

APOSTLES OR BISHOPS?

By John Eckhardt



Introduction

With the current restoration of apostles to the Church there is a corresponding restoration of New Testament terminology. As I travel around the world emphasizing this current restoration, I am often asked the difference between apostles and bishops. There is some confusion concerning these two terms that needs to be resolved. Many leaders are opting to use the term “bishop” in describing their ministry. Some have even gone as far as using the term “archbishop”. Some are opting for the term “apostle”.

Some will contend that any term is irrelevant. However words and terms are very important in helping us understand truth. Wrong terminology can actually hinder people from understanding important truths that the Holy Spirit is restoring to today’s church.

This is true with the historical use of the word missionary. Peter Lyne states “The church for generations has used the term “missionary” to identify those sent out to foreign lands to plant and establish new churches. The Antioch model shows us the importance in releasing apostles for the planting and establishing of new churches. The events of Acts 13:1-4 have profound implications for the church today. So often we have sent the wrong people. At the heart of the church in Antioch was a team of prophets and teachers, but out of this group of five men the Holy Spirit singled out Barnabas and Saul for the wider work of evangelism and church planting. That these men were foundational to the establishing of the church in Antioch is without question. Their intensive program of teaching was a vital key to the development of the church. The contrast with contemporary church life is this. Had they been involved in any one of our churches today, they would have quickly become indispensable! New titles would have to be discovered, like ‘senior pastor’, to identify the importance of their role, and before long, their giftedness would become the cork in the bottle, preventing other gifts and ministries from developing. To cope with this dilemma, a name change has been inevitable. Apostles are now missionaries, the latter word coming from a Latin derivative, but essentially meaning the same thing. Some will feel that what I am saying here is simply semantics and of no particular importance. HOWEVER, WORDS ARE SYMBOLS OF IDEAS, AND A CHANGE OF NAME HAS SO OFTEN BROUGHT WITH IT A CHANGE IN UNDERSTANDING AND FUNCTION. A RETURN TO NEW TESTAMENT TERMINOLOGY COULD LEAD TO A REDISCOVERY OF APOSTOLIC PRIORITIES AND EFFECTIVENESS.

I agree wholeheartedly. Think of the difference between what comes to your mind when you hear the word APOSTLE to hearing the word MISSIONARY. There is a marked difference. Although both words mean essentially the same thing (a sent one), the word apostle carries a higher degree of authority. We expect more from apostles than we do from missionaries. The church is built upon the foundation of apostles, not missionaries (Eph.2:20). Although many missionaries were and are apostolic, many were and are not. Since many in the church have historically taught that there were nor more apostles after the apostolic age , we needed to replace their ministry with missionaries.

The word apostle is mentioned over seventy times in the New Testament. It is used more than any of the other ministry gifts. It is obvious that the Holy Spirit uses this word so often to

emphasize the priority of the apostle's ministry. It is the most important and primary gift in the church. This does not mean that we don't need the other gifts. They are also important. The apostle however is set in the church FIRST by God (1 Cor.12:28).

The word PASTOR is mentioned only once in the King James New Testament (Eph.4:11). How is it that a ministry that is listed once gets more priority in most churches than a ministry listed over seventy times? Our tradition has kept us from emphasizing the ministry that the Holy Spirit has emphasized in the Word of God. Some believers and churches are afraid to use the term APOSTLE. But it is a New Testament word that describes the most important and up-front ministry in the church. We cannot be afraid to use New Testament terminology.

Which things we also speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor.2:13)

The ASV says "combining things with spiritual words." In other words the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual words to help us understand spiritual things. The word APOSTLE is a spiritual word that helps us understand a SPIRITUAL ministry. No other word can adequately describe this ministry.

In order to understand what the Holy Spirit is doing today we need to understand this word. We cannot be afraid of it. We cannot be blinded by tradition that limits this ministry to twelve. Unfortunately there are many leaders today who don't understand this word. They are afraid to use it, or will substitute other words to replace it. But the fact remains that Jesus gave APOSTLES (Eph.4:11). If leaders don't understand and have a revelation of the term APOSTLE, how can the Body of Christ as whole understand this ministry? If the church does not understand this word and gift, how can believers place a demand on this anointing and receive fully from this gift?

