

WHAT IS APOSTOLIC MINISTRY?

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Part 2

"Age-old, yet brand-new"... sounds like a product slogan, hook of a promotional ad, or a sound byte from a media campaign, doesn't it? Actually, it's where we find ourselves in God's grace. The "Lamb slain at the foundation of the world" provides for us mercies that are "new every morning" and the "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (Rev.13:8; Lam.3:23; 2Cor.5:17).

But what happens when we find ourselves resisting the eternal order of God by failing to let God move the Church into what (to us, anyhow) seems brand-new? We find ourselves in disagreement with the God of the age-old, for He is also the God of the brand-new. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever" (Heb.13:8). And while we often cling to that stability when desiring to acquire the promises, we often fail to connect that sameness of Christ with the order He has established in His Church.

For example, Jesus made it clear that the Church He was building would be founded upon revelation, and that the rock (petra) of revelation concerning Christ's identity and the order He came to earth to establish would be the only foundation the church could stand on (Mt.16:18). The building metaphor, found also in Paul's description of the Apostles and Prophets role in the church, in this instance equates continual revelation from God as being not only keys of the Kingdom, but the essence of what the Church will be built on. The revelation of Christ from God is the foundation the Church stands on. What Christ revealed through His life and teaching comprised that foundation then; what He reveals to us now through the foundational ministries lays foundation for the "now" in God. (Eph.2:20; 3:5). Jesus, teaching "as one with authority," made it plain that obedience to His teaching was the only way to remain standing in the midst of all that was being constantly threatened.

"Therefore, every one who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock (petra); and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall; for it had been founded upon the rock. And every one who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall" (Mt.7:24-27).

Jesus' audience understood that a house must be built upon rock if it is to stand the tests time inevitably bring. Even we who have soil instead of sand understand that a solid foundation is absolutely essential for building anything that will stand throughout the storms that accompany each season of life.

What is the relevance of these building metaphors for the church in the "here and now?" God is desiring to do something among us that we've never experienced before. He's actually releasing to us a Move far beyond our experience or understanding. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that we renew our minds concerning what He is working to establish among us. If what was in yesterday had been completely Biblical or sufficient to see true Love, Power, and Liberty in the Spirit established, we should have tenaciously held on to it. But an honest look at the Word of God shows it was neither fully in keeping with what Jesus came to establish, nor was it sufficient to fulfill His promises to us. Therefore, all stubborn

clinging to the past and even the "what is" that seems to be working now must to be released if we are to make it "back to the future," if we are to truly experience the Power and Presence of the Acts church. Why should we reject what is familiar and comfortable, what seems tried and true, what seems to breed Peace and Love?

It what has seemed so precious, important and essential really is so wonderful, why have we had so much in-and-out, up-and-down, and every imaginable ministry scandal? (I'm not speaking now about national or international household names, but those locally whose failures have scarred the very ones God has given us to lead). Quite simply, the instability of the church can be attributed to the lack of proper foundation; the constant upheavals and cyclical patterns of growth and purging are due to the lack of being properly undergirded.

Whatever part of life and ministry in the Lord that is not built solidly upon the revelation of Christ and His order cannot survive. And the needed restoration starts at the house of Aminadab and ends only when the Ark of His Glory is established in the tent that God has raised-up His leadership to establish. So while crumbs are available in many places, only then will the people eat the fulfillment of His promise (2Sam.6:1-19).

It is clear that much of what God desires for His Son's body cannot be established by many who are now leading. The gracious love of the Father has granted much more patience with what prevails than we could ever know. But the cleansing of the temple is now arising in an increasing intensity. And as we saw in the Gospels, the ones receiving the severity of the scourging are the leaders. The church must return to prayer, not just (or even primarily) in program and work, but in life and heart. The beautiful bonnets and colorful bows that we've put on our Ishmael's cannot cover the stench of death that is upon them.

Only the fragrance of life that is the true anointing of God will bring life, and see it go beyond the altar service into the structures of the church, the "who we are," "what we do," and "why we do this" issues that are often hidden from those celebrating the Presence of the Lord in Worship. And while there are many among us who sincerely desire God to take us forward, the Move goes no farther than a momentary display, because the transforming power of the Spirit is rejected by the hearts and minds of many who lead. When wooing to bring changes that would bring establishment of what has been experienced in fleeting moments, God's love and power are being resisted.

