boundaries of one single text. Contradictory ideas cannot be tolerated, but complementary ideas should be expected. In addition, two of the conclusions are expressed negatively. It would be a grievous error to assume that the statements could be made positively and remain valid. For example, the fourth point does not suggest that an evangelist cannot do anything other than share Christ. It simply means that this passage has not taught that an evangelist does other ministry.

³⁷ George W. Peters, “Let the Missionary be a Missionary” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 122 (1965), 348. Peters concludes that a missionary must be involved in the “making disciples” process or he is not a missionary.

Lincoln does not argue that the later apostles were evangelists but he does argue that the evangelists “are to be seen as those engaged in mission and the founding of churches and, therefore, as having responsibilities beyond the local congregation.”³⁸ Chafer takes a different position and concludes, the evangelist mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 is the pioneer missionary to the unevangelized fields.³⁹ Best takes an entirely different view claiming rather dogmatically, “We need to be careful not to read modern usages of this term back into Ephesians. It does not refer to: (i) the authors of the gospels... (ii) those who conduct mission in existing Christian countries; (iii) those who travel as missionaries taking the gospel into fresh areas.”⁴⁰ Rather, Best concludes that the evangelist ministers to believers claiming, “The NT use of the word then provides no evidence that it relates to a ministry outside the church.”⁴¹

In order to wade through the molasses swamp we will proceed by setting the context and then seeking to resolve four issues that rise to the foreground. First, the paper must determine whether these are people with special abilities, people with particular ministries, people with particular offices, or some combination. Second, the significance of the universal versus local church distinction will be probed. This question becomes particularly significant when applied to modern-day claims. Third, we must evaluate whether Eph. 4:11 provides a progression and if so determine the basis for the progression. Fourth and finally, the function of the persons must be developed according to a proper understanding of the relationship the prepositional phrases of

³⁸ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians. Word Biblical Commentary* ed. Ralph Martin, Lynn Allen Losie. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 250.

³⁹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, “Editorials: Salient Facts Regarding Evangelism,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 101 (1944), 385.

⁴⁰ Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians in International Critical Commentary* (New York: T&T Clark, 1998), 390.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* In fairness to Best, he does not deny that an evangelist has no ministry to unbelievers, but simply that the term emphasizes ministry to the congregation of believers.

v. 12 and their corresponding referents. This section will begin with a brief review of the context.

Ephesians 4 begins the second half of the book with a call to walk worthy. A worthy walk not only involves humility, gentleness, and patience, but also includes unity with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ (4:1-6). The book has already explained that the dividing wall between Gentiles and Jews was broken and now the two groups have been joined together into one single body (2:15). However, unity among such cultural, racial, and political diversity is not easy.⁴² The Grace of God is the only means by which true unity both in Ephesus and in the church today can only be accomplished (v. 7). As Snodgrass explains, “‘Grace’ has an unexpected meaning. It does not designate saving grace here, but grace for ministry.”⁴³ The grace would not be metered out arbitrarily, but according to Christ’s sovereign distribution.⁴⁴ Paul explains to his readers that the giving of gifts by Christ was confirmed in Psalm 68.⁴⁵ His descent confirms his right and authority to ascend ‘above all the heavens that he might fill all things.’ Thus, it is Christ who has all rule and authority over all powers (cf. 1:20-21), and he fills all things ‘not in some semi-physical sense, but by his mighty rule over all things.’⁴⁶ It is Christ, with all rule and authority, which gives the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

⁴² Many examples could be cited but the divisions present in many churches, even though homogeneous, demonstrate the challenges.

⁴³ Klyne Snodgrass *Ephesians in The NIV Application Commentary* ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 200.

⁴⁴ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 287.

⁴⁵ It is beyond the scope of this work to deal with this issue in detail, but those interested in pursuing this issue should see Gary V. Smith, “Paul’s Use of Psalm 68:18 In Ephesians 4:8.” *JETS* 18:3 (1975) 181-9.

⁴⁶ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 296.

Are they persons with abilities or persons with functions or persons with offices?