The word BISHOP is found four times in the King James New Testament. Again the word apostle is found over seventy times. You do the math. Which ministry is emphasized more by the Holy Spirit? In addition to these numbers the term 'bishop' has had a history of misuse. It has presently come to mean something that it never meant in the early church. Because of this the church has suffered in it's understanding of apostolic ministry. This is unfortunate because the apostle's ministry is much needed today.

The Holman Bible dictionary gives an excellent definition of the term BISHOP:

The English word "bishop" is the normal translation of the Greek noun episcopos , which occurs five times in the New Testament (Acts 20:28; Philem. 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 pet.2:25)... Paul, addressing the Ephesian "elders," reminded them that the Holy Spirit made them "overseers" (episcopous) "to feed (verb which is cognate to the noun "pastor") the church of the Lord." From this many conclude that in Paul's time "elder," "bishop," and "pastor" were terms used to describe three different functions of the same Christian leader, not three distinct ministerial offices. Moreover, according to Phillipians 1:1 the church at Phillipi had more than one bishop. During the second century A.D. churches came to have a single bishop, and then that bishop came to exercise oversight over nearby rural churches as well as the city church so that his ecclesiastical territory became known as a "diocese" or "see" ("eparchy" in the East). Bishops of churches that have been founded by apostles were said to be in succession to the apostles, and hence their teachings were held to be authentic and their authority collegial. By 400 A.D. in the West, the bishop of Rome began to assume extraordinary authority over other

bishops. Today the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Old Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion, and the (Lutheran) Church of Sweden teach the doctrine of apostolic (or Episcopal) succession.

Vines Dictionary defines bishop as follows : EPISCOPAS, lit., an overseer (epi, over, skopeo, to look or watch), whence Eng. "bishop," which has precisely the same meaning, is found in Acts 20:28; Phil.1:1; 1 Tim.3:2; Tit.1:7; 1 Pet.2:25. Note: Presbuteros, an elder, is another term for the same person as bishop or overseer. See Acts 20:17 with verse 28. The term "elder" indicates the mature spiritual experience and understanding of those so described; the term "bishop," or "overseer," indicates the character of his work undertaken. According to the Divine will and appointment, as in the N.T., there were to be bishops in every local church, Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil.1:1; Tit.1:5; Jas.5:14.

Roger Sapp states in his book *The last Apostles on earth* "As Martin Luther, John Calvin, and others were raised up by God in the dark Ages of Europe to be forces in the Reformation, they and others were the first to acknowledge the misuse of the term bishop. The Reformers correctly explained the relationship between these two terms. The terms presbyter (or elder) and bishop (or overseer) in the New Testament denote the same office – with this difference only, that the first term originated from the synagogue and the second from the Greek communities; and that one signifies the dignity of the office, while the other the actual practice of ministry... The equality and interchange of the terms elder and bishop continued until the close of the first century, as evidenced by the epistle of Clement of Rome written about A.D. 95. The Didache reveals that the equivalent meaning remained evident even near the end of the second century. However, with the beginning of the second century from Ignatius onward, the two terms began to be distinguished from each other. In other words, during the second century, the term episcopas began to lose its scriptural meaning and to be transformed into something else. During this time the term episcopas began to mean "a head of a congregation surrounded by a group of presbyters." Decades later it came to mean a "head of a diocese and successor to the apostles." The episcopas grew out of the "presidency" of the presbytery. The Reformation churches, i.e. the Lutherans, the Presbyterians, and the pre-Reformation Anabaptists, rejected the erroneous idea of bishops leading the Church; however, they did not reestablish the correct order of apostolic ministry."

It is a common fact that words can change in meaning over a period of time. It is unfortunate that the scriptural meaning of the word bishop has changed because it has often given men holding unscriptural authority and positions in the Church. It is not surprising that the King James translators did not translate the word episcopas as overseer. They kept the term bishop in place because the Church of England still had in place the Episcopal form of church government, and this is true even until this day.

