

The restoration of Apostolic ministry.

Has apostolic ministry ceased?

The bible says that Jesus gave five gifts to men. This means that these five gifts and attributes can be found in all men. As children we all experienced the difference between a teacher just doing their job and one being called. Did the ministry of the teacher ceased? Certainly not! The same applies to the shepherds, pastors, counsellors and caretakers amongst us. These people have this inherent calling to take care, go the second mile, love unconditionally, and heal and restore the wounded. Prophets has been there since the beginning, visionaries, seers, forecasters, analysts and judges. These individuals recognise the wrongs of society and are prepared to speak out against it. The evangelists are the marketers, salespersons, the public speakers, the movers and shakers who always tries to convince us of something. Now if these gifts has not ceased, how can we conclude that apostolic ministry has ceased? The apostles are the pioneers, the discoverers and reformers of society. They start new movements without even knowing it. They are the revolutionaries and civil servants who keep us focussed on the bigger picture of why we are here on earth and on what are we doing about it.

You do not have to call yourself an apostle or even be recognised by others as one, to be one. Apostles are wired differently, so is prophets, teachers, evangelist and pastors. Whether they knew it or not, the church was exposed over the last two centuries to God's special messengers, who was born with a special assignment and destiny in them. Some did great and wonderful things, others fell into disrepute, but they nevertheless managed to impact society in a drastic way. *Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,' Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.* (Isaiah 46:10-11) When God has a plan with man, He will fulfill it.

The fact is; the bible does refer to apostles outside of the selected twelve whom Jesus chose. Both Paul and Barnabas are seen as apostles. (Acts 14:4, 14) James the brother of Jesus is clearly recognized as an apostle by Paul. (Gal 1:19) The same James seemed to have had some preeminence among the apostles at the meeting in Jerusalem. (Acts 15:13-19). So we are certain of at least another three apostles.

Mention is also made of Silas (1 Thes 2:7) Andronicus and Junias (Rom 16:7) but this may be indirect references and not conclusive. The fact that a warning is imposed to immanent false apostles is further proof, because if their were only a closed circle of twelve apostles, who then were these so-called false apostles? (2 Cor 11:13) Even John refers to certain false apostles who call themselves apostles but are workers of iniquity. (Rev 2:2) Remember that the book of revelation was written 70-95 AD. Apparently their will be false brothers, teachers and prophets too (Gal. 2:4; 1 Tim. 1:6; 2 Tim. 3:12-13; 2 Pet. 2:1-3, 10-22; Jude 4, 8-13, 16)

Understand that there are only twelve apostles, whom Jesus has chosen unto himself, whose names will be inscribed on the twelve foundations stones of the wall of the New Jerusalem. (Rev 21:14) But it does not mean that the function or the gift of an apostle has ceased.

What were the Biblical requirements for apostleship?

We can list many requirements but they will mostly be our own opinions and ideas. Dr. Jack Deere explains this point thoroughly in his book "Surprised by the Power of the Spirit". It is interesting that a former Cessationist and professor in the Old Testament Department of Dallas Theological seminary could be 'converted' so to speak to the other side. According to him you have to differentiate between the requirements and characteristics of an apostle. This is an important distinction else we would end up qualifying some who are not apostles and disqualifying those who truly are apostles. For instance if you make the "signs and wonders" a requirement it means that Stephen and Phillip were also apostles.

Paul sets forth three requirements for apostleship. The first and most important requirement is the specific call and commission from the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 1:1; Rom 1:1, 5; 1 Cor 1:1,2; 2 Cor 1:1). The other two requirements are set forth in (1 Cor 9:1-2). *Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are*

the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. The second requirement is that an apostle must have seen the Lord Jesus Christ. In Paul's case this requirement was met when he saw the Risen Christ on the Road to Damascus. (Acts 9:1-9) This requirement is then the most obvious disqualifying criteria for modern-day apostles. This is also probably the reason that mention is made of the fact that James the brother of Jesus also saw the resurrected Christ. (1 Cor 15:7) But what about Barnabas, there is no evidence that he has seen Jesus? (1 Cor 15:6) says that more than five-hundred seen the risen Christ does this make them apostles? No. I believe that this is an important requirement but like in Paul's case this does not have to be a physical encounter.

Thirdly he refers to the people who he has ministered to as his seal of apostleship. The fruit of an apostle is the disciples and people he ministers to, their life and conduct is a sign and proof of a true apostle. Do they reflect the image of Christ?

What are the characteristics of an apostle?