There is essential agreement that the gifts are persons. The challenge begins when one wishes to describe those persons. O'Brien believes that function, office, and ability are essentially the same.⁴⁷ This makes it possible to view them as officers of the church. Lincoln is not quite so clear nor is he persuaded by discussions of office since the text does not indicate it. However, he is not willing to be too dogmatic for he writes, "Evangelists, pastors, and teachers were so called because they regularly exercise their ministries, and such ministries would have required acceptance and recognition by their churches."⁴⁸ Hoehner takes a different approach and believes that the persons are already endowed with the necessary ability to perform their task.⁴⁹ This brings in the issue of ability, but he wants to distance himself from the office idea claiming, "The NT does not mix gift and office."⁵⁰ In other words, Hoehner would be comfortable combining function, and ability, but not office. Walvoord removes the focus from office entirely and places emphasis on ability. He writes, "Of primary importance in propagating the Gospel is the gift of evangelism (Eph 4:11). By its title, it is clear that this gift has reference to effective preaching of the Gospel message to the unsaved, and as such it is to be compared to the teaching gift which gives instruction to the saved."⁵¹ The diversity is painfully clear; some

⁴⁷ O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 301. They are simply three ways to describe the same thing. O'Brien does not use this example, but the illustration of elder, shepherd, and bishop would be similar. Best does not link function and office, but he clearly sees this group of people as officers of the church (393-4).

⁴⁸ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 252. In fact, Lincoln goes on to conclude that theologically speaking it would be acceptable to refer to each member in the list as an office.

⁴⁹ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 541.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 547. Hoehner argues that a person can be gifted to perform a particular task without having the office normally associated with that office. This is particularly clear in his discussion regarding women having the gift of pastor-shepherd. He has no problem with a woman having the gift of pastor, but would not support her having the office of a pastor (p. 546).

focus on the ability of the person, some on the office, and others on the function. It may be helpful at this point to make a few observations from the data and propose a solution that is consistent with the data.

First, while there is no question that these individuals were recognized for their particular place serving the Lord, that does not mean however, that an office naturally follows for at least two reasons. One, the Pastoral Epistles, written later and with a more developed structure of the church only deal with the deacon/minister and the pastor as official capacities in the church and they are accompanied with selection criteria. Two, many ministries and gifts in the NT are not thought to form offices. Examples would include both the prophets of 1 Cor 12 and those who exercise helps in Romans 12.⁵² Thus, it is unwise to assign offices where the text of Scripture does not clearly substantiate them. Since, as has been pointed out already, the text of Ephesians does not indicate office it is best to exclude them here.

Second, the term *χαρίσματα* is not used in this passage, but its theological idea is certainly included. After all, most speak of the gift of evangelism even if they do so by arguing that an evangelist (the person) had to have the ability. But does *χαρίσματα* indicate an ability to do something whether the action is done or not? In other words, is the gift an inherent ability of the person or is it the way God has chosen to work through a particular person? Berding, in his

⁵¹ John Walvoord, "The Person of the Holy Spirit Part 8: The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Believer" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 99 (1942), 26. Earlier in the article, Walvoord admits that the gifts in Eph. 4:11 are people not abilities per se. However, he ties them together, "The two ideas are not strictly separated as indicated by the references in the Corinthian passage to both spiritual gifts and to gifted men (p. 28)." Admirably his position did not change in his 1986 article, "The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 (1986), 111.

⁵² Regardless of the passage under considerations, the issues of gifts/functions always revolve around the common good. O'Brien would be forced to defend what makes Eph 4:11 different than the examples previously mentioned. In addition, while it is beyond the scope of this paper to deal at length with the question of whether there are 4 groups or 5 in this passage, the answer to that question may potentially provide yet another example. The office of teacher is rarely discussed in scholarly literature. Those interested in pursuing this further should consider Daniel B Wallace, "The Semantic Range of the Article-Noun-Kai-Noun Plural Construction in the New Testament," *Grace Theological Journal* 4 (1983), 59-84 and *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 278-86.

helpful article, argues that the theological concept behind the term is ministry or roles given by the Spirit. This may or may not involve a particular ability (such as a healing); only the context of the passage under consideration can determine that.⁵³ Thus, it may be more helpful to see individuals performing certain functions in the church without an emphasis on the given ability to do so.

Therefore, it seems from the data that most reasonable and defensible position is that these individuals were the gifts to the church. The Spirit certainly enabled their ministry, but it is not at all certain that these men were endowed with particular abilities themselves. It could make just as much sense theologically that the Spirit worked in the hearts of the people these men were ministering to as it does that they were endowed with a particular ability that made their ministry effective.⁵⁴

Is the church local or universal?