John Tetsola states "the term episcopas (overseer), for example, developed a meaning that was quite different from the New Testament usage. It became one of the most significant ecclesiastical titles of the hierarchical church. We know that the term in English is "bishop," meaning a church official who presides over many churches and the lower clergy. Thus, the original sense of the term episcopas, which was synonymous with elder, indicated a local church official...In the end, every local church is responsible to teach its people the meaning of the terms it uses to describe its spiritual leaders, whether it be elders, overseers, ministers, preachers or pastors. Biblically sensitive church leaders will insist that the terminology they

use represents as accurately as possible the original biblical terms and concepts of a New Testament eldership. The vocabulary Christians use to describe their church officials has great problems. Much of our church vocabulary is unscriptural and terribly misleading. Words such as clergyman, layman, reverend, priest, and bishop convey ideas contrary to what Jesus Christ and His apostles taught.”

The New International Version translates the word *episcopos* as overseer. Roger Sapp concludes in his book “ Perhaps it would be better to altogether dispense with the term bishop. It has been so strongly tied to traditional and historical misuse that its use will continue to perpetuate confusion and make the apostle’s role more difficult. Perhaps we simply need to use elder or overseer to describe this local church ministry to avoid confusion.”

The historical decline of apostolic ministry can be traced to the rise of bishops in the church. The doctrine of Apostolic Succession that teaches the bishops replaced apostles is a heresy. The Roman Catholic Church has taught that the bishop of Rome (pope) has inherited the authority of the apostle Peter. This is the teaching of Apostolic Succession at it’s worst. This teaching excludes any apostle who is not in direct line of the bishops from the time of Peter. The apostle Paul was raised up by God without any direct connection to Peter. Many other apostles have been raised up by God over the centuries without being in the line of bishops. This is a gift given by grace and has nothing to do with apostolic succession. No church has a monopoly on the gifts of God. They are given by the Holy Spirit irrespective of a denomination or certain group of churches.

The unfortunate truth is that many present day Pentecostals and Charismatics are embracing terms and concepts that were challenged by the Reformers hundreds of years ago. Although the Reformers were limited in their understanding of spiritual gifts, we have no excuse today. We have more knowledge of spiritual gifts than ever before. The Reformers did not reestablish the order of apostolic ministry. Their biggest fight was to restore the doctrine of Justification by faith. Present day churches should reestablish the order of apostolic ministry. We should not return to concepts and religious systems that the Reformed changed hundreds of years ago. We should be progressing instead of regressing.

With the decline of apostolic ministry and the rise of unscriptural bishops the church entered into a long period of decline. The leadership of the church became corrupt as men often used ungodly means to rise to positions of power in the church. Because the bishoprick became an appointed position, favoritism and other things besides the anointing became the means of being appointed into these offices. Some bishops were corrupt and ungodly. Many were simply religious politicians who maneuvered their way into the coveted positions.

With the decline of apostolic ministry came the decline of apostolic power. One of the major characteristics of an apostle’s ministry is power. This includes signs, wonders and miracles (2 Cor.12:12). With the restoration of the apostle’s ministry will come a corresponding restoration of apostolic power. There is also a restoration of apostolic terminology. Terminology that is religious and outdated will be replaced by terminology that is current and scriptural.

We are presently in a period of great restoration. Truth and ministries that have been neglected for generations are being rediscovered by the church. This includes, but is not limited to, the apostle’s ministry. God is breaking the spirit of ignorance. We are in a time of reformation. Things that have been imposed on the church are now being removed. The unscriptural role of bishops was imposed on the church for hundreds of years. This is being removed and replaced by the proper order of apostolic ministry.

BISHOPS DO NOT REPLACE APOSTLES

This false concept is based on the doctrine of Cessationism. This is the teaching that the apostle's ministry ceased after the death of the twelve. The bishops therefore replaced the twelve as the leaders of the church.

First of all there is no substitute for the apostle's ministry. We need apostles in each generation just like we need evangelists, pastors, and teachers. When emerging apostles do not replace founding apostles, the church is in trouble. This cycle of deterioration has occurred in almost every movement and denomination. This is because of a lack of understanding concerning apostolic ministry.

After the death of the early apostles the church began to teach that the bishops (those ordained and set by the apostles) replaced the apostles as the governmental leaders of the church. The doctrine of apostolic succession was espoused by Clement of Rome. He intervened on the behalf of the presbyters of Corinth who were dismissed from the church. He ordered their reinstatement by insisting that an orderly succession of bishops was established by the apostles. This is found in the letter of the Roman Church to the Corinthians (c.a.96).

