

THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

(Writings from a personal journey)



I am convinced before the Lord today, that more than ever we need a fresh release of the equipping ministries. Too few have been 'doing the ministry', when everyone is graced to serve (see Eph.4:7, Rom.12:6; 1 Pt.4:10). It is only when each one is equipped and empowered (raised up), that the church will move on victoriously being prepared for the Second coming of Jesus, and indeed living for Jesus in these End Times. Included in these 'equipping' ministries are the apostolic and prophetic. People today do not have a problem with evangelists, pastors and teachers but some do with the former. However, I am convinced by Scripture as well as my journey that not only do apostolic and prophetic ministries still function, but the need is great for the 'true', called by God to rise up, and build, & rebuild upon the true foundations, Jesus Christ and Him crucified (see 1 Cor.3:10 cf. 2:2-5), as well as walking powerfully in obedience to God (see Mt.7:21-24). I believe that just as Elijah was 'prepared' over a 3½ year period (see 1 Kgs.17 – note also that the disciples were too), that people have been going through trials, deserts, wildernesses etc in preparation for these important ministries just like David & Joseph were for theirs. Now, in words that echo Scripture, "the King has need of thee" (Gen.41:14). These writings as I have reflected are primarily focussed on the apostolic ministry, and the need of it today.

The apostolic ministry, like the prophetic is a building ministry. The original apostles and prophets were foundational as they brought us the written Word of God, as well as saw the building of the early church (1 Cor.3:10) etc, and indeed are the foundation of what is to come (Rev.21:14). But with any new house that is built (i.e. a new Christian, and churches, movements etc.), there is a need for a foundation to be laid, and the apostolic & prophetic ministries are key to this – see 1 Cor.3:10. I've heard people say "Oh, Pastors can do all that". Well I disagree, because it has to do with the grace of God and God's authority resting on certain individuals for certain tasks. But also, did you ever stop to think that some people who we call 'pastors' today, might have an apostolic, prophetic or even evangelistic ministry? Some would say today that only those who plant churches and start new ministries have an apostolic calling, but I would challenge that and will do in these writings. As we move on, I would like to state the following:

With the state that the church is in today, we need people graced and empowered by God to help align (re), build (re) and firm up the foundations. We need people who are willing to pay any cost to build into people's lives that they would follow Christ wholeheartedly. We need people who are self-less and instead gives their lives to equip the saints for the building up of the church and the glory of God. We need people who have a burden from God placed on their hearts.

The apostolic ministry from a Biblical perspective sees a burden placed on the hearts of those with an apostolic call. This however is not what 'some' try to manipulate today in the flesh to do with covering, form or control, which has caused much hurt in the Body. (However, I am convinced that it seems that the 'Sauls' have to come before the 'Davids', it is necessary so they can be moulded and learn etc. just like David did). The apostolic ministry burden is not about coming 'under' someone's leadership / headship, we are all under Christ's! Nor is it about bringing the church into a certain form, although certainly change from the heart, indeed a returning to living as God's people needs to happen, and this will ultimately change the way we 'do' church. The new wine necessitates a new wineskin (Mt.9:17). **But, the burden above all else, is to see Christ formed within His people – IN HIS FULLNESS.** Paul declared in Galatians 4:19 that "I am

again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!” The burden continues as it’s also to see the church (God’s people) in an intimate relationship with Jesus Himself. 2 Cor.11:2 reads, *“I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him”*. There is a big difference between the false and true apostolic burdens and indeed ministries, one is Christ-centred, the other is man-centred. One is all about Jesus, and equipping people to follow Him, the other is all about man or a movement and getting people to follow them. The natural extension of this apostolic burden is to see the disciples of Christ, walk as He did & indeed to carry on the ministry of Jesus! More about that later.

We must realise that we are not changed by programs, nor by looking at ourselves, but only as we behold the Lord. *“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit”* (2 Cor.3:18 ESV). This burden is at the heart of one who has an apostolic (sent & empowered by God) ministry. Apostolic ministry is a foundational ministry, and a building ministry, and although they are not the original 12 who are the ‘Foundational Apostles’ (Rev.21:14), this essential ministry has not ceased because it is still imperative and foundational, that Christ is formed within His people today. This is an ongoing foundational ministry which is laid in people’s lives, which will see them on the journey to maturity, a disciple of Christ (the only follower to which the Bible speaks of salvation – see Lk.14:27, 33; Mt.7:21-24). Jesus is Lord of all, and true disciples both in Biblical times and throughout history were taught, and walked in this truth. This message is all encompassing, as this has always required people to follow Jesus day by day, in every place, in every situation, Jesus as their all, and the same is needed in every believers life today!

The Great Commission, the mandate given by Jesus needs to be central to the church’s mindset today. Decades ago, the church was at the centre of society and people (even if nominal), came to church and thus Pastors and Teachers became the main focus as the need arose. But now, with the church on the fringes, we need also the apostolic, prophetic and evangelistic ministries to help move the church on to a more missional outlook once again. The foundation of the Great Commission is that all authority has been given to Jesus in both heaven and earth (see Mt.28:16-20). We can never fulfil the Great Commission by just proclaiming Jesus as Saviour; He must be Lord of all, otherwise He is not lord at all. Jesus is the key to it all. We cannot say we want Him to be our Saviour and not Lord, nor His Spirit, or His gifts etc. We are to *“grow up in all aspects into Him”* Eph.4:15. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth *“the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, so that you are not lacking any gift”* 1 Cor.1:6-7. All authority, all aspects, all is the key word. We are to love Him with *“all our heart”* (Mt.22:37). This is why we need all ministries operating in the church today, not just pastoral for example, for only as the ministries function together side by side, can the people of God be properly equipped and empowered in all aspects and the Great Commission itself fulfilled as we await the coming of Christ.

