

True Apostles

by Hubert Bunney

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INTRO

A lot of people are claiming to be apostles today and I believe that the Lord is restoring the Apostolic ministry. I believe God is restoring people and calling more people to become Apostles and also prophets but I think we need to be cautious on those that are desiring the name of an Apostle without having the function. I think this is going on today also. It seems like everybody and his cousin is becoming an Apostle. My thought is if everyone is going to be a chief, whose going to be the indians? We cannot all be the chief. So I want to look into the scripture on some characteristics of Apostles.

THE CALLING OF AN APOSTLE

Some people think because they have one aspect of an Apostle, they are an Apostle, but the early church had scriptural tests in the word for someone to be an Apostle. For instance, the bible's sixty-six books had to pass the test of the canon. They had to have canonicity and they had many tests that would bring into or illuminate from being part of the canon, and so it's the same way with an Apostle.

Today people are saying because I am a spiritual Father, I am an Apostle. What they mean by this is they have prayed someone into the kingdom. They travelled in prayer until Christ had been born in somebody. Well, you know my mother prayed me into the Kingdom and if you had asked her if she was an Apostle, she would have said absolutely not. So you have to have more than one aspect to be an Apostle.

Luke 6:12. And it came to pass in those days he went out into a mountain to pray (and you have a comma there, then it says:) and continued all night in prayer to God.

I don't think Jesus planned to pray all night but He went out into the mountain to pray and He continued, maybe pressed by the great need and responsibility of choosing the ones that were to be His apostles.

Luke 6:13. when it was day (after that all night prayer) he called unto him his disciples.

Now the disciples were a larger group and of them, He chose twelve whom also He named Apostles. So to be an Apostle, you must be called and then you must be the choice of that calling. It says many are called, but few are chosen. There is a book today called "Apostles and Merging Apostles". We would call it "Apostles and Apprenticeship Apostles," learning to be an apostle. And you have to favorably respond

to be the choice of an Apostle because it is a chosen group. Now in Romans 1:1, in the original language we have a clue here ...

Rom 1:1 Paul, a servant (doulos) of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle separated unto the gospel of God.

Now they tell me the tense on the verb "separated" is "having been separated" unto the gospel of God. Paul was separated unto the gospel and he was called to be an apostle. I believe therefore, he was called to be an apostle because he had already (past tense) been separated ("having been separated") unto the Gospel. This is part of the calling qualification of being an Apostle.

Now Paul refers to himself as a slave. What bothers me today is the love of titles and the pushing of position. I am a rung higher than you because I am an apostle, I'm a prophet. Sometimes when I call someone on the phone, especially one of our students, I say is brother so and so in? I might even call him by the first name and say "Is Joe Smith in?" And they say, "You mean Apostle Smith!" And I say "Yeah, okay, put on the Apostle." But to me it doesn't feel quite right, but that is the way it is in our day.

THE POWER OF AN APOSTLE

Luke 9:1-2 And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve and said unto him, send the multitude away that they may go into the towns and the country round about and lodge and get victuals for we are in a deserted place.

Luke 9:12. Then he called his twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all devils (there is only one diabolos, it should be demons) and to cure diseases and he sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Now, He not only gave them authority (that's exousia), but He gave them dunamis. See, you can have the authority to do something, but not the dynamic to do it. So He gave power to the twelve here: power over demons, to cure diseases, to preach and heal the sick.

The meaning of the word "Apostle" is Sent One. You have to be sent to be an Apostle but you can be sent and not be an Apostle. See, because the bible says "how shall they preach except they be sent," a preacher is sent.

Matt 10:5 And the twelve Jesus sent forth and commanded them saying go not into the way of the gentiles and into the city of the samaritans, enter ye not but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

V8 .. It says, "...heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils" (demons), ...Freely ye have received, freely give." There shouldn't be a price put upon the ministry.

And so, raise the dead. There are not too many dead that are raised today. I don't hear about too many. I read the book, "Like a Mighty Wind" and it talked about that seven different people were raised from the dead (in Indonesia, I believe it was), and they were raised from the dead by laity. They would go to funerals expecting to see the Lord do a miracle. They were singing one time and the big toe of the corpse started moving. Since that encouraged them a lot, they kept on praying and the fellow came back to life. I believe we need to be open for people to be raised from the dead because sometimes we pray for people and then when they die we say well, that is the end of it. But Jesus walked up to a funeral procession in the bible, stopped the crier and raised a girl.