During the second century the church came under threat from false teachings, primarily the teachings of Gnosticism. These heresies posed such a threat to the church that Irenaeus proposed the concept that the true churches must be able to trace their leaders back to the apostles. He taught that an unbroken succession of bishops of dioceses founded by the apostles guarantees the truth that a church possesses. In this way one could differentiate true churches from the false ones lead by heretics. This is found in his writing *Against the Heresies* (c.a.185). Churches were therefore considered apostolic if they could trace their leadership back to the apostles.

The African orator Tertullian , in his treatise *The Prescription of Heretics* (c.a.200) proposed that a church need only have the teaching of the apostles in order to be apostolic. In other words there was no need to have apostolic succession in order to be a legitimate church. Clement of Alexandria (c.a 150- c.a.215) similarly proposed that a succession of doctrine rather than a succession of bishops is the most important characteristic of a true apostolic church.

Cyprian , the bishop of Carthage (c.a. 205- c.a.258), is perhaps one of the strongest proponents of apostolic succession. He maintains that the apostolate (the apostles) and the episcopate (the bishops) are one. In his view the bishops were the successors to the apostles and the apostles were the bishops of old. By the mid third century, the difference between the apostles and bishops disappears with Cyprian.

The development of the doctrine of apostolic succession (an unbroken line of bishops from the apostles to the present bishop of Rome) was a response to the rampant heresies being taught in the early church. This doctrine was developed to test the whether a church was legitimate or not. If teachers (heretics) could not trace their leadership to the apostles, they were considered false. Only the apostles and the bishops that replaced them were considered valid teachers and carriers of apostolic tradition.

This teaching further states that only ordinations conducted by the bishops were valid. This teaching rests on the false doctrine of Cessationism. It rests on the false concept that bishops replaced apostles. Any teaching based on a lie is false because it rests on a false foundation. There have always been apostles in the church. Tradition has often hid them from our eyes,

but this gift was never withdrawn from the church. Each generation needs apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. I agree with Tertullian in stating that the doctrine of the apostles is currently available through the New Testament. Any teaching outside of it is blatantly un-apostolic.

Paul was sent as an apostle without the laying on of the hands of the twelve. He was an apostle by the will of God, not by the will of man. Jesus sends apostles. Although they are usually released in the local church and confirmed by prophetic ministry, their origin is from God, not man. No man has to trace his ministry directly to one of the original apostles through the laying on of hands. This would be a fruitless endeavor for the multitudes of apostles the Lord is sending today.

The apostle is a pioneer. They are set in the church first (Greek word *Protos* meaning first in time, order, or rank, 1 Cor.12:28). This pioneering anointing causes great breakthroughs and advancement. New Movements grow rapidly and have great momentum. This usually continues while the founding leader is alive. Movements usually try to maintain the leaders legacy by replacing the leadership with bishops, superintendents, and administrators. The movement begins to lose momentum as it becomes more administrative than apostolic. This process is called institutionalization.

Ernest B. Gentile defines institutionalization as the process whereby the church of Jesus Christ becomes an established, recognized organization, a structured and highly formalized institution, often at the expense of certain spiritual factors originally thought to be important. Derek Tidball defines it as the process by which the activities, values, experiences and relationships of the (religious) group become formalized and stabilized so that relatively predictable behaviour and more rigid organizational structures emerge. It is the name for the way in which free spontaneous and living (Church) movements become structured and inflexible.

Inflexibility is the characteristic of an old wineskin. New wine must be poured into new wineskins. New wineskins can become old wineskins quickly after the death of the founding leaders. This has happened to almost every movement in the past. It will continue to happen unless a group can identify and raise up emerging apostles to replace the founding apostles. When the founding leaders are replaced by bishops and administrators (governments in 1 Cor.12:28) the emphasis is on maintaining instead of advancing. The movement becomes less open to new ideas and revelation. It ceases to be a movement and becomes a monument.

And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, and those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. (1 Cor. 12:28 , NIV).