While debate exists regarding the encyclical nature of the book, there is little question that Ephesians emphasizes the universal church.⁵⁵ The metaphors of building, body, and family seem to point clearly toward the universal nature of the church. In Ephesians 4 the universal

⁵³ Kenneth Berding, "Confusing Word And Concept In "Spiritual Gifts": Have We Forgotten James Barr's Exhortations? JETS 43 (2000), 37-51. The author's argument is that theologians have confused the word and the concept; one of the warnings issued by James Barr. In this case, *χαρισματα* is loaded with more than it can properly support and thus exegetes are guilty of illegitimate totality transfer. Berding does not deny abilities in 1 Cor. 12:8-10, but would argue that in that passage only the context is clear. However, assuming that all 'gifts' have accompanying abilities, is in his mind, where exegesis moves to eisegesis.

⁵⁴ It should be noted that this issue does not revolve around of the question of whether the Spirit works, but on whom he works.

⁵⁵ Earl Radmacher, *The Nature of the Church*, (Hayesville: Schoettle, 1996), 223-280. Radmacher includes numerous passages in Ephesians that teach the doctrine of the Universal church using the metaphors of body, bride, and building. Stott avoids a lengthy discussion on the universal church, but nevertheless confesses that Ephesians 4 calls for unity both between and in churches. John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians in The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1979), 154.

emphasis seems stronger than the concept of a local congregation. Ephesians 4:4-6 explains the theological reason for unity. No matter how many believers, or groups of believers exist, there remains one body, one spirit, one God. The individuals in v. 11 are given ultimately so that the church, the body of Christ, will be strengthened and able to fend off the dangers from false teaching, no matter how subtle they become, holding onto the truth in order to grow. This universal picture in Ephesians 4 has some significant implications. First, the evangelist is not necessarily a local church staff position.⁵⁶ While this may be a desirable position, especially to curtail some of the challenge in missions it simply cannot be supported from the text as a necessity. Second, it is not necessary that the evangelist scope of ministry must be limited to a particular congregation. God may have given him to the universal church for the purpose of beginning new local churches or enlarging existing ones.

Does Eph 4:11 provide a progression in the five terms used?

Best believes in a progression for he writes, “Paul the apostle exercised that same dual role and in that sense evangelists might be regarded as successors to the apostles.”⁵⁷ Hoehner, however, would not see either a progression in terms of authority or in time for he argues, “the evangelists would win converts to the faith, the apostles would establish churches, and the prophet would fill in needed revelation for the perfection of the saints.”⁵⁸ In other words, each of these individuals complemented the others. Rice believes that since evangelists are placed before pastors and teachers that, “in the New Testament, the evangelist had some prominence

⁵⁶ Contra James King, *World Missions and the Local Church*, 13. It should be noted that a local church may choose to place an evangelist on staff for effectiveness or organizational reasons, however, there is no more theological justification for this than to place on staff a teacher, or even a person with an unusual effectiveness in the area of helps.

⁵⁷ Best, *Ephesians*, 391.

⁵⁸ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 543.

above local pastors.”⁵⁹ However, it is probably not appropriate to place too much emphasis in the order given in the text. Carson writes, “It cannot be assumed that the entries are in order of importance when prophecy is sixth in the first list, second in the second list, and first in the third.”⁶⁰ Combs argued that the five groups of people are related according to function. Ephesians established the foundational nature of the apostolic and prophetic ministry in 2:20 and 3:5. It was the revelation that they provided that would serve as the rule of faith for Christianity. Evangelists it would seem from simple logic would follow this ministry by sharing the faith and seeing converts. Pastors and teachers would then serve to strengthen these individuals. While this construction makes some sense one must be careful not to draw lines too sharply for there is no question that all of these individuals function together in the early church, especially at the time Ephesians was written.

Do the gifted individuals have one job or three?

This question could be restated as, “does the change in preposition imply subordinate clauses?”⁶¹ The standard view of v. 12 is that the gifted individuals of v.11 have the responsibility to (προς) equip the saints, but then it is the saint’s responsibility to (εις) do the work of the ministry and to (εις) build up the body of Christ. This however, is not the only view. Lincoln states, “the change of preposition cannot bear the weight of such an argument,

⁵⁹ John R. Rice, *The Evangelist and His Work*, (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1968), 57.