Our English word "apostle" is derived from the Greek apóstolos. Apóstolos is a noun and the corresponding verb is apostello, to send. Another, more common, biblical word meaning "to send" is pempo, but there is an important difference between the two. Apostello means to be sent with a particular purpose or with a specified commission from the one who does the sending. When this is done, "the envoy has full powers and is the personal representative of the one sending him." The ancient Greeks also used apostello from time to time to indicate being sent out with divine authorization. In the Non-Christian Greek world the word is used in reference to a fleet, or even the admiral of the fleet. Mostly the word implies someone with great authority being commissioned to some special purpose and mission. Today the word has generally fallen into disrepute because of the erratic and sometimes even immoral conduct of so called apostles. The Old and New Apostolic church which is considered by most believing Christians as a sect has also brought much confusion and misconceptions about apostolic ministry.

Apostles are sent ones with a certain commission, mandate, and mission. (Luk 11:49; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25) Apostles are not always invited, nor requested; they come and go because they are sent and are commanded. This is a life of an apostle, not to speak or do anything unless God gives the word. So David did in His time (he enquired of the Lord), Jesus said I do nothing unless the Father commands me, and Paul often was either permitted or sometimes restricted to go.

They are master-builders of the church (1 Cor 3:10; Mat 16:18) Apostles are always concerned with church, ensuring that it remains accurate and healthy before God. It is interesting that a Peter Rosa a former priest makes the following comment about the earlier apostles in his book "vicars of Christ. There is no record that any of the apostles were ever the Bishop of any church, not even the churches they planted. It seems that in the minds of the Christian commentators the apostles were in a class apart. The apostles belonged to the whole church. A true apostle's focus is never to only build a specific church, but to build the church.

Concerned with the things of the Kingdom. (Acts 19:8) Their topic of preaching like Jesus was mostly pertaining to the things of the Kingdom, which is simply to help people to be right with God with the resulting benefits of peace and joy. (Mat 6:33; Rom 14:17) They ultimately want to see God's Kingdom established on the earth. This is where the social conscience comes in, apostles does not only want to see souls saved but society changed for the better. They operate as reformers of society, leaders who influence governments through people the preaching and manifesting of the truth.

Purposed to bring every believer into the image of Christ. (Gal 4:19; 2 Cor 11:2; Col 1:28; 2 Pet 1:8) This after all should be the purpose of all ministry in the church. (Eph 4:13)

Eye-witnesses of the person of Christ. (2 Pet 1:16; 1 Joh 1:1-3; Luk 1:1-3; Acts 1:1-3; 1 Cor 15:5-8; Acts 10:39-42; 1 Pet 5:1) Obviously this does not refer to Jesus physically only, for that would have disqualified Paul, but it refers to apostles having a personal, first-hand encounter with Christ. No apostle would have any authority if they speak from the premise of not having seen for themselves. There is a certain conviction and first-hand experiential account of some kind that is fundamental to apostolic ministry. They were taught by men and through books and knowledge, but in some regards they heard and saw for themselves.

Evident suffering. Power usually corrupts, and for apostles to have the authority which they have they grow and mature through much suffering and persecution. This is to ensure that their character equals their authority. (1 Cor 4:9-13; 2 Cor 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:23-33) Some modern-day apostles see apostleship as a form of dictatorship and control, where their lavish lifestyles all but witness of the life Paul lived. Being the appointed leader of many churches does not necessarily prove that you are an apostle. Many of these men see suffering as evident failure to successfully stand in faith, and resisting evil. It is true then what Paul said 'I consider myself least of all the apostles'.

Authority. They stand in delegated authority as ambassadors and representatives of God. (Mat 10:1; Luk 9:1, 10:19; Acts 5:1-11) Authority is either there or it is not. When someone has to enforce their authority they usually have already lost it. This authority is limited to the sphere and metron of each apostle where he has found favour. (2 Cor 10:13) Authority is also easily recognised and evident to all. Authority can be questioned as in Paul's case, but he is not swayed nor does he defend himself through fleshly means. He simply defends his apostleship by reminding the people of what they have already seen and believed.

Insight in divine mysteries – Christ (Eph 3:1-6); Godliness (1 Tim 3:16); Isreal (Rom 11:25-32); abundance of revelations (2 Cor 12:1-4,7)

Signs and wonders – (Luk 24:49; Acts 1:8; 14:3; 15:12; Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12) These are not only miracles of healing but sometimes even nature submits and reacts to their words. The signs are unique and God's initiates and confirms the words of His special messenger in ways that would make sense to the specific people or crowd the apostle is addressing.

