

Monday 15 September 2008

JESUS OUR APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST

In a recent vision I saw the Lord Jesus carrying something precious in His hands. On closer inspection I noted it was the word '*apostolos*'. As Jesus walked away from me I was able to see the same word etched into the linen garment He was wearing. The word *apostolos* had the appearance of being charred as though it had been literally burned into His garment. The word *apostolos* that Jesus carried emanated fire yet the fire did not consume it.

Apostolos is translated in Greek to mean 'apostle'. The Strong's Concordance states: a delegate; spec. an ambassador of the Gospel, officially a commissioner of Christ ["apostle"] (with miraculous powers):- apostle, messenger, he that is sent.

As a "sent one" an apostle is appointed i.e. called by God to walk in the "office" of apostle. The office of apostle is both a kingly and priestly role in which a person is set apart i.e. anointed by the Holy Spirit to serve in apostolic priestly duties and is authorised and commissioned to function as an apostolic minister. Apostolic duty has a priority to minister first unto the Lord, and thereafter to minister in word and in prayer. Apostles are authorised to preach (*1 Cor 1:17*); authorised to be ambassadors for Christ (*2 Cor 5:20; Eph 6:20*); to be witnesses to all nations (*Lk 24:48*) and to make disciples of all peoples (*Matt 28:19*). Apostles are radical lovers of Jesus Christ who understand they have been entrusted with a precious, holy aspect of Christ's own nature and have been imputed with a measure of His grace to fulfil this high calling (*Eph 3:2*).

THE LAMB OF GOD - THE BURNT OFFERING

The Lord instructed the Israelites that the fire on the altar had to be kept burning and that it must never go out (*Leviticus 6:12*). The writer of Hebrews describes the Lord Jesus as our Apostle and High Priest (*Hebrews 3:1*) who became the sacrificial Lamb of God, the spotless, blameless burnt offering who atoned for the sins of mankind. *"Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am it is written about me in the scroll - I have come to do your will O God.'" Heb 10:6-7*

The vision revealed the Lord in the role of High Priest and Apostle. Jesus carried the ministry of apostleship at the same time as being marked as an Apostle. The mantle of apostle was upon His back and speaks of the weight of authority of the office of apostle thus the vision also reveals the Kingly ambassadorial aspect of apostleship. The office of apostle is a high calling and one that is brought forth in a baptism of sacrifice and obedience to Father. As Jesus prepared to go to the Cross His back was torn wide open when He was lashed for our iniquity; He carried the mantle of apostle as He bled on the Cross as the Saviour of the world. In His body Christ released the apostolic office as a gift to the world; the office of apostle brings forth

Christ in His body to reach the world. All apostleship finds its meaning in Jesus the Apostle, sent by God to be the Saviour of the world (*1 John 4:14*).

A MODERN DAY MOVEMENT OF APOSTLES - BURNING SIGN POSTS OF GOD'S LOVE

In the vision the Lord moved forward holding the office of apostle in His hands as it burned with holy fire. The action of moving forward speaks of ongoing momentum and continuous movement. Contrary to some cessationist teaching, Jesus reaffirmed by this simple vision that the office of apostle has not ceased but continues on because of His sacrifice at Calvary. The office of apostle is current, consecrated and to be celebrated by the church, Christ's body. The Lord paid a high price for our salvation and this embraces the five governmental aspects of His mantle imparted to the church when Christ ascended to the Father's right hand. (*Ephesians 4:11*). The church needs apostles to keep her moving forward in the plans and purposes of God. Apostles lay foundations on which others are then able to build upon to fulfil their Kingdom destinies; apostles help to father/mother movements and mobilise believers in the nations. Apostles have grace and favour to gather and assemble under the unction of Holy Spirit with the purpose of revealing Christ and advancing the Kingdom of God on earth. There are certain divinely inspired legislative strategies and heavenly agendas that can and will only be released and completed when the church receives the ministry of the apostle.

In the vision the word *apostolos* burned with holy fire that did not consume it. We understand from Scripture that God's fire consumes all that is unholy, and we note the office of apostle survived the baptism of fire and remained intact. This speaks volumes to us of the sanctified nature of apostolic calling, and the requirement to walk God-ward in tenacious humility and God reliance for those who are called to walk in apostleship. Fire purifies and apostles often undergo intense preparation in order to be made ready to carry and administrate the responsibilities entrusted with this mercy-endowed consecrated office. There are many modern day apostles who have been in "hiding" i.e. being prepared to be sent forth for such a time as this. I believe that the Lord is releasing grace on the mantle of apostle in this hour and a new apostolic movement is coming forth on the earth in obedience to Christ's call.

Whilst the Bible teaches us that the ministry of a bona fide apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ is marked with "*signs, wonders and miracles*" (*2 Cor 12:12*) the most poignant of all truths is that genuine Christ-appointed apostles are not concerned with putting on a "show" or seeking after signs, fame or the accolade of men for their lives are hidden in Christ and they themselves are burning sign posts of Christ's radical love to the world. It is also important for us to realise that in the early stages of an apostle's walk the signs and wonders may not yet be obvious to see. Signs, wonders and miracles point to apostolic authority, whilst the fruit of the apostle's ministry is evidenced upon the hearts of those whom he/she serves as a father/mother in the faith.