The NIV translates the Greek word *kubernesis* as "those with the gift of administration." The Kings James version uses the term governments. The gift of administration is a very important gift to the success of any church. It is not however set in the church first by God. In other words it is not intended to be the dominant anointing of the church. When the administrative gifts becomes the dominant gift the priorities of the organization become administrative instead of pioneering and advancing. The administrative gift cannot replace the apostolic gifts at the helm of the church. David Cartledge states "Where apostolic ministries are not in the church, or accessed by it, those without a ministry Gift will attempt to lead or govern the Church. The end result of this is a man-made bureaucracy. It becomes merely a democratic administration instead of a theocracy. The usual effect is the utilization of control mechanisms rather than modeled leadership...The attitudes of most denominations towards apostolic

leadership have tended to squeeze such gifted ministries out of their local churches. The resisted or rejected apostolic ministries have either formed independent churches, or movements that functioned without democratic or denominational restraint.”

There are many bishops who are apostles. There are also many apostles who have administrative abilities. This book is not intended to oppose leaders with genuine gifts and callings. I personally have many friends who identify themselves as bishops and yet they know they are apostles. My only desire is to remove any confusion or tradition that would hinder the many apostles that are emerging around the world. Many of these emerging apostles are in denominations that are more administrative than apostolic. The lack of movement in many organizations has frustrated many emerging apostles. Many apostles end up leaving groups that they love in order to fulfill their ministries.

I believe that God always provides the gifts that we need in order to fulfill our destinies. It is not the will of God that movements start out with great power and momentum only to shrivel up and die after one generation. The apostolic gift is the key to continuous advancement and momentum. There is always another generation of apostles that should be in position to replace the founding apostles. When an organization or church becomes administrative at the expense of being apostolic, apostolic gifts are often choked out. This is because apostolic gifts tend to be progressive, pioneering, and advancing for many organizations. Some would identify this as rebellion, but usually it is a desire to keep the group moving forward and walking in present truth.

This is unfortunate because the very gifts that churches need to advance are usually lost due to the organizational constraints placed upon them. This happened in the early church when bishops replaced apostles. The church became more ceremonial and traditional. The apostolic power and grace of the church in the book of Acts was lost. The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century began to change this. The Reformers however failed to restore the proper role of the apostle. Many Reformation churches kept the Episcopal (bishops) form of government. We are now seeing the restoration of apostles to their proper role in the church.

APOSTLES ORDAIN BISHOPS

The third chapter of First Timothy gives the qualifications of bishops (overseers, elders). Paul is giving apostolic instruction to Timothy concerning the government of the local church. Timothy is functioning as an apostle (1 Thess. 1:1 & 2:6). Apostles are responsible for the oversight and setting of leaders in local churches. The traditional concept of bishops being over groups of churches is really an apostolic function. The teaching that bishops replaced apostles removes the role of current apostles from the church.

Some have taught that the bishop is the highest office in the church. This is not true. God has set apostles first in the church. No amount of scriptural wrangling can remove them from this position in the church. Apostles ordain and set bishops (overseers, elders) in the church. Titus was sent by Paul to ordain elders (bishops, overseers) in the church at Crete (Titus 1:5). Paul and Barnabas appointed elders (bishops, overseers) in the churches they established (Acts 14:23). Roger Sapp states “We must recover the scriptural understanding of the apostle and the overseer, and for the sake of the Church put away the unscriptural ministry and the title of bishop. It is evident from a simple look at these passages that all or at least the vast majority of those Christian leaders who have accepted the title of bishop did not receive it from apostolic ministry and have accepted a role that usurps the role of the apostle. For present-day bishops to

acknowledge this error to the churches that respect them will be difficult, but necessary, to make room for apostolic ministry to come forth. Otherwise, the “old wineskin” will not be suitable to hold the “new wine” of the Spirit that will be poured out in the days preceding the coming of the Lord. In some cases, it will not be difficult for the man of God to dispense with this title and to instruct those who look to him for leadership about the apostolic ministry over a short time. It will be for him a question of humility and love for the truth. In other cases, due to long tradition it may not be possible to do so without serious difficulties. In any case, the Lord will grant His servant grace to embrace the truth.

FIRST APOSTLES / LAST APOSTLES

God has set in the church first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers...(1 Cor.12:28)

For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. (1 Cor.4:9)

The apostle’s ministry is the highest ranking ministry in the church. This does not mean that an apostle has jurisdiction over every church. There are different apostles who have different spheres of influence. Apostles have different geographical regions to which they are set and sent.

