

NORMAL CHURCH LIFE

This is a study of New Testament church life, its government and its workers. God is a God of works, "But He answered them, My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working" (Jn. 5:17). And God works through His servants. Among His servants, Apostles ranks FIRST.

THE FIRST APOSTLE

1. God sent forth His Son, the Christ of God or the "anointed one." The Greek word, "Christos" that is translated Christ is from "crio, that is, to rub or smear with oil.

Son relates to His PERSON AND HIS POSITION.

Christ relates to His OFFICE, and that is ministerial.

2. Jesus was not "self-appointed", but was a SENT ONE.

How much more we as His servants need to be sent.

39 times in John, Jesus is declared to be sent by God.

"Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work" (Jn. 4:34).

HIS FOOD!

"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (Jn. 5:30).

HIS SEEKING!

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (Jn. 6:38).

HIS PURPOSE!

3. His workers are sent ones. If there is not any divine commission, there can be no divine work.

"And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was" (Heb. 5:4).

4. The Greek word "Apostolos" translated "Apostle" means to be SENT OUT as an ambassador of Christ or God.

"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as thou God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20).

5. Jesus Christ, the first apostle, was THE APOSTLE.

"Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession" (Heb. 3:1).

THE TWELVE APOSTLES

1. These were chosen, drafted and not volunteers.

"And He said to them (Peter and Andrew), Follow Me (a command), and I will make you fishers of men" (M't. 4:19).

2. The replacement of Judas demonstrates: (Acts 1:21,22).

a. That the number was TWELVE.

b. That one of the qualifications was an association with Jesus from John to the resurrection.

c. And that he was to be a witness of the resurrection of Jesus.

3. The Holy Spirit recognized the selection of Matthias as being one of the twelve.

"And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:26).

"But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven...." (Acts 2:14).

4. The twelve was a fixed number.

"And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. 21:14).

"Having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone" (Eph. 2:20).

"And that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve" (1 Cor. 15:5).

THE APOSTLES IN THE SCRIPTURES

1. THE TWELVE were personal followers and witnesses of the resurrection, therefore, there is a need to differentiate between the twelve and the other apostles.

2. From Pentecost to Acts 13, the original twelve carried the Work.

3. However, Paul and Barnabas, were separated unto a work, and later called apostles.

"And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me (now) Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them"(Acts 13:2).

"But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul..."(Acts 14:14).

4. The Father sent His Son. The Son sent twelve others. The Holy Spirit sent two, and later many others.

THE BODY BUILDING APOSTLES

1. Apollos and the joint-writer, Sosthenes.

"For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men" (1 Cor. 4:9).

"Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes.." (1 Cor. 4:6).

2. Notable ones among the apostles.

"Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me" (Ro. 16:7).

3. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy referred as apostles.

"Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority" (1 Thess. 2:6).

4. John, reputed as being the last of the twelve apostles, instructed the church to test others to see if they were truly apostles.

"I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false" (Rev. 2:2).

THE MEANING OF APOSTLESHIP

1. Apostles, are not primarily people of special gifts, but people of special commission.
2. Spiritual gifts or personal abilities does not constitute one as being an apostle, rather it is God's will, His call. A PERSON SENT FROM GOD!
3. The Latin form of "apostle" is "missionary". Those who are sent out, not by mission boards, but by GOD!

APOSTLES AND THEIR MINISTRY.

"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" (Eph. 4:11-13).

1. Edifying the work of the Lord.
2. Equipping the saints for the work of the ministry.
3. Bringing the church into the unity of the faith and the true knowledge of the Son of God.
4. Not a ONE MAN MINISTRY, nor an ALL MEN MINISTRY.
5. In conclusion, an Apostleship is an office, one who has been commissioned by God on the basis of His grace.

"And for this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (1 Ti. 2:7).

"For which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher" (2 Ti. 1:11).

PASTORS AND TEACHERS

Shepherds and pastors of the church as the same. They are the translation of one Greek word. The term "Elder" is synonymous with Shepherd and Pastor.

"And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church" (Acts 20:17).

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (bishops), to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching" (1 Ti. 5:17).

