

## GIFTS given to MEN

“When he [Christ] ascended on high, he led captives in his train and **gave gifts to men**”  
(Ephesians 4:8).

Ephesians 4:8 is a quote from Psalm 68:18: “You have ascended on high. You have led away captives. And **you gave gifts to people**; but **the rebellious will not dwell in the presence of God**” (Psalm 68:18 New Heart English Bible).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Christians may wonder what **gifts** referred to in Ephesians 4:8 and Psalm 68:18 were given to men. The Apostle Paul understood the gifts given and the original purpose of the gifts. He knew that the Levites were chosen by God as helpers to the High Priest (Aaron) and his sons. They were given a variety of roles in the service of God. The Levites replaced the firstborn among Israel in God’s ministry; they were the people given as gifts to Aaron to help him and his sons.

“But I have taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel. Of all the Israelites, I have **given the Levites as gifts to Aaron and his sons to do the work at the Tent of Meeting** on behalf of the Israelites and to make atonement for them so that no plague will strike the Israelites when they go near the sanctuary” (Numbers 8:18-19).

“Because **their office was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the LORD, in the courts, and in the chambers, and in the purifying of all holy things, and the work of the service of the house of God**” (I Chronicles 23:28-32).

“But the Levites are to **camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony and watch over it**, so that **no wrath shall fall on the Israelite congregation**. So, **the Levites are responsible for the tabernacle of the Testimony**” (Numbers 1:53).

Psalm 68:18 quoted by Apostle Paul has not been translated consistently and clearly. Some translations indicate that the “gifts” come **from** people other translations indicate that the gifts are given **to** people.

The New International version states, “When you ascended on high, you took many captives; you received gifts **from people**, even from the rebellious—that you, LORD God, might dwell there” (Psalm 68:18).

Gifts received **from people**... even **from the rebellious** and that you, **LORD God, might dwell there**?

What gifts could be received **from people** that God might dwell there—and where is there?

The Aramaic Bible in Plain English translates the verse as, “You have ascended on high and you have captured captivity and **you have given gifts to the children of men and rebels will not dwell before God**” (Psalm 68:18).

The Brenton Septuagint Translation translates the verse as, “Thou art gone up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, **thou hast received gifts for man, yea, for they were rebellious**, that thou might dwell among them” (Psalm 68:18).

The Apostle Paul clearly understood that verse, as he quoted it, while explaining to the Ephesians the move into the order of Melchizedek. He said:

“But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: ‘When he **ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.**’ (What does ‘he ascended’ mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is **the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens [Christ is now King of kings and Lord of lords]**, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was **he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for works of service...**” (Ephesians 4:7-12a).

1. The expression “**ascended on high**” means that Christ “also descended to the lower, earthly regions” (Ephesians 4:9) there, he imprisoned the captives, the rebels that he took captive through his victory on the cross.

“And having **disarmed the powers and authorities**, he made a **public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross**” (Colossians 2:15).

The “powers and authorities” are the same identified in Ephesians 6:12 “For our struggle is **NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD**, but **against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers** of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the **heavenly realms.**”

2. The “**gifts**” given to men was the booty won from Christ’s victory over the heavenly rebels who once had authority to teach the nations. Christ took that authority—“gifts”—and “gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11).
3. **The purpose** was “to **equip the saints for works of service**, so that **the body of Christ (the church)** may be **built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ... **no longer be infants**, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-15).

#### **Simply explained:**

The Apostle Paul said that Jesus’ death on the cross was a spiritual victory for God and especially mankind because Christ won the authority, “gifts,” over the nations from the rogue heavenly

powers and authorities. His victory enables him to bring **all of mankind** back to God by teaching them God's way, instead of the rogue heavenly rulers and powers who were leading them astray.

**The authority won—the gifts— are the same gifts** that the Levites were to Aaron and his sons—helpers given authority in service of God. Christ identified the type of helping that would be done: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. That was the responsibility of the heavenly powers and authorities, but they turned against God and taught mankind to worship them and they gave the nations (goyim) their own theology and holidays.

The Apostle Paul identified **the purpose** to receiving this special authority. It was **to equip the saints for works of ministry to build the church** (all of the twelve tribes of Israel who are the churches of Revelation) up into a spiritually sound group of people who are not easily tossed to and fro with falsehoods, misconceptions, disinformation, false interpretations, but that they mature into Christians who eat “solid food,” that is, a Christian who has a sound foundation of the word of God and lives God's word building an intimate and lasting relationship with their Creator. The “infants” cannot distinguish good from evil (Hebrews 5:14).

The saints, the solid structures of the church, and the righteous church will complement Christ—the last Adam, as Eve complemented the first Adam. These faithful and righteous will receive eternal life through Christ (the last Adam) just as Eve was created from one of Adam's ribs. She was not made in the same way as Adam. Part of her came from Adam; it mirrors the way Christians come to receive eternal life—part of their eternal life comes from Christ, the rest comes from God's grace. The shoes Eve was given upon her creation was the walk of mankind.

**In addition:**

It was foreknown before the creation of the earth that a unique relationship between Christ and the righteous and faithful church would become the one ruling body over both realms: heaven and earth. The story written in Genesis reflects the greater story: Christ (the man) and the church (the woman) under the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 6:20).

The “gifts” given to men by Jesus Christ was the institution of the order of Melchizedek with Jesus Christ as the High Priest from the tribe of Judah not Levi, and the helpers in special service of God—no longer the Levites, but the saints (men and women—spiritual sons) from ALL tribes of Israel—**the spiritual firstborn** of Israel. God's story goes full circle with God having first chosen the mortal firstborn of Israel as His helpers, then He chose the Levites—“but, I have taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel” (Numbers 8:18)—in closing, He has chosen the spiritual firstborn of Israel—these holders of the gifts are precious to Him and Christ.

“A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. **They will be mine... in the day when I make up my treasured possession.** I will spare them... And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not” (Malachi 3:16b-18).

*Compiled by Janette Andrejowich*