

PREACHED IN JACKSONVILLE N.C FOR APOSTLES CONFERENCE 2011

TITLE: THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

FOUNDATIONAL SCRIPTURE: **Ephesians 2:19, 20** *“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.”* This passage uses a building analogy that is carried on in **Ephesians 4:11-13** where he uses the phrase “building up.” The word in **Ephesians 4:11** is from the base of the same Greek word that was used in **Ephesians 2:20**. Here in **Ephesians 2** apostles and prophets are the foundation with Christ being the cornerstone.



One of the most important events at the end of the church age will be the restoration of the apostolic ministry to the church. The ministry that opened the church age will be the one that closes it. The raising up of a victorious church, demonstrating for all time to all creation that truth will prevail over lies and righteousness will prevail over iniquity, will be the completed job of the apostolic ministry.

The enemy has had a boast since the fall of man, he declares that God's special creation, which He made in His own image, loves evil more than righteousness. Satan proclaims that those whom the Lord created to become members of His family will gladly serve a lie rather than the truth of God's word.

Instead of growing into its full stature and purpose she has created an imperfect and unhealthy environment for herself. She must now revisit the foundational principal in which she was build upon.

The reason the church emerged in the book of Acts as a force that could so change the world was because the Lord was among them. They had encounters with Him day by day. He was their message, and He did great works among them. Because of this, it didn't take long for the name of the Lord to become known and feared.

The first century church had abundant evidence of the Lord's presence with them. Almost everything they did was far beyond human ingenuity or brilliance. In fact, they did not leave buildings or programs behind, but they only left transformed lives, families, and even nations.

There evidence of abundance and victories were due to their commitment to stand on the sure sound and foundational teachings of Christ. For Christ is both the foundation and the Head of the Christ. He is the bedrock that the church is built upon. He is the revelation from the father

to the church. He is first stone laid in the foundation of the church and the way in which every subsequent stone must be laid (Matt: 16: 13-18).

So because the foundation was so crucial to the first century church, we the church of today must accurately judge the present state of her upon this same foundation. Then we can hold fast to that which is good and discard that which is not. (3 John 1:11, Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God)

Before His ascension, the Lord gave His Apostles a commission that has since been called, the Great Commission. It's this message that is the foundational message for the church (Matt 28:18-20). Notice that the foundation finds itself centered around Jesus, it is a proclamation of His Authority. The message wasn't given so that the church could establish her own authority, but that it would proclaim His authority.

The Apostolic ministry burden is not to bring the church into a certain form, but to see Jesus transformed within His people. The more man-centric the church becomes the quicker she falls into the prophesied apostasy. The more Christ-centered her message remained, she remained pure. Day after day, the apostles taught what they had been commanded, for there apostolic ministry was not just to get people into the church, but to see Jesus formed in His PEOPLE.

BY WHO'S AUTHORITY: Eph 4: 11-16 (Read). It is by the authority of Christ in which these gifts are rendered to the Church, that they may equip the saints, for the work of service, that the body may be built up. These gifts were given as aspects of His ministry (Jesus), they came from Him not man. Together, these five equipping ministries formed His complete ministry, which required to equip the saints and them to grow up in all aspects into Him. It is therefore, apparent that the church will never become all she is called to be until all of these ministries are functioning together. It is also obvious, according to this scripture, that if the church has not attained this stature, all of these ministries are still needed. They were clearly given "UNTIL WE ATTAIN TO, THE UNITY OF THE FAITH, THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD, TO A MATURE MAN, THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE WHICH BELONGS TO THE FULNESS OF CHRIST.

If there is a church anywhere in the world which can rightfully claim this? If not, then we still need all of these ministries functioning in their places. But because some minds are set on the flesh ignorance is eminent, but for those who set their minds on the Spirit, revelation is granted.

UNDER WHAT STRUCTURE: (Read Eph 2:19-22). So the Apostolic ministry is given to the church as a master builder to help build the habitation of God. This ministry should be especially devoted to seeing the church become the temple of the Lord. It is to bear the travail of spiritual labor until Christ is formed in the church. The early church apostles did certain things to achieve

and maintain order in the congregations, their goal was to change the heart, not just the institution. When hearts are changed, institutions either give way to the spirit or burst like old wineskins.

POSITIONS BASED ON FUNCTION: In the first century, all authority in the church was derived from the apostles. But what was important is in the way in which they exercised their authority. Through transformation any worthy subordinate at every opportunity was considered a position of privilege and became as much responsible to the service of that position.

TEAM MINISTRY: The apostles were the first ministers established by the Lord, but as they laid a foundation in the church with their teachings and leadership, other ministries began to emerge. Each of these specialized in an aspect of the apostolic ministry. At least to some degree the apostles were all prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The emerging ministries from the church mostly specialized in just one of the equipping functions. Some focused on evangelism, others teachings, others the prophetic, or administration, healing etc. In this way, the ministry that began with the twelve grew throughout the expanding church, meeting the growing needs. When we read the book of acts, it seems that all of this happened quite swiftly, but actually it took many years to unfold. For example, it was seven years from the day that the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost until Peter first preached to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. It was more than two decades from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit until Paul and Barnabas were sent out from Antioch.

THE GOOSE PRINCIPLE: geese are remarkable birds with a form of government in each flock. This government is popularly known as the pecking order. Every goose in the flock knows its place. For a goose to rise out of its place in the flock, it has to fight and subdue a goose that is on a level above it. This may sound brutal, but it is in reality, the way most human groups also act. Geese always fly in formation, but it is for a very different purpose than the ability of one goose to dominate another. They fly in formation in order to help one another. The lead goose is actually doing the most work, being the servant of the others. In flight, the others are drafting behind each other. By drafting this way, all are using 20 to 35 percent less effort than the leader. Therefore, the leader will tire much more quickly than the others. This requires a constant changing of leadership if the flock is to keep pace.

WHERE ARE WE? We are told the following in 2cor 13:5, test yourselves to see if you are in the faith, examine yourselves. There is a time for projecting vision and a time for examination of ourselves and our work. We need to be able to do both together. We need to see where we are going and have a good evaluation of where we are. Those who are going to be the most prepared and be a part of what is coming are those who had the wisdom and humility to visit

and receive from the Lord. For those who are gaining vision and perspective from the Holy Spirit, will start to make the pattern clear.

Jesus said for those who receive even the least of His people were receiving Him. The Apostle Paul commended the Galatians for receiving him as if he were an angel from heaven. My point is that a greater move of God is about to happen for those who have the hunger and humility to go where God is moving. They will be the ones who find the grace to walk in what is coming. That's the Apostolic Ministry in its best form.