⁶⁰ Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 35. This view would also be supported by Fee who wrote, “It is not so much that one is more important than the other, nor that this is necessarily their order of authority, but that one has precedence over the other in the founding and building up of the local assembly.” Gordon Fee, *First Corinthians*, 619-20.

⁶¹ This can clearly be seen by Bruce’s comment, “The three prepositional phrases in this verse are not coordinate one with another...the second and third phrases are dependent on the first.” *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 349. Similarly, Wallace sees this as the key question, *GBBR*, 371.

and there are, in fact, no grammatical or linguistic grounds for making a specific link between the first and second phrases.”⁶²

While this debate cannot be finally resolved on grammatical arguments alone, one should equally be cautious about context. After all, the context may not provide as definitive an answer as some wish to suggest. O’Brien explains quite nicely how the involvement of all the saints is not only helpful for the church, but part of God’s plan and the argument of the entire book of Ephesians.⁶³ However, it is not necessary to hold the standard view and still believe that both the book of Ephesians and the entire paragraph (4:7-16) teach the importance of every person to the work of the church (v. 16). All one must believe is that all three responsibilities must be done by those God has placed in the roles of v. 11, albeit not exclusively done by them (note esp. v. 16). Even though neither grammar nor context provides a full proof argument, one would normally assume that three continuous prepositional phrases would modify the main verb they follow. On balance, then, without clear contextual or grammatical warrant for subordinating the clauses this passage should be understood as three coordinating prepositional phrases all modifying ἔδωκεν. This question in turn contributes to our understanding of the evangelist. Actually, this issue is extremely important. Some have concluded that evangelists are those who ‘preach against sin’ or those who ‘go for the jugular,’ but such a concept is actually dependent on them ‘equipping the saints’ only. In other words, once all three roles are included, the evangelist may have an equipping ministry in the area of evangelism, but his primary role still remains the work of the ministry such that there are people to equip. Thus, Radmacher would be a bit extreme when he

⁶² Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 253. See also T.D. Gordon, “Equipping” Ministry in Ephesians 4? *JETS* 37 (1994), 69-78.

⁶³ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 302-305. This line of reasoning is also taken by Best, *Ephesians*, 397-9 and Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 547-50.

writes that instead of being professional soul-winners then, both the pastor and the evangelist are to be professional saint-equippers.⁶⁴ Radmacher continues his argument claiming ‘in place of the typical two-week evangelistic service that we have in many of our churches, I would suggest that it might be well for us to consider the possibility of spending two weeks in the intensive training of our membership in the work of evangelism.’⁶⁵ A much more balanced solution is to recognize that the evangelist performs all three tasks to one degree or another. Since the evangelist can function both in and outside of a local congregation, the amount of effort given to these tasks may change as circumstances warrant. O’Brien seems to capture this balance when he concludes, “While the term probably included itinerant individuals who engaged in primary evangelism, it was not limited to them.” O’Brien concludes ultimately that it is a ministry to believers and unbelievers alike.⁶⁶

Conclusions on Ephesians 4:11

Since there were several issues discussed in this section it would be wise to consolidate the conclusions at this point. This paper has demonstrated that the gifts mentioned in v. 11 are gifts of people. These people function in certain capacities such that unity is maintained, the believers are taught and strengthened to resist false teaching, and the church is built. Thus, it is not necessary to speak of abilities, or offices, merely the tasks enabled by the Holy Spirit.⁶⁷ We have also seen that the church is not the local church, but the universal church. As such, there

⁶⁴ Earl Radmacher, “Contemporary Evangelism Potpourri: Part II” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 123 (1966), 165.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 166. Such advice seems very wise, but unfortunately it does not flow out of a clear understanding of this passage.

⁶⁶ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 299.

⁶⁷ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1020.

seems to be no reason why the evangelist's ministry must occur within the bounds of a local church however advantageous, practically speaking, that may be. It has also been shown that while a progression is possible in the passage it is far from certain. All five groups of people were functioning at the time of the writing and there is not enough evidence to draw a firm conclusion. Finally, the role played by the five groups of gifted people are not simply to equip, but also to do the ministry and to build up the body of Christ. Therefore, the εὐαγγελιστής is not necessarily restricted to a church planter, an itinerant evangelist, or a staff position in a local church, but may serve in any number of those capacities.