"...appoint elders in every city as I directed you" (Titus 1:5).

"For the overseer (bishop, elder) must be above reproach as God's steward.." (Titus 1:7).

A shepherd carries a rod for correction, rescue and comfort.

TEACHERS

Teaching is a gift of God's grace.

"And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us...he who teaches.." (Ro. 12:6,7).

Teaching is not a miraculous gift. 1 Cor. 12.

A pastor has a teaching ministry. 1 Ti. 4:6,11; 6:2; 2 Ti. 2:2.

A teacher works more in the area of interpretation rather than revelation, on the other hand, a prophet dwells more on revelation than interpretation.

EVANGELISTS

And evangelist is a messenger of good news.

Philip was called an evangelist.

"And on the next day we departed and came to Caesarea; and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him" (Acts 21:8).

Timothy was told to do the work of an evangelist.

"But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Ti. 4:5).

The work of an evangelist is broader than a pastor, but narrower than an prophet.

The so-called evangelist on the scene today, largely are only travelers with particular gifts of ministry, preaching and music. There is something missing. The church needs to redefine "an evangelist" according to the scriptures. They are people called of God to minister the good news to the sinners, and to be the most effective, they must have one foot in the church and the other in the community. The church does not need anymore travelers, but they do need workers.

Each church should have evangelists working the community daily, bringing in converts, so that they can be trained and matured by the pastors and teachers.

Because of the church's definition of "an evangelists", people think they must sell their homes, remove their community roots, and travel from place to place. If this is not done, then you are not an evangelist according to modern definition. This situation must change!

PROPHET

Remember, you are a prophet by commission as was clearly seen in Eph. 4:11. A gift of God to build up His church. Prophecy is listed as one of the miraculous gifts of 1 Cor. 12. These are things given by the Spirit. One may have the gift of prophecy but not be commissioned as a prophet.

"And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues" (1 Cor. 12:28).

People and things

APOSTLES

They were commissioned to:

1. found churches. Acts 13,14.
2. bring revelation. Acts 10
3. give decisions in doctrines and government. Acts 10
4. edify saints and organize churches. Acts 13,14

An Apostle is an office and not a GIFT!

1. They are appointed.

"And for this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (1 Ti. 2:7).

"For which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher" (2 Ti. 1:11).

2. Commissioned of God to exercise gifts of ministry.
3. Mark the difference between the prophets and teachers at Antioch before and after the commission of Paul and Barnabas.
4. In 1 Cor. 12:28 the Apostles are first. The church universal

In 1 Cor. 14 the prophets are first. The local church.

THE EVIDENCE OF APOSTLESHIP.

1. A planted church

"Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord" (1 Cor. 9:1-2).

2. A commission brings authority, then power and that equals spiritual fruits.
3. Spiritual values vrs. converts.

4. Consider the argument of "seeing the Lord" in order to be an apostle. 1 Cor. 15:5-9.

5. The evidence of apostles is two fold, spiritual and miraculous.

THE SPHERES OF EACH OFFICE

1. Pastors and teachers are basically local.
2. Evangelists are regional, normally based in a local church.
3. Prophets may be sent from region to region.
4. Apostles are commissioned to "the work"—God's assignment.

Commentary on a prophet.

These gifts of the Lord were not limited to one given locality, but were sent forth upon certain missions to assist in needy localities. They did not function in a manner to usurp the local elders, but minister in harmony with them. Barnabas, Saul, and certain prophets from Jerusalem ministered with the teachers (pastors and elders) at Antioch. Acts 11:19,22,27; 13:1. He was to bring God's message to the people, that is, to edify, exhort and comfort them. It would be noted that, prophets did not stay and assume the responsibilities of an elder, but ministered in preaching and teaching, until, the Spirit would move them on to different localities. Note the prophets at Antioch in Acts 15:32.