Although apostles are set in the church “first”, they are often treated as “last”. The rise of bishops to positions of prominence in the church coincided with the state’s recognition of the church. Bishops often became more powerful than natural rulers. This began when the Roman Emperor Constantine recognized Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire. The bishop’s office eventually became a position of power and prominence.

Some leaders like the use of the term bishop because it is recognized by the world. Apostles have always been persecuted and hated by the world’s system. They know what it means to suffer and be treated as “last”. Many leaders are afraid to walk in true apostolic ministry because they fear rejection and persecution. Many desire honor from men rather than honor from God. Some religious leaders even receive titles such as “His Eminence”, or “His Holiness”. How disgusting this must be to God because it is a manifestation of pride and arrogance. We should not think of men above that which is written (1 Cor.4:6).

Many leaders don’t like the idea of being treated “last”. Many desire to be treated “first”. Being treated “last” is hard on the flesh. The flesh hates suffering, rejection, and persecution. The flesh loves flattering titles. Leaders must be aware of the subtle trap of religious pride. True believers and ministries cannot avoid suffering and persecution, especially apostolic ministries who minister in power and authority.

There are many leaders today who refer to themselves as bishops that are apostles. Many are aware of it, some are not aware. The word bishop means an overseer. The word apostle has a much broader definition and broader function. Apostles provide oversight to churches. They are also elders. The word apostle is a transliteration of the Greek word apostolos meaning “one sent forth”. A sent one has a variety of functions and duties including overseeing, planting, watering, encouraging, correcting, judging, activating, imparting, demonstrating, establishing, pioneering, mobilizing, teaching, preaching, and ordaining. Leaders who are apostles cannot limit themselves to managerial duties, but must fully express the grace that is upon the apostolic office. The same thing is true of many pastors. Pastors who are apostles need to recognize this gift and walk in it fully. Pastors cannot allow fear and tradition to hold them back. God has not

set in the church first pastors , but first apostles. This is an order of ministry for the local church. Paul wrote to a local church when revealing God's order of ministry.

Some will maintain that terms are not important. Terms and words are very important. Words have definitions. Words shape our way of thinking. Apostles cannot think like pastors. Apostles must think and act like apostles. Our lack of understanding of gifts and ministries can hinder us from walking in the fullness of God's grace. We are not to be ignorant of spiritual gifts (1 Cor.12:1).

THE STRATEGY OF JESUS AND EMERGING APOSTLES

Jesus ordained twelve that they might be with him. Many have looked at the strategy of Jesus as a one time historical event. Jesus is however our perfect example. He is the apostle of our profession. He is the perfect sent one. His methods and strategies reflect the wisdom of an apostle.

Jesus did not raise up twelve pastors, evangelists or bishops. He raised up twelve apostles. Is this a one time event or a model that modern apostles need to have? One of the failures of many apostles has been the failure to raise up emerging apostles. Many apostles raise up pastors to shepherd the churches that are birthed through their movements. This is not the wisdom of God for several reasons. The first reason is that the next generation of leaders also will need an apostolic anointing to continue in the momentum of the founding apostle. Jesus raised up leaders that would carry his message and penetrate to the uttermost parts of the world. Apostles have the ability to breakthrough and expand the movement begun by the founder.

God will place emerging apostles around a founding apostle. It is up to the founding apostle to discern who they are and mentor them. The failure to do so often causes the next generation to replace the apostle's leadership with managers and administrators. Some fellowships resort to voting in order to replace leaders. Without emerging apostles the fellowship is not in a position to advance and progress. The apostolic gifts in a church need to be recognized, encouraged, and released. This is the strategy of Jesus and it should be our strategy today.

Joshua is a type of an emerging apostle. The Lord told Moses to encourage him. Emerging apostles need to be encouraged. They need spiritual fathers who will mentor and train them. There are many emerging apostles in the church today. They cannot be locked into managerial positions that limit their anointings. They need to be released fully.

Timothy and Titus were emerging apostles who were trained by Paul. Emerging apostles will often be a part of the apostolic team. They will travel with an apostle and learn firsthand apostolic ministry. They will be a part of planting and establishing churches as well as ordaining ministers. Their gifts will take time to fully come forth, but through patience and maturity these gifts will be able to fully manifest.