Contribution of 2 Timothy 4:5

The final NT occurrence is found in 2 Timothy 4:5. The text reads, "But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." This passage does not contribute a great deal to our understanding for several reasons. First, the context is a series of commands not necessarily closely related. Thus, there is very little context from II Timothy that helps identify parameters. Instead, the book is normally considered Paul's final letter to Timothy where Paul will encourage and challenge him for the last time. In this letter, Paul emphasizes the importance of the Bible in ministry. Timothy must study so that he will be a workman who does not need to be ashamed (2:15). Timothy must remember what he learned from mother and grandmother and how the Word of God molded and shaped him to that point (1:5-14). In addition, he must preach that word regardless of the obstacles that might intimidate him (4:1-4). In verse 5 then, "Paul returns to his direct charge to Timothy...with a series of four imperatives."⁶⁸ The third command is "do the work of an evangelist." Second, Timothy's

situation is not overly clear. While he has a current ministry in Ephesus, Paul expects that ministry to be postponed so that Timothy can come to his aid (4:13, 21). There is no indication that Timothy will or will not return. In fact, Timothy drops from the picture. Therefore, it would be wise not to press his future work into the mold of a settled congregation. Thus, Knight may be implying a bit more than he should by saying, “Paul wants Timothy to continue to evangelize even though he is working in a more settled situation and is not in a new and unevangelized territory as Philip was.”⁶⁹ Third, Paul does not call Timothy an evangelist; he instructs him to the same work as an evangelist. This is a potentially helpful insight for it may indicate that there is a distinction between evangelists and those who perform similar work. Fourth, many commentators see this command as nothing more than a restatement of previous information. Fee argues that this command, “simply recalls the imperative with which this charge began (v. 2, “preach the message”).”⁷⁰ If Fee and Hughes were correct, then that would imply that the evangelist was a person who shared the gospel. With so little information to go on, it is probably best to conclude that evangelists were those whose role in the body of Christ was to share the gospel with the lost regardless of his circumstances or present locale. Additionally, it is also reasonable to conclude that while all have some responsibility to share Christ, this was the ministry focus for the evangelist.

⁶⁸ George W. Knight III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 456.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 457.

⁷⁰ Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, in *New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988), 286. Hughes is in complete agreement for he writes, “The good news was to be constantly on his lips—the message that Jesus Christ is descended from David and raised from the dead (cf. 2:8).” See R. Kent Hughes & Bryan Chapell, *1&2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit, in Preaching the Word*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 247.

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE IDENTITY OF THE ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΣΤΗΣ

This paper has considered the contextual and linguistic evidence to evaluate the meaning of εὐαγγελιστής. Lexically speaking, the εὐαγγελιστής was a person who shared the gospel. However, when the word was studied diachronically, we discovered that some in the early church believed they carried apostolic authority, at least in the area of appointing shepherds over churches. It is not difficult to explain this progress for two of the three NT uses involve apostolic delegates, Philip and Timothy. In the latter case, appointing elders was one of his responsibilities, in the former the text does not specifically state it, but it would not take a great deal of imagination to reach a similar conclusion. However, the authority carried by Timothy and possibly by Philip would derive not from their evangelistic ministry per se but from the laying on of hands by the apostles. The passage in Ephesians does not state, but possibly implies that not all evangelists had to have similar authority since the apostles did not have to function as a mediator between Christ and the individual. We also discovered that the ministry of the εὐαγγελιστής was not as narrow as some might like to make it. Philip's ministry not only involved starting and helping the church in Caesarea, but also the evangelization of individuals in cities he did not reside long-term. Ephesians 4:11 explains that the evangelists were individuals given by God to the universal church for equipping the saints, doing the work of the ministry, and building up the body. This job description fits the actual work of Phillip even if those three jobs were not performed in equal quantities in all places. Similarly, the evangelist is not a gift per se. While it is possible that evangelism is a gift, it is certainly not demanded by the text. All that is demanded is that the function or ministry performed by that person is

empowered by the Holy Spirit. Thus, an evangelist may be no more skilled in his ability to share Christ, but God may use him to see souls saved in a unique fashion. In addition, there is not a hint of authority structure, importance, or even time of operation. While most if not all conservative evangelical scholars dismiss the current apostolic function, many are quite comfortable with the other four active today.⁷¹ With the evangelist, there seems to be little reason to exclude this function from the current church. According to II Timothy, there is little to limit the scope of the evangelist with the possible exception that the person recognized as an evangelist would be different than a person who simply shared Christ as opportunity arose. Therefore, the three uses in the New Testament (Acts 21:8; Ephesians 4:11 and II Timothy 4:5) convey the idea of one especially commissioned to proclaim the Gospel good news. Thus, all of the apostles as well as others (*cf.* Ephesians 4:11) could fit into this function.⁷²