Eph.4:11-16 says..

“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 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 fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the

whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” (NASB)

It's time for the people of God to be equipped, empowered, raised up, and sent as mature, Spirit-filled disciples of Christ. This is the call of all leaders, not to do the ministry, but to give their lives for the benefit of others, which in turn is to the Kingdom, and the King! We are to *“look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others”*, just as Christ did (Phil.2:4; 1 Jn.3:16). People with an apostolic ministry / calling, have a sending and outward looking missional & Kingdom mindset (compared to pastoral being more inward). It's not about them, nor their 'followers', or ministries, or even the local church, but about Jesus, and His Kingdom and His people being all they are meant to be in Christ. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth *“What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow”* 1 Cor.3:5-7. It's always about the Lord! In the words of John the Baptist *“I must decrease, that He may increase”* John 3:30.

In saying this though, in order to go onto a fuller maturity, we need to move beyond who we are in Christ, to who Christ is in us! The message that was spoken and seen through the early church as I've said before was, 'Jesus is Lord'. The apostolic burden was not to just get people into the church, but to see Jesus formed in them and to see His Name made a glory and a wonder in the earth. After all, we are commanded to make disciples, not converts, who obey all that Jesus commanded. True evangelism is not founded on a love for the lost as much as a love for the Saviour. The apostles taught all that they had learnt from Jesus, not with a man-centred message, but a Christ-centred one! When Jesus is lifted up, not our churches or doctrines, but Jesus, then people will be drawn. To lift Him up, our attention must always be upon Him. True, mature Christianity is a journey to intimate fellowship with our Father, through Jesus and the continuing work of the Spirit. It was our fellowship that was so tragically lost at the fall, and what desperately needs to be restored today. Our chief call as individuals and indeed the church (the people of God), is to 'be a dwelling place of God'. We are the temple (1 Cor.3:16, 6:19), the dwelling place of God, not a building. Isaiah 66:1-2 *“This is what the LORD says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD”*. 2 Corinthians 6:16 *“We are the temple of the living God”*.

Apostolic ministry is especially devoted to seeing the church become the temple of the Lord. The apostles taught from a place of intimacy, teaching all that Jesus had taught them, and this is the need today. Again 2 Cor.3:18 *“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit”*. Our flesh is the veil, and when we are born again we begin to see the Kingdom of God because we are spiritually circumcised. The flesh must be cut away so we can see Him. A key to remember is that **we do no change so we can have fellowship with Him, we are changed by our fellowship with Him.**

I read *“Caesar sought to change men by changing institutions. Jesus changed institutions by changing men.”* For example, when we look at the early church we see they had community (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35 etc), and met from house to house because they had life, not in order to get it. They became the force that they were because the church was not their pattern for their church life – Jesus was the pattern. They were not following a formula or a form, but a Person. And this

is at the heart of true biblical apostolic ministry. Helping people to follow Jesus in all the fullness of a disciple. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and it's interesting to note once again, that the early disciples / Christians didn't start a program of 'meeting together' daily to get life. They had life (the life of Jesus in them by the Spirit), and thus desired to meet together, it was a natural flow on. This is why I believe that as Christ is formed in people, the structures (wineskin) of the church will need to change.

Jesus must always be the focus of our ministry and indeed the church, the people of God, if we are to be truly an apostolic 'sent' people. The Lord's emphasis, and indeed the apostolic emphasis was devoted to changing the heart, not just the institution. When our hearts are changed, institutions either give way to the Spirit or burst like old wineskins. As said previously, the early church had community and met from house to house because they had life, not in order to get it. The church is not the pattern for the church – JESUS IS! The church does need order and form, but when form becomes the primary emphasis, there is almost always a falling away from the grace that can only come from abiding in the Lord Himself.

In closing, Jesus was the only One who could fulfil all ministries, He is the fullness of God, the truly Perfect One! But today we see that in this in between time, between His ascension and Second Coming, He has given people as gifts to the church to help them grow up into maturity (see Eph.4:7-16). These people are to sacrificially serve together for the betterment of the people of God – to see His Kingdom come and His will be done, and all for His glory!! The world needs just one person, and that is JESUS. They don't need another church, another program or method etc, just Jesus. I am convinced that we need more of God and less of us, and the apostolic ministry is one amongst others that will help build this into our lives. It is my prayer that we would be filled with the presence of the Lord in such a way that people would come and say "Surely God is among you".

There is much more that could be said (*E.g. The apostolic ministry is an empowering ministry & is a ministry that serves together with APEPT, equipping, building, raising up and sending. Just like Apostle means 'Sent one', the apostolic ministry with a missional mindset, sends others. This ministry is truly like the role of a Coach in a sporting team. The coach equips, aligns and motivates the players to be the best they can be as a team, he is no greater than the players, it is just his role within the team*), but simply, it's important to see all the gifts operating in the church today. It is imperative that we allow people graced by God to build into our lives as the apostolic and prophetic ministry does. True apostolic and prophetic ministry which is empowered by the Spirit, always, always, points people to Jesus, for after all – IT'S ALL ABOUT HIM! After reading all we have, and seeing the burden on the hearts of those with apostolic gifting, if there is one way to measure the fruitfulness of an apostolic ministry it would be by the manifest presence of the Lord in the church. Is the church abiding in Him so that He can manifest Himself through us? We must always keep in mind that we do not change to have fellowship with the Lord, but that we are changed by our fellowship with Him. This fellowship was only made possible by the Cross. We can never enter the Lord's presence by our own merit, but only through the Blood of Christ. Can I leave you with these verses!

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God" Heb.10:19-22a.