When leaders step fully into apostolic callings, many emerging apostles will have a model to follow. Ministers will follow the models set before them. If all ministers see are bishops and pastors, this is all many will aspire to become. If they see apostles and prophets honored and received in the church, they will have a New Testament model before them. We are responsible for what we model before emerging ministries. Paul encouraged the church to follow him as he followed Christ. Paul presented a true apostolic model before the churches. He exposed false apostles and modeled the true.

We cannot afford to present old religious models before the church. Traditional models will not suffice. The church is built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets (Eph.2:20). It is not built upon the foundation of bishops and pastors. This is not to say we don't need bishops (elders , overseers) and pastors. It simply means these are not foundational ministries. They are not the primary ministries of the church. When we replace foundational ministries with ministries that are not foundational, the church is in trouble.

Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) Gal:1:1

Paul always identified himself as an apostle. He never referred to himself as a bishop. Apostles are called and sent by Jesus. Bishops are appointed and set by apostles. Paul knew his calling and setting was not by man. He understood the authority of his calling was given directly by the Lord. When he corrected churches he did it based on his apostolic authority. His authority came from God and not from the church. Bishops that are set in their positions by the church are accountable to the churches that elect or appoint them. How can leaders walk in the necessary authority without the authority coming from God?

This is one of the reasons many organizations have a problem with apostles. Apostles operate in a level of power and authority that make many uncomfortable. Bishops who are apostles also walk in authority, but this authority comes from their apostolic grace. Apostles have the authority of a "sent one". They have ambassadorial authority. Authority is a distinct mark of the apostle's ministry. This authority is recognized in the spirit realm. Angels and demons recognize this authority. This authority registers in the spirits of people. Apostles are first in time, order, and rank.

Many organizations and denominations will have a hard time embracing the order of apostolic ministry because it is a threat to a pyramid type of leadership structure. When emerging apostles are raised up and released they will in turn raise up and release emerging ministries. This is a threat to control mechanisms that are set in place in many structures. Mature spiritual sons will raise up sons and daughters. There is a greater release of gifts and ministries when apostles are in place. Many emerging apostles will develop their own networks and spheres of influence.

THE DEPARTURE OF APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:29-30)

Paul warned the church what would happen after his departure. Evidently the enemy could not do these things while he was present. The apostolic anointing provides a restraining influence to division and false ministry. The church is always susceptible to these attacks when the apostolic mantle departs. This happened historically with the death of the early apostles. The church drifted into tradition, ceremonialism, and heresy. This is the reason why the apostle's ministry is so needed in the church.

And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. (Exod.32:1)

Moses is a type of an apostle. The people began to rebel when he departed from the camp. His presence provided a restraining influence. This is what happens when strong leadership departs. People need strong leaders. The church needs the apostolic anointing to be present. The devil will do anything in his power to remove this ministry from the church. If there are no emerging apostles to replace the founding apostle, the church tends to choose leaders after the flesh. Every Moses needs a Joshua. Every Elijah needs an Elisha. Every Paul needs a Timothy. The church cannot afford to have a void in apostolic leadership.

Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them.

And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. (2 Chron.24:17-18)

Jehoiada the priest mentored and trained the young king. He was a father to the king. He is a type of an apostolic ministry. His death marked the beginning of a spiritual decline for the nation. The princes of Judah came to the king and enticed him to disobey after Jehoiada's departure. Jehoiada's presence was a restraining influence to the powers of darkness. The apostolic ministry has the power to bind. This is another reason why the devil hates this ministry. He wants it to die in the church. He has influenced the church to believe that the apostle's ministry ceased after the death of the twelve.

The devil has always hated and feared the apostle's ministry. It is the most misunderstood and persecuted ministry in the church. The enemy has successfully removed this ministry in its fullness from the church through tradition and false teaching. The major lie the enemy influenced the church to accept was that bishops replaced apostles. The enemy effectively stole the role of the apostle from the church. Thank God we are presently seeing a restoration.

This is why it has been necessary to view what happened in church history after the death of the early apostles. There is always a danger when apostolic ministry departs from the church. Paul warned of wolves entering the flock. The Corinthian church became divided and sectarian after Paul's departure. The schisms in the Corinthian church were probably due to the fact that there were no strong apostolic leaders present in the church. Churches are more unified when the apostolic anointing is present. Without apostles the church is susceptible to the influence of spirit of division and carnality.