In sum, there seems to be no reason linguistically or contextually to believe that the evangelists were equivalent to what would now be known as church planters.⁷³ That is not to say a church planter could not be an evangelist, it is simply the realization that they are not one and the same. Their role and function existed within local churches and outside of them. Itinerant evangelists could also fit under the term εὐαγγελιστής as well as anyone particularly recognized for the way God chooses to use them in the salvation of others.⁷⁴

⁷¹ The largest debate would occur over prophecy. Cessationists tend to limit all prophecy to the first century due to the revelatory nature of the function. However, some NT scholars are more skeptical of this approach and believe that prophecy, as revelation, is active today so long as the revelation is not given authority over the written revelation of God. Grudem, 1031-61. *idem.* *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1982). Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 160-5.

⁷² W. Harold Mare, "Church Functionaries: The Witness in the Literature And Archaeology Of The New Testament And Church Periods" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 13 (1970), 236. 229-39.

⁷³ While I am indebted for the helpful article by Combs, "The Biblical Role of the Evangelist," I believe he unnecessarily restricts the position by refusing to account for the more itinerant nature of Philip and the lack of limiting conditions in the other two passages.

CHAPTER V APPLICATION OF FINDINGS TO THE SUBJECT OF GLOBAL MINISTRY

The paper began by explaining the lack of definition in global ministry and some of the negative consequences. Thus, the task was to provide a clear biblical theology of the evangelist and apply it to today. It is possible to articulate a series of steps that will yield productive results in the church. First, we must stop using the term ‘missionary’ to refer to every role that a person may fill. Instead, we need to classify missionaries by the function they will perform on the field. For example, if the primary task is construction, let us use the term “construction worker.” If the person is a theological educator, then let us call them that. The term “missionary” is too broad to evaluate carefully from the Scriptures. Second, we must recognize that the previous discussion only applies to particular types of roles done on the mission field. Thus, even though the term εὐαγγελιστής is rather broad, it is not equal to ‘missionary.’ Only those whose primary role in ministry is the evangelization of those who have not heard the gospel and those who have been recognized in this role can rightly fall under the term. This may imply that some church planters need to be reclassified! Third, simply because a person is an evangelist does not imply they are immediately entitled to church support. In other words, the passages have not necessarily implied that one’s life work is sharing Christ, although it may be. However, for those who have properly filled this role, been identified, and wishing to pursue gospel ministry as a vocation, support would be warranted (1 Cor. 9:14). Fourth, those who properly fall under the umbrella of

⁷⁴ I must admit that this is a different conclusion than I expected. In addition, the flexibility of this definition will leave many uncomfortable. However, it should be noted that just because one claims to be an evangelist does not mean they are one. I tend to believe that some ‘church planting missionaries’ are struggling in ministry because that is not the function God has called them to perform. This same skepticism would be applied to itinerant evangelists, and lay persons as well. Similarly, while an evangelist may function for a short time in a particular area that does not mean that the believers should not gather and form a local church. This approach raises the sticky issue of determining those who are called. A full-scale treatment of that issue is beyond the scope of this project, but a couple general suggestions will be made in the final chapter.

this term must understand that the apostolic authority of laying on of hands does not apply to them—regardless of the type of commissioning service given! They do not have the right to appoint elders, although their involvement may be helpful assuming they want what is best for the group of new believers. Fifth, just as we desire good quality teachers in our ministries so should we desire good quality evangelists?⁷⁵ God will use them to build up and strengthen our local ministries and possibly allow us to have a significant part in influencing the world around as one of our own is used by God to evangelize people who have never heard the message of Christ in a foreign location.

⁷⁵ Maybe the point could be made stronger by saying that we need to pray that we will become evangelists. Paul encouraged the church in Corinth to earnestly desire the greater gifts (1 Cor. 14:1). Maybe this is a hint that God enabling ministry may change over time as God sees fit. Thus, a non-evangelist could be one some time in the future, God willing of course.

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