"THE TWELVE APOSTLES" ministered primarily in and from Jerusalem during the infancy of the Church. Peter, referred to himself as an Elder (1 Pe 5:1); as well as John (2 Jn. 1:1); and ministered as such to the Church at Jerusalem. Being personally instructed by Christ they administered their office of Apostleship to various places, and provided the vital guidance necessary to the young Church. Note that later there were apostles and elders at Jerusalem. The Apostles function as elders to the Church of Jerusalem, but as apostles to the churches. Acts 15 was a question that concerned the Church universal, there they functioned as apostles with a view to the whole body. Later, "Fox's Book of Martyrs" records that most of the twelve apostles died in other localities, fulfilling the command of the Lord to go into all the world.

Also the twelve apostles served as a transition team from Judeo-Christian concepts to a saved-by-grace-era. The first 12 chapters of Acts covers this transition, but something new is introduced in chapter 13 when the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2). The mystery that had been hid from the beginning was about to be unfolded, "to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow

members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph. 3:6).

THE SEPARATION AND MOVEMENTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Church in Antioch is the model church. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). We must look at the first act of the Holy Spirit in any given direction to discover His pattern for us in that particular direction. The first recorded sending forth of workers from the first church established on absolutely clear church ground is our best example in the sending forth of apostles or missionaries.

I. Acts 13.1,2. THE HOLY SPIRIT CALL. Five prophets and teachers.

The Holy Spirit only sends to other parts such as are already equipped for the work and are bearing responsibility where they are, not those who are burying their talent and neglecting local needs while they dream of some future day when the call will come to do special service.

The prophets and teachers "ministered to the Lord," not work for Him.

It was to the divine call they responded, not to the call of human need. Their compassion had not been stirred by doleful tales of heathenistic practices. ALL SPIRITUAL WORK MUST BEGIN WITH THE SPIRIT'S CALL. All divine work must be divinely initiated. God makes conscripts from those who are making themselves available for service.

Only the divine call can qualify for the apostolic office. Many workers have simply GONE OUT. A worker may be called directly by the Spirit, or indirectly through the reading of the Word, through preaching, or through circumstances.

"And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was" (Heb. 5:4).

II. SEPARATION OF WORKERS.

The Holy Spirit spoke directly to the apostles, but He also spoke indirectly through the prophets and teachers. What was said privately to the two was confirmed publicly through the other three. He did not speak to the CHURCH but to the prophets and teachers. God spoke not to an Assembly mixed with babes, but to a representative company in the church, to men of spiritual experience.

The call was personal, the separation was corporate; and the one was not complete without the other, A DIRECT CALL, A CONFIRMATION by the

prophets and teachers, thereby, eliminating free lances in the service of God. The call was not in haste, but with much prayer and fasting.

III. THE EXPRESSION OF THE BODY...Body life and body work.

On what ground did these prophets and teachers set certain men apart as apostles, and whom did these men represent? Why not the entire church doing the separating?

We must declare IT IS ONE BODY...a oneness of life. Many members emphasizes the diversity of functions in that unity. ONENESS IS LIFE...FUNCTION IS WORK!

The body of Christ has two aspects; LIFE AND MINISTRY. The church expresses LIFE and the gifts of the church expresses MINISTRY. Life is on the ground of the body, as well as, the ministry.

A cursory reading of Eph. 4:11-12, would lead us to think that these gifted workers build the church up from the outside, but that is not the case. They seek to build it up from within.

1 Cor. 12:27,28. A study of these verses makes it clear that the gifted ministers of verse 28 are the members of verse 27, and that the church of verse 28 is the body of verse 27; therefore, what ministers are to the church, members are to the body. The gifted ministers are the functioning members of the body, and all their operations are as members.

1 Cor. 12:28. Three persons and the rest are things.

THE SEPARATION OF ACTS 13 WAS A QUESTION OF MINISTRY RATHER THAN LIFE. It was the sending forth on the ground of the body and not of a particular organization. 1 Jn. 2:19.

IV. APOSTOLIC MOVEMENT. Ga. 5:25.

Antioch did not control the movement of those that were sent out, but the Holy Spirit was only their director.

After reading these workers experiences this fact is noted, A TRUE APOSTLE IS A TRAVELER, NOT A SETTLER. They did not argue, "Now we have a group of believers here, we must stay awhile and shepherd them."

They dared to leave the disciples in mere infancy, for they believed in the power of the life of God!