Blameless integrity – Often Paul remarks; "*you know how we have conducted ourselves...*" Asking open questions of this nature, in a letter that would be read in public is remarkable and proves their attitude and conduct among the saints. To an apostle their lifestyle is just as important as their message. Paul even instructs his disciples to imitate him. (1 Cor 11:1) *But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (2 Corinthians 4:2)* Although their tactics and methods would be often severely criticized their message and lifestyle was always above reproach.

Apostles are pioneers and often have to experience things first before they can even preach about it. Their own frustration with something often leads to depth and mysteries being explored and revealed to the church. Their continual hunger to be fed and nourished with the true bread of life, becomes the primary goal of their life. Having tasted Him, nothing else will satisfy anyway. This is how portions of Christ's nature and life becomes more visible to us, when we discover Him in the midst of our problems, circumstances and issues.

Pillars and doctrine – (Acts 2:42, Acts 15) The purpose behind all their writings was to establish the church in the truth. To expose and confront false doctrine and to ensure that the churches remain faithful to the Way. Apostles do not primarily preach revelation, and broad expository apologetic references of the Bible. They tend to focus on giving perspective, seeing the whole picture and purposes behind things, giving understanding so that people will walk out the detail for themselves. The Church is built on their foundation. (Eph 2:20)

Apostles were chosen by Jesus himself. You cannot be appointed by man as an apostle for then you would be sent and commissioned by man and not God. All the gifts mentioned in Ephesians can be listed under the above criteria. When we ordain such people in the church today, it is not because we appoint them but because we recognize the fact that they have been appointed by God. The only two appointments of man in the church are Elders and Deacons. You can not study to become an apostle, prophet or teacher. You are either called as one or not, you could certainly be further equipped and trained in your office. This also explains the whole issue of titles. You cannot use the five gifts as titles, for Jesus actually warns against the use of titles and positions. (Mat 23:8-10) But people need to know who you are, so there is a certain acknowledgement and reference to the function and the office in which one stands, but not in the same way that the title Doctor or Professor is used.

They are doers, manifesting the truth. (1 Cor 2:4; 4:20; 2 Cor 4:2) They do not only speak about the answer, but they also show you the answer. They discern a problem and through the weapons of the spirit confront it and overcome it. A good example of this is where Paul summarizes his suffering and persecution and how he

has overcome; *by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true.* (2 Corinthians 6:6-8)

What is the so-called five-fold ministry?

Jesus embodied all the five gifts given to the church.

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift... and He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:7-12)

Apostle - Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus. (Hebrews 3:1)

Pastor - "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. (John 10:11)

Evangelist - for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10)

Teacher - But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. (Matthew 23:8-10)

Prophet - So the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee." (Matthew 21:11)

For the Church to be complete in Christ it has to be exposed and receive the grace that is locked up in each of these five gifts.

Every gift is unique in its function, focus, passion, personality and approach.

According to Rick Warren you get five different kind of churches.

The Soul Winning church. The terms you're most likely to hear in this church is; witnessing, evangelism, salvation and decisions for Christ. Everything else is secondary to the desire to see the lost being saved. (Evangelist)

The experiencing God church. The focus of this church is experiencing the presence and power of God in worship. Key terms in this kind of church is: praise, prayer, worship, music, spiritual gifts, spirit, power and revival. (Prophet)

The family reunion church. This church focuses primarily on fellowship and relationships. Key terms for this church is; love, belonging, fellowship, caring, relationships, small-groups and fun. (Pastor)

The classroom church – the emphasis is an preaching and teaching. People come to church with notebooks and pens. Key terms are; expository preaching, bible study, Greek and Hebrew, doctrine, knowledge, truth and discipleship. (Teacher)

The social conscience church. The focus in this church is to see the community changed. They are doers of the word, practical, no-nonsense approach. Key terms are; needs, serve, share, minister, take a stand and do something, get involved. (Apostle)

The point is that a healthy church should be all the above. Because the abovementioned list of churches is basically presenting and divining the scope of the various five-fold anointings.

It is interesting that the Purpose-driven model is based on five point purpose statement.

Magnify – we celebrate god's presence in worship. (Prophetic)

Mission – we communicate God's word through evangelism. (Evangelistic)

Membership – we incorporate God's family into our fellowship. (Pastoral)

Maturity – We educate God's people through discipleship (Teacher)

Ministry – We demonstrate God’s love through service. (Apostolic)

Although the fivefold ministry is never mentioned and acknowledge as such, yet it forms the basis of the whole model. It is evident that for the church to be healthy and balanced care should be taken that members are exposed to all five areas and scope of ministry. Members who are part of such churches will experience accelerated personal spiritual growth within an atmosphere of corporate growth and change. Usually when one of these aspects is over emphasized it leads to error and ultimately a misrepresentation of Christ.

