

Ambassadors of Christ The Preparation of Ambassadors Part 1

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In the book of II Corinthians, Paul says in chapter 5, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making His appeal through us." That one statement, II Corinthians 5:20, is an incredible jump forward, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors." An ambassador is a 'sent one', by definition. The Greek word for a sent one is 'apostolos', an apostle. We are therefore sent ones. Now there is a term of art that relates to AN apostle and the general concept that as ambassadors of Christ we are sent ones.

I was amused recently, when traveling in Greece; I came upon the expression 'apostolos'. You know what it means in modern Greek? He's your post man. In fact the word 'post', the root word is 'apostolos'. The post man brings the letter; the post man brings the message, as it were, in written form, between the one who has sent you something in the mail and the recipient, the postman, 'apostolos'. I like that, it somewhat demythologizes a lot of the hype surrounding apostles today. The 'apostolos', the sent ones, is the term for 'ambassador', sent ones.

So the church in the present age is experiencing an upsurge of interest in this apostolic function, sent ones. Naturally, whenever anything new comes forward, comes forth from God; the tendency is to receive the new within the context of the old. We have created a considerable mythology around the whole notion 'apostolic' and 'apostles'. And before we can actually appreciate the fact that we are ambassadors of Christ, sent ones of Christ, apostolic, apostolos, postmen of Christ, delivering the message between heaven and earth; we must get used to a new concept, new to us but old and ancient in terms of the scripture. You see God has always been reaching out to man. From the very beginning, the relationship to God has been one in which God has been imparting, God has been sending, God has been reaching out to man. So it's an adamic reality, it's integral, it's woven into the very fabric of being the sons of God that we would also be apostolic, sent ones.

Now in the governments of the kingdom of God, and God gives gifts, the Holy Spirit

gives gifts of the authority of Christ to man. In that gifting, there's a specific designation of apostles, as opposed to the term 'apostolic'. Apostolic is the nature of all of our goings forth, apostles is that office, that function within the body, that imparts the reality of us being a sent people. So in one sense, the apostolic is the result; apostles are the deploying. Because there are apostles in the church, in the body of Christ, there is a deployment of the body in an apostolic capacity. But to understand both apostles and the apostolic, one must not receive this information within the context of historic church perspectives. Because historic church perspectives have used these terms in any manner that's convenient to the maintaining of the hierarchal structure that in the end denies Christ access to His people. This, I understand, is a stark indictment against the historic church but because of the truth of it, it is startling that so much has been usurped under such false pretenses.

So what I want to do is take a moment and go down the side of this argument that speaks of how the apostolic has been coopted by the historic church and then come back and speak about how the apostolic is being restored to the real church. And I do not believe that the historic church and the real church are one and the same. Now there are many of God's people yet in the historic church, but it's akin to being in a Babylonian system, a system that speaks the language of truth, devoid of the substance of truth.

I understand that I am saying startling things. I do not call attention to the fact that I am saying startling things to be a controversial figure, I have no desire for anything but a quiet life. But it is unmistakable, the debauchery that has engulfed the historic church and I use the term advisedly because there is no defense against that pointing of a clear fact. This is not an accusation against the historic church; it is merely a statement of fact regarding its present condition. And its historic, it didn't just get here overnight. What it did was it usurped the legitimate offices and heaped them up to themselves, heaped them up to the offices of church, and by that distorted the real perspective on the apostolic. So for example, even though the historic church, the ecclesiastical church, will agree that the church is apostolic, its structure defines the apostolic in such a way that fosters and promotes and supports the structure itself rather than the function of the apostolic, which was to release an entire population to being about their destinies and their callings.

Instead, as the church emerged out of Roman persecution, particularly the persecution of the flavian emperors, beginning about the year 81 AD, now there had been persecution before that, the persecution in the reign of Nero, persecution in the reign of Caligula. But the flavian persecution was very structural in the way it attempted to exterminate the Christian faith. But as that persecution progressed, the Christian faith over the nearly 250 years of the flavian persecution, lived and survived and thrived to the point where it nearly overcame the Roman empire by the sheer numbers of people within both eastern and western Roman empires; both eastern and western divisions of the Roman empire. It nearly overwhelmed the Roman Empire, so ultimately it was declared the religion of the

state.