Also he made a molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof; and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about.

And under it was the similitude of oxen, three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east: and the sea was set above upon them, and all their hinder parts were inward.

(2 Chron.4:2-4),

The molten (brazen) sea was a type of the cleansing power of the word. It was the basin of water that the priests washed in before they ministered in the tabernacle. It is also a type of the apostle's ministry. It rested upon a foundation of twelve oxen. Twelve is the number of government and the apostolic ministry. Oxen represent the laboring aspect of the apostolic ministry. The oxen faced every direction representing the apostles going into all the world. The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The enemy desires to remove this foundation from the church.

And king Ahaz cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them; and took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones. (2 Kings 16:17)

King Ahaz removed the molten sea from its proper foundation. It placed it upon a pavement of stones. This is what the enemy did to the church. Church tradition has removed the church from its apostolic foundation. When apostles and prophets are not operating in the church, the church is not standing on its proper foundation. One of the ways the enemy did this is by influencing the church to believe that bishops replaced apostles. The church is not built upon the foundation of bishops, but apostles.

John Tetsola makes the important point that the church should be a non-clerical family. The separation of clergy and laity has brought much damage to the church. Bishops are sometimes referred to as “high clergy”, while those ministers under them as “low clergy”. Tetsola states “the local church is a non-clerical family. The early church was a people’s movement. The distinguishing mark of Christianity was not found in a clerical hierarchy, but in the fact that God’s Spirit came to dwell within ordinary, common people and that through them the Spirit manifested Jesus’ life to the believing community and to the world”.

With the institution of the clergy came a distinction in dress. Robes, collars, colors, staffs, and rings become the dress of bishops. Clerical dress became mandatory for those ordained as bishops. We are seeing a revival of this kind of wear among Pentecostal and Charismatic leaders who identify themselves as bishops. This is totally foreign to the early apostolic church. When the church becomes clerical it loses the simplicity that the early apostles desired. The result is a religious caste system that elevates men to positions of power and prominence that is dangerous and carnal.

Apostles are given for the perfecting of the saints. They are one of the five ministries given for this purpose. Apostles are called to activate believers to do the works of Jesus Christ. They are anointed to impart and stir up the gifts inside of the believers. Their position is not one of fleshly prominence. They are usually treated “last”. They are driven and motivated by a commission, not by worldly fame and power. They are not clerical. In other words they do not represent some priestly order inside the church. They know that all believers are priests.

The church must be careful not to revert back to clericalism. The reformers challenged this concept and brought reformation by exposing it as a false system. Clerical terminology can hinder the church from being a non-clerical family. The division of the church into clergy and laity causes the saints to invest the majority of ministry into the hands of a few. The five-fold ministry is given to “perfect the saints for the work of the ministry”.

RESTORATION

We are presently living in a time of restoration. The Lord is restoring the order of apostolic ministry to the church. With restoration comes reformation. Adjustments and alignment to the truth is necessary in order to receive the new wine that is being released. Religious tradition is being challenged. The church is returning to New Testament terminology and truth.

Many leaders are beginning to embrace their true callings and ministries. They are being loosed from fear and tradition that has hindered them from walking in the higher callings. It is important that true apostles understand their function in order to release their gifts fully to the church. Apostles are more than bishops (overseers). They have a unique anointing to advance

the church. Apostles must be free to minister in the church. They cannot be limited by false teachings and governmental structures that are not biblical. The truth will set us free.

God is also restoring prophets to their governmental positions in the church. This will not fully happen until apostles take their place. Religion and tradition has always been a hindrance to the release of the gifts of the Spirit. Apostles have the ability to activate the gifts through impartation and the prophetic word. With the restoration of apostles and prophets will come the greatest release of the power of God. We must study to shew ourselves approved unto God. Ignorance will no longer be an excuse. God is opening his word and causing us to know his secrets. We are stewards of the mysteries of God.

The new leaders the Lord is releasing must shed the old religious garments of the past. We cannot sew a new piece of cloth on an old garment. The new anointing that God is releasing will not work with an old mentality. Remember words represent concepts and ideas. The way we think is governed by our vocabulary. We must renew our minds according to the word of God in order to receive what God is releasing from heaven. Holding on to the old while trying to receive the new will not work. We cannot put new wine into old bottles.