The OUTSTANDING TRAIT of a "sent one" is that he is always on the move.

V. APOSTLES ON THEIR RETURN

On their outward journey their first concern was to found churches. On their return journey their chief business was to build them up. We must realize clearly that even though we adopt apostolic methods, unless we have apostolic consecration, apostolic faith, and apostolic power, we shall still fail to see apostolic results.

REPORTING BACK TO THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH was done in such a way as to glorify God and to benefit His children, and not to build up an image of a great personality.

THE ELDERS APPOINTED BY THE APOSTLES

1. "Elders" originates from the Old Testaments. Elders were first mentioned in Acts 11:30. Acts 14:23 reveals how they are appointed.
2. The apostles did not request that men be sent from Antioch to shepherd the flocks, nor did they remain behind to shepherd. They chose local faithful brethren.
3. Oversight of the church is not the work of apostles. Paul stayed in Corinth for over a year, in Rome for two years, and in Ephesus for three years, yet in the scriptures we read of the elders of Ephesus but never the apostles of Ephesus. All the fruit of the apostles' work had to be handed over to the care of local elders.
4. God purposed that apostles should be responsible for the work in different places, while elders were to bear responsibility in one place. APOSTLES ARE ALWAYS GOING! ELDERS ARE ALWAYS STAYING! Note the time lapse was nearly two years, yet elders were appointed, and history shows that the churches flourished, therefore the elders must of been adequately qualified by the standards of the Holy Spirit.
5. In the appointment of elders the apostles did not follow their personal preferences; they only appointed those whom God had already chose. That is why Paul could say to the elders in Ephesus. "The Holy Ghost hath made you bishops" (Acts 20:28).
6. Elders are local men. An elder in Ephesus was not an elder in Smyrna. In scripture there are no local apostles, nor are there any extra-local elders. The apostles were the ministers of all the churches, but they had control over none of them. All management was in the hands of the elders.

7. How did Paul deal with the adulterous believer in Corinth? The utmost he could do was to instruct Corinth concerning the seriousness of the situation, and admonish them. 1 Cor. 5:13. If the church was spiritually right it would heed the instructions, if they had refused they would have been spiritually wrong, but legally right. 1 Cor. 11:34 was a result of invitation, and the church must be dealt with doctrinally by Paul, then the church would have to deal with the problems. 1 Cor. 14:37. Note "acknowledge", "beseech" in 2 Cor. 1:13; 7:12; 10:8-16.

THERE ARE NO ELDERS OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH AND NO APOSTLES IN THE LOCAL CHURCH!

1. Elders and bishops are the same office. Titus 1:5,7; Acts 20:17,28. Elder relates to their person; bishop to their work. Bishop means overseer, or one who supervises others as they work. God intended that every Christian should be a Christian worker.

2. Elders are not a group of people who contract to do the church's work on behalf of its members; they are only the head men who superintend affairs.
3. 1 Ti. 5:17; 1 Pe. 5:2,3. Proper way to rule and to instruct. Every church after God's sown heart bears the stamp of ONE ANOTHER. 1 Cor. 12:24.

4. The plurality of elders are always seen in the local church.

SUMMARY

Elders. Acts 20:17,28. Shepherds and overseers.

Bishops. Titus 1:7. (Elder in verse 5). 1 Pe. 2:25.

Pastors. Eph. 4:11. Pastors are the elders in Acts 20:17.

Overseers. Acts 20:28. They are pastors. Bishop and overseers come from the same Greek word.

Shepherds. The same as pastors. 1 Pe. 2:25; 5:4.

Elders in every city:

1. Each locality has a plurality of elders.
2. Acts 14:23. Ordained elders in every church.
3. Ephesus had elders. Acts 20:17.
4. Acts 15:4. Elders in Jerusalem.

5. Phil. 1:1. Bishops.

6. Presbytery. It is an order of elders (presbuterion).

a. Presbu = Elder, senior.

b. 1 Ti. 4:14.

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF A BISHOP

1. 1 Ti. 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9.

2. This must be the ideal goal for leadership. It is objective in nature.

3. "Apt to teach," "to exhort," seems the clearest difference between a bishop and a deacon.