But sometime around the first hundred or so years, right about the time of the dying of, not only the apostles, John being the last of them; but the ones whom the apostles disciplined. Often these people were a bridge to what came to be known as the 'church fathers'. What we began to see was a reinventing of the governance of the church, the church became congregationally based, when the authority of God's kingdom was meant to empower a people, an entire race, or nation, of people in the earth. The government of God, the thing spoken of in the scriptures about the government of God, was never intended for a parish model. The parish model was the lowest breakdown of a structure that saw the church be fundamentally changed from a community within a community, to the citizens of an entire empire being managed and controlled from the level of a parish; geographically rather than relationally.

And out of this arose a distended view of a bishop. You see in the first century the term bishop, 'episcope', was a reference to what the rulers, the leaders of the church, actually did; they bishoped. The word 'bishop' is the word 'overseer', they oversaw. And they did it as a group, they oversaw as a 'presbytery'. That meant there were more persons than one in the office of a bishop. Paul, for example, meets with the overseers of Ephesus in the city of Milpitas and he says to them, "Take heed to the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you 'bishops'." 'Episcopes', 'overseers'. These were the elders of Ephesus with whom he met with in the town of Milpitas. They had traveled over land from the port of Ephesus, on the river meanda, they traveled over land to the city of Milpitas to meet with Paul who was on his way to Rome. When the bishops of Ephesus were also synonymous with the term 'elders' of Ephesus, we begin to understand that the function of overseeing is what's referred to in the word 'episcopes'. And the collection together is what is referred to in the term 'presbeteros'. But the foundational characteristic was how they were older and more mature, so they were 'elders'. And what they oversaw, and what they oversaw as a group, was God's people.

So in that sense they were 'pastors', 'poimen', 'shepherds'. All these terms appear within the same context of Acts 20 when Paul meets with the elders from Ephesus. Elders, bishops, presbytery and shepherds all appear within the one context of Acts 20 when Paul is meeting with the elders from the city of Ephesus. So it wasn't that he was meeting with bishops and presbyters and pastors and elders; he was meeting with a group of shepherds who were overseeing, 'episcopes', God's people as a 'presbytery' and they were older and more mature, so they were 'elders'. The same group had all of these particular designations.

What's amazing is, in church governance, all of these offices and functions were co opted and taken up to the church in the historic church. And the confusion has reigned chaos and exploitation upon the people of God. So now a bishop dresses differently from a

pastor, even though it would be whispered in the sleeve, as it were, that his real function is that of a pastor. But he may be a bishop, or an arch bishop, or a cardinal or even pope and they were called 'pastors'. But the truth is, it's all one and the same thing, it's just which reference are you talking about; like the facets of a diamond, what emphasis are you speaking of. Are you speaking of their function of overseeing? Then you're speaking of the bishoping function. Are you speaking of the job description, poimen? Then you're speaking of shepherd or pastor, the word is exactly the same. In Spanish, the word for shepherd is the word 'pastor'; it's the same Greek word, 'poimen'. 18 times it occurs in the scriptures, 17 of the 18 times it's translated shepherd or shepherds, plural. The one time that it's translated pastor, is not a different meaning than the word shepherd because I point out to you, that if you speak Spanish, if you say the word shepherd, you are saying the word pastor. If I explain to you that the word poimen appears 18 times in the scriptures, if you speak Spanish, I would also have to say to you that all 18 times it is the word pastor because all 18 times it's the word shepherd. Shepherd and pastor are exactly the same word in Spanish, a romance language derived from Greek and Latin.

So what happened was, in order to control the people, control their destinies; the historic church has taken to itself these designations. And they have robed themselves with the authority of the deception, and when you carry it out for 1700 years, people think that's the norm. You know, the shocking thing about listening to what I'm saying, is you can actually understand what I'm saying. And there is no other biblical foundation that someone may use to twist and turn this thing. They simply distorted the government of God when the Romans offered the church the opportunity to be the church of the empire, now, you see, everyone had to be a Christian. So the personal salvation experienced went out the window, no one had to be saved anymore; you were simply born into it.