Many who yearn for God to do a wonderful work in the service see God show up to a degree according to the sincerity of the people present to enter in and invite God to come. But even as these leaders become instruments of the Lord in precious moments of inbreaking, they themselves remain mostly untouched and the work of God is actually stopped by the very ones who seem to be the focal point of God's Presence. Why? Because the move of God, although sincerely desired, is permitted to appear, but God Himself is rejected because it would mean that the minister's identity, activity, concepts of leadership and understanding of the Church would have to be upgraded to God's restorational "state of the art." As Jesus said, "new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, 'the old is good enough'" (Lk.5:38-39).

What is so often overlooked is that with each momentary sprinkle or droplet of what God intends to be only the beginning, leaders will be held accountable for failing to allow the Lord to move further in, and also judged for refusing, for whatever reason,

to lead the Church farther out into His Presence. Honestly, there is a sense in which many just cannot go on, for they honestly prefer the old, and they are unwilling to learn new ways for new days in God. A drizzle would rip them apart, for the droplet is more than enough to cause their anxiety and defensiveness to begin to rise, instinctively squelching what comes. And what's coming is God. It is in those decisions of the moment, however, that the outcome is determined, and precedents are established.

This can be readily seen and understood in the story of the return of the Ark of the Covenant in 2 Samuel 6. Uzzah, the son of who once kept the Glory (Aminadab), cannot oversee the processional of restoring the Glory because He is not God's leadership for the dispensing of that restored Glory. Why not? The authority of King David's leadership does not override the fact that he is not God's choice for the task. He is not a Levite. So when He tries to stabilize the Glory, he acts in direct violation of established Divine Order and must receive the recompense for that act. No one is allowed to touch the Glory during its Movement! Why does Uzzah, experienced with the Ark, instinctively act in a protectionist, stabilization mode? Because as protector of the previous place of Glory, he is only able to function as He did when the Glory wasn't moving. Uzzah is a protector, a stabilizer, actually one of the team who hid the Glory from the enemy. The task before them however is not a passive and defensive retreat, but an active, offensive advance: the movement of the restoring of the Glory. Uzzah is neither called nor equipped for that ministry!

What is the relevance of this for us? God is moving on! Those God has placed in charge of the New Day have (rightly) yearned for the Glory to return. But the days of Aminadab and Uzzah are over. It's time for God's ordained Levites to rise up! Specifically, God is calling for the resignation of Uzzah's everywhere. Furthermore, God is also calling the many Levites, who, for whatever reason, have served God in the way of Uzzah instead of the order to which they are called, to embrace their destiny and repent of the unrighteous fears of man and God concerning the outcome of total obedience. Finally, God is calling for the new generation of His Levites to rise up and take their rightful place in the restoration of the Glory of the Lord!

Is the house of Aminadab without notice in their keeping of the transition of the Glory? No! There was a time when their ministry was essential to God's plan of restoration. But lest we idolize the mode of ministry that can only protect and stabilize (not leading an advance), change is imminent. Uzzah is significant in the beginning stages of the return of the Glory, but for Uzzah to be used beyond his ordained destiny costs him his very life.

David's subsequent seeking of God transforms tragedy into a new understanding of God. We are to also! David is quick to learn how essential it is to have every part of the restoration in Divine Order. He is so careful to seek and follow the pattern that God has forever established, that even after ascertaining it through the Word of God, David is careful every step of the way to make sure that the entire operation moves forward with clean hands, purified hearts, only in priestly fashion and in full praise to God, thereby causing all that join the ranks and follow suit to come into one accord as God's Glory returns (2Sam.6:13-15).

Likewise, we must consciously and continually resist the temptation to slip into denial, believing that change will come without change in leadership, change of leadership and change through leadership. Why? Because many are (for the most part) still at the house of Aminadab. And while some of us have started forward from that point, there are numerous casualties between where we once started and

where some have made it to at this point: the house of Obed-edom. Remember, to be at the house of Obed-edom means that whatever progress that has been made (and it is small), has come at great price and casualty.

So those who have made it to Obed-edom must be especially conscious of the absolute necessity of being aligne