Do we still need apostles?

The church has not outgrown the need of apostles. Apostles are present in the Church today as they were in the early days of the Church in the Book of Acts. The signature scripture indicating this is Ephesians 4: 7 - 16. Several truths are clearly indicated here as follows:

After His resurrection Jesus ascended to heaven and gave gifts to men. These gifts are not the charismatic gifts of 1 Corinthians 12. The gifts are indicated in verse 11: apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists and teachers. These are ministry gifts that are given not on a limited basis to the Church only but instead are given to 'men', that is to the entire earth to bring an impact of the Kingdom of God to the world of men. All the gifts are given to:

equip the saints for the work of the ministry

cause the edifying or building up of the Body of Christ (the Church)

function UNTIL the Church comes to the unity of the faith

bring saints from childhood to maturity in the things of the Lord

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cause the global Church to arrive at the expression of the full measure of the Christ anointing in the earth.

There is a clear time-frame of operation indicated here. Apostles, like the other gifts, are given to the Church in the earth UNTIL the Church arrives at a predetermined state of maturity in expression and development of power in the earth. Since we manifestly have not yet arrived at this place apostles continue to function in the Church.

Have Apostles Always Been Present Or Have They Recently Re-appeared

Apostles have always been in the Church though they have not always functioned in the reality of their calling because of the following reasons:

Those called by God to be apostles were ignorant of the identity of their ministry therefore causing the function to be restricted and not released

There was ignorance in the wider Church of the existence of apostolic ministry so that the ministry could not be recognised and accepted as valid in the Church. . The condition of corporate acceptance indicated in Titus 1:1 could not be fulfilled:

Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgement of the truth which accords with godliness Titus 1:1

There was wrong teaching in many theological schools that the apostolic ministry ended with the Book of Acts thereby destroying faith for the release of the ministry gift in the Church

Destruction and limitation of the operation of the gift by designating all church-based ministry as a 'pastor' and thus limiting and imprisoning many church-based apostolic ministries to the function of the administrator of a local church.

The principle for function is in Deuteronomy 29:29.

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. Deuteronomy 29:29

Things that are unrevealed belong to God. But things that are revealed belong to us that we might function in them and teach them to the next generation.

Are There Different Kinds Of Apostles Today?

Yes most definitely, just as there are pastors with different callings and ministry operations and just as there are evangelists with diverse anointings and operations in the Kingdom. A great mistake has been made in simplifying the operations of the apostle because of the carnal desire in men to categorise the activity of the Spirit of God in the Church and force it into formulas. God continually breaks out of man's formulas.

John 3:8 says:

"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." John 3:8

It is impossible to force the operation of any ministry gift into a fixed formula. The best that we can do is to identify broad general guidelines for the operations of ministries and learn to spiritually discern the identity of different gifts to the Body of Christ.

Some have said an apostle is one who plants churches, or an apostle is one who gathers pastors around them in a association or a network. The truth is that many pastors and evangelists have planted many churches but still are not apostles called by God. Many men have gathered pastors through their maturity, seniority in the work or because of a powerful fathering dimension to their anointing but still are not called by God to be an apostle. Let's look at the scriptural evidence:

James was a mighty apostle of God but as far as we know he was not an itinerant preacher, did not plant churches and released no great revelation to the Body of Christ as Paul did. He was local church based in Jerusalem and was the senior elder of Jerusalem assembly.

Peter was a mighty apostle of God. He was an itinerant preacher with a powerful healing ministry. He was known to raise people from the dead. He was not a great church planter, only wrote two small epistles in the New Testament and was not a powerful revelator of the Word of God. He even struggled to understand some things revealed by Paul (2 Peter 3: 15 - 16).

Barnabas was an apostle (Acts 14:14), yet he wrote no scripture, was not the releaser of great revelation, planted no churches, operated as the second fiddle in a powerful apostolic team. He was a behind-the-scenes shaper of the destiny of ministry for the future (Acts 15:39).

Paul was a great apostle who was a giant of fresh revelation in the faith, was an itinerant preacher yet at times pastored local churches for years at a time. He was a prolific church planter, manifested great miracles in his ministry, taught for two years in the bible school of Tyrannus (Acts 19: 9 -10) and seemed to live with the constant threat of sharp persecution.

All these men are genuine bible-validated apostles of the church and yet they are so sharply different in the manifestation of their ministries. A person is an apostle because he is called by God Himself to be an apostle (Colossians 1:1) and may manifest the function of his calling in many diverse and unique ways.

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