So the churches functions became increasingly more important. So because you are born into it, the church developed a process of dedication to membership in the church. This matched something of what the Jews did when they recognized someone who was born into a family of the Jewish race. They were in a sense 'dedicated' early in life. This was mirrored by the Christening ceremony, they even use the term 'making them to be like Christ', 'Christened', 'acclimated to the culture of Christ'. So it had made it into cultural Christianity. What does a child at 8 days of age, this was the time of the circumcision, when a male child was circumcised at the age of 8 days, this was brought over and made into the Christening ceremony, making them to be of the race. The Bar mitzvah the Jewish boy went through at the age of 12 that's the age of confirmation; they modeled it after the Jewish model of life based upon the law.

Because once you get away from a personal relationship to Christ, then it's no longer that which designates you as saved; you're simply born into a realm, into families, who are members of the church and ergo you are a member of the church. Therefore you are designated saved and you have to go through these processes to have this matter

established and confirmed. And then you're married into the church and buried when you die, given last rights. You can do all of this without a personal relationship to God, this is an alternative to God. That's why the historic church is filled with people who don't know God, that's why. And it's why it's become secular to the core, because the people don't know how to judge the priests. In fact, how would the people dare judge the priests, cause the priests are the representatives of God? But if you also have a population who simply do not know God, on what basis would they judge the activities of the priests? That's why these guys get away with the shameful conduct that they've gotten away with for so long.

And furthermore, what the church gets to do is to forgive sins. So you don't have to actually repent; repentance would mean a fundamental change of your way of life. But if the church can forgive you and order you to count so many beads, or go and say so many meaningless prayers, rote repetitions. How on earth does that cure the nature of sin in a person? This is not a theology that promotes a relationship to God; it promotes a relationship to the church, that's why they can't be held accountable. It takes the law, ultimately, to hold them accountable for criminal conduct. But even when the law holds them accountable, about all that the church can do is remove them from service. But what about the people themselves? The truth is that they're not saved, there's no nature in them that's different.

So the church has taken on to itself the ambassadorial role of Christ, but I am saying to you, this is all a flagrant misstatement of what is in fact true. You are ambassadors of Christ, you are the sent ones, you are the apostolos, the postmen who deliver the message. That the church has taken that to itself and its officials is fundamentally and biblically illegitimate; it has no basis upon which it may claim this. Its claim that Peter was given the right to do this is false. Peter had a destiny and he was given the authority to fulfill his destiny. When Peter died, Peter had accomplished all that God put him here to accomplish and the power that allowed him to do that lapsed with Peter. What was the power? The power was to open the kingdom to the Jew and the Gentile. Did Peter accomplish that? The answer is, of course he did. First to the Jew on the day of Pentecost, and that's related in Acts 2, and then to the Gentile in Acts 10.

Listen, once the kingdom has been opened to the Jew, once the kingdom was opened to the Gentile, you cannot subsequently open the kingdom for the first time to either the Jew or the Gentile, it was done by the time Peter was done. To say that Peter then created the church and gave to the church the authority to continue his work is false on two counts. Number one, that was not necessary because Peter had finished. And number 2, God never empowers an institution because the fashion of His empowerment is to give the Holy Spirit into a person and the Holy Spirit brings the gifts. There is no possibility of the Holy Spirit, the living presence of God Himself, being able to fellowship with an institution which is a legal fiction. The Spirit must fellowship with spirit, Spirit to spirit.

There's nothing for the Holy Spirit to fellowship with in a church institution. This is false, and men have been held in bondage to this use of authority and what has languished as a result is the true role of the ambassadors Christ. God always intended that ambassadors would be apostolos, sent ones. Not a church office as such, and certainly not a compendium of ideas that the church may dole out, especially for the favors.

So today there is a version of the apostolic in the historic church, but it is so highly controlled that it's doled out as a favor and naturally it comes with some financial attachments. This kind of perception, the perversion of the truth in such base and contemptible ways as these, is exactly why the church today is viewed with such utter contempt by the world. It deserves the contempt that it has, make no mistake this is not the church, this is the harlot that has presented itself as the church. And the time has come when the harlot's garish adornments are being seen as just that, garish adornments unsuitable as the righteousness of the Bride. The Bride herself, however, is arising and the next time I will talk to you about how She is being prepared to be the apostolos of God; to be the one through whom God chooses to work in the world.

You are therefore Christ's ambassadors. YOU are Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through you, individually and collectively. We'll talk about how He prepares you so that He can speak and work through you.

I hope you'll join me the next time for a continuation of this discussion. And visit me on the website, www.soleyn.com. Thank you and God bless you. Bye bye.