

WHAT IS APOSTOLIC MINISTRY?

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Part 1

In the church today, there is great familiarity with what we call "Pastoral ministry." Everyone who goes to worship is familiar with a Pastor's ministry, and many know their Pastor personally. There is also extensive understanding of "Evangelistic ministry." From time to time, an Evangelist comes in to "have a revival," or to conduct special meetings, or promote specific crusades or outreaches.

These ministries, along with the teaching ministry, comprise our understanding of how the church functions and is formed-- around the Pastor's ministry, with occasional evangelistic surges, featuring regular teaching by those in leadership (& perhaps a few select others), given to ground us in Scriptural principles and practical service.

But throughout the Church there is a cry coming before the Lord for restoration to New Testament function and pattern, that God might work through the body of Christ the way Scripture describes. But according to the clear witness of the Word of God, for such recovery to take place, Prophetic and Apostolic ministry must first be restored to proper function, structure and priority in the church, or the cry of these many will never be answered. You may deem that a presumptuous Prophetic proclamation, but after looking closely at Eph.2:19-22; 3:3-8; 4:7-16; 1Cor.12:27-31; and 14:26-40, you'll see clearly the pattern God has established, and that Jesus put this in motion well before Pentecost (Mk.3:13-15; Lk.6:12-20; Mt.16:13-20; 28:16-20).

Take an hour or so and look over these passages before proceeding, imagining what these passages must have meant to those who first received them, then taking that "there and then," convert it into the "here and now."

In the same way that the Ark of the Covenant could not return except by the express pattern of ministry God established through Moses, the end-time Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ through His Church will not come apart from His church functioning according to His express pattern. And while Prophetic ministry is essential to the church's function, without the Apostolic ministry that Christ gave full right of way to in matters of priority and function, there will be no significant change in the church, for God operates according to His plan, and we are the ones who must change. We were made to conform to Him.

We are blessed with more than enough Scripture to help us understand and begin to properly implement the process of converting our mindsets, priorities and structures (wineskins), to become the vessels through which the Glory of God can return and be administered (Lk.5:36-39; 2Cor.3:4-12; 4:7-18). Acts is replete with examples of Apostolic and Prophetic ministry, and in Ephesians 4:12-13 we read that Apostles and Prophets (as well as Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers) will continually be called by Jesus, providentially prepared by God, and anointed and empowered by God's Spirit,

"for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ."

We need to be equipped and built up, don't we? We want to see the church in agreement concerning who Jesus really is, the depth to which He wants to transform through intimacy, and what He really wants to accomplish, do we not? We long to see believers mature in character and as a functioning body, do we not? Wouldn't it be wonderful to see the stature (grandeur, nobility &

splendor) of Christ established within us individually and corporately, so that who God is, what He does, and what concerns Him could clearly be seen by all? Yes . . . yes . . . yes! We sincerely desire all that God wants!

Only Apostolic and Prophetic ministry will bring foundation while also providing other ministries the valid opportunity to establish all that God wants (Eph.2:19-3:12). We already have a measure of the Prophetic among us, but it is lacking in its effectiveness. Why? Because Prophetic ministry needs the Apostolic in a unique way (but not less than pastoral, teaching or evangelistic), in order to supply what is lacking in complimentary function of anointing, boundaries for remaining appropriate, and parameters for staying pertinent. Apostolic and Prophetic ministry, functioning rightly and in varying forms, will provide the foundation Jesus authorized (Eph.2:20/Mt16:13-20).

The promised move of God to southern Ohio can not entirely come in; neither could it flourish, nor could it remain in place, apart from an emergence of Apostolic foundation, revelation, equipping, priority and relationship(s). Only God can do what He's promised for this area, and God works only according to His pattern, His blueprint. His pattern releases the return of His Glory (1Chron.15), and the building of His people requires His blueprint for His foundation to be established (Eph.2:20). And those whom Jesus chose and empowered with His nature and authority (see Eph.4:4-11), are those called and commissioned to set God's work in motion-- by using the authority expressly given to release and establish the Kingdom of God in this region (1Cor.12:28).

But how would we know an Apostle? (after all, they don't glow in the dark or anything). Since we are generally not acquainted with Apostolic ministry, let's ask the question again: what is Apostolic ministry? Rather than lay a systematic Biblical foundation on the subject, let's first look at Apostolic ministry in comparison with and in contrast to ministry we are more familiar with, such as the Evangelist. When we continue next time, we'll conclude with some distinctions between Apostolic and Pastoral ministry function. These contrasts are not meant to downplay or undermine the legitimacy of Christ's gift of the Evangelist, there are instead given to highlight the depth and extent of the Apostolic foundational ministry gift of Christ.

SOME DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE EVANGELIST AND THE APOSTLE

1. Evangelists win souls, but Apostles make disciples.
2. Evangelists preach salvation, but Apostles preach the Gospel of peace and demonstrate the Kingdom of God.
3. Evangelists declare and display the grace of God to those who receive; Apostles demonstrate signs, wonders and miracles as a witness in order to reveal the hearts of those who do and don't believe.