ALPHA AND OMEGA

The vision showed Jesus in the 'first place' as Apostle (going forward with the apostolic anointing) and also revealed Christ in the 'last place' as Apostle. Each of these aspects point to the Lord as Alpha and Omega and further embraces the aspects of Christ's servant Kingship. The apostolic ministry is a pioneering "kingly" type of ministry that opens up new territory for the Gospel message and in this manner it is 'first and last' being willing to embrace all aspects of taking up one's cross, even laying down one's life unto martyrdom. Apostolic ministry has to be unflinching in its commitment to being ground-breaking so that Gospel seeds can be planted, nurtured and grown to maturity in the hearts of men, women and children throughout the world.

In relation to the kingly i.e. ruling aspect of apostleship it is important to note that apostles have a God-assigned sphere of influence, "*We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you.*" (2 Cor 10:13) Notwithstanding the apostolic mandate is unceasing in its desire to open up unchartered territory for the glory of God, "*Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in another man's territory.*" (2 Cor 10:15, 16)

APOSTOLIC PARADIGM

The apostolic ministry is 'first' in governmental office according to 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11, meaning that tremendous God-given authority and compassion has been entrusted to those called as apostles. This is not a hierarchical ministry but one that seeks to serve in anointed leadership. Apostles are trained by the Holy Spirit to be uncompromising in Christ-like values and vision. Ephesians 4 reveals God's heart for the five-fold ministry offices to work in unity, "*There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all,*" so that the church may attain the full measure of the stature of Christ. With the continued emergence of end-time apostles the global church will experience a paradigm shift in leadership models/trends and will become increasingly apostolic in function, ministry and nature.

The things that are placed in the Lord's hands are to be considered precious and when God breathes upon them they are multiplied as manna for the nations. The gifts that flow from the hands of Christ are sanctified for works, witness, and worship and walking with Him. In this instance the hands of our Saviour held the office of apostle. Apostolic ministry is a gift to the body of Christ and when the church receives apostles there will be acceleration of Kingdom activity including church planting, building up the body of Christ, receiving revelatory strategy and heavenly blue prints along with an ability to wage spiritual warfare at cross-continental level in apostolic intercession.

ORDAINED BY GOD

Governmental aspects of leadership enable the church to rule and reign to full effectiveness as Christ's ambassadors on the earth. Without government a nation would quickly descend into anarchy with order being overtaken by chaos. In like manner, God in His wisdom has decreed that His government should be carried on the shoulders of apostles alongside the other ascension gifts of prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. Elders, deacons and bishops also help to carry the responsibility of governance in local congregations. As a forerunner ministry (another aspect of being "first") apostleship is a gift of God's grace to the church to enable her to reign/serve and mature in sonship. Apostolic authority is given by God to protect His sheep and provide Fatherly instruction, covering and direction.

All believers are equal before the Lord. However, God has decreed that apostles are first in "rank" (particularly with regard to spiritual warfare). Whilst all believers have authority to cast out devils in the name of Jesus, apostles are anointed and called to high level spiritual warfare. They have rank in governmental execution of the will of God in relation to pioneering into hostile territory, pulling down of enemy strongholds and establishment of the garrison of the Lord's presence (see 2 Cor 4:10)

THE LIGHT OF APOSTLESHIP

Another aspect of fire is that it provides light. In the beginning God said "*Let there be light*" (*Genesis 1:3*) Light brings disclosure and revelation. Jesus said, "*I am the light of the world*" (*John 9*) and went on to heal a man who had been born blind at the pool named Siloam. Siloam means 'sent'. Jesus, the Light of the world was sent by His Father and opened the eyes of a man who could not see. There is a divine connection between being sent and being able to bring fresh revelation of the Father heart of God, His wonder-working power and the things of the Kingdom into clear perception and accessibility. Christ opened eyes that were both physically and spiritually blind. Yet Jesus spoke to the Pharisees of His day and said they were blinded to the truth. Apostolic ministry brings forth the light of revelation and speaks with authority to dismantle religious mindsets and demonic alliances that deny Christ's authority. It opens eyes to see both the God of all creation and the glorious Gospel in a dynamic way. In emulating the Master an apostle is called by lifestyle example and divine calling to be a light to the church and the church likewise is called to be a light to the nations just as Israel is called as light for the Gentiles. Jesus tells us, "*Let your light shine before men.*" (*Matthew 5:16*) The ministry of apostles was made to shine in the darkness so that God might move in creative power and re-align destinies of individuals, communities, churches and nations in accordance with His will and His word.

"Father in humble obedience I pray with apostolic authority for all those called as apostles to come forth in Jesus' name that your church might enter into a fresh dispensation of apostolic grace and favour and all glory be ascribed to your Name. For Jesus sake. Amen."

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