Jesus, another time, lingered purposely because God delayed Him until He got to Mary, Martha and Lazarus' house, you remember. When He got there, they said "If You had only been here, he would not have died." They more or less said, "Too late now..." and He said "He shall arise." They said, yes, in the resurrection. He finally had them remove the stone and said "Lazarus, come forth" and they said loose him (he was all bound up in garments where they had spices inside) and they let him loose and he was alive. It was no small stir. Quite a few people came to Bethany, not only to see Jesus, but to see Lazarus. And many believed on Jesus because of this resurrection of the dead.

Matt 23:6-12 ...

v5a .."But all their works they do to be seen of men." We must be careful that our Alms and works are not to be done just so that men might see it.

v5b.. "They make broad their phylacteries and enlarge the borders of their garments". In one translation it says, "They make their prayer shawls wider and wider and the tassels longer and longer."

I go to places where they have what almost looks like a high priest robe on and they have these prayer shawls around. Everyone else is dressed in regular clothes and they have this special thing to look different.

I was in one church and I was completely relaxed. I got there a little early and was talking to one lady when another lady rushed by me in a burlap sack dress. In the Old Testament they would fast and pray with sackcloth and ashes. They would have on an itchy garment which would make them more uncomfortable in praying and it was to remind them that every time they would itch, we need to have this need met. But the lady rushed by me and had this dress with stripes painted on it

when I said to her "Are you having a Christmas play today?" and she said, "Oh no, that is the garb of our worship team." I thought to myself, why do you have to have a special garb for the worship team? So later on in the service, one of the leaders up front was soliciting more people to wear burlap and she came over to this other lady and said, "Would you like to be with us on the worship team?" and the other lady says, "No thanks, I'm fine worshiping the way I am." So people like to have some kind of distinction. And it says here ...

THE DEMAND FOR TITLES

v6 .."And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues."
(They love preeminence).

v7 .."And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

Now, Young's Concordance (you can look this up for yourself), the first meaning that Young gives of the word "Rabbi", is "Great One" and then after that it is "teacher." And so, they love greetings in the market place to be called Great One and Teacher.

v8 .."But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

Do you know I have called on the phone to talk to a preacher and I have said "Is brother James there?" and the secretary says, "You mean Bishop James?" I said "Yeah, that is the person I mean." See, they correct you if you happen to use the word "brethren" but Jesus said, "Ye are all brethren," (and by the way, we are all sisters). Sometimes people say: You know, it's a great thing if you forget someone's name. You can always call them brother or sister...

v9 .."And call no man your Father upon the Earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

I wonder why so many religious figures are called "Father" when the words of Jesus in red says don't do it.

v10 .."Neither ye be called masters: (now this word, some translations say "leaders") for one is your Master, even Christ."

v11 ..But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

This word (servant) is not the greek word Doulos, but diakomos and it means minister, one who serves. The greatest among you, let him be your servant.

v12 ..And whoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Now, this verse thrown in where it is, is very interesting. It says, if you try to exalt yourself, you shall be abased. And it is put into the context of desiring titles. The idea behind this thing is to be lifted up and be above other people. Jesus said, no, you are just plain brothers. See, the bad part about it, is being demanding. Now if somebody says, "Reverend Bunney" or "Pastor Bunney", I don't make a big issue of it, but neither do I demand it. You can call someone "Joe" and love them or call them "Most Honorable Reverend" and hate them. We are not to demand titles. You must earn esteem. I believe that if you are an Apostle and you function as an Apostle, it will be recognized by the body of Christ. And you will have the esteem without trying. You

cannot force people to call you an Apostle. That is a bunch of baloney! So be careful with titles, because whosoever exalts himself will be put down. The way people are pushing today is that there are whole conferences where people are prophesying and saying you're it. The bible talks about being made an apostle of men. The important thing is that Jesus chooses you.

You know, I have never had to show my credentials but one time in forty-four years of preaching. Somebody went into a mental ward where people have breakdowns and he preached hellfire and brimstone. He scared them so bad that the whole ward went berserk. So when I came up there to visit someone in that ward, someone said, "I would like to see your ordination card." He wanted to make sure I wouldn't go in there and scare everyone. And so you say, "Do you have diploma's?" and "Do you have ordination?" Yes, I have them in my file somewhere but I don't worry about them too much. The commission that I really want is the commission of the Lord. At my official ordination, I don't think the fellow that prayed for me did anything more than mess up my hair. But my true ordination came later. I went down to a grange hall where there was a black minister preaching up a storm and he stopped right in the middle of it and came back to where I was sitting. He put his hand on my head and all he said was "Lord, enhance his ministry." I felt the power of God go through me from the top of my head to the soles of my feet and the next week I was used in my first message in tongues. But when I got my official ordination, they just messed up my hair and handed me some fancy stuff. Now, at ordinations, they give you one of those prayer shawls that hang down to the floor. You see, there is a desire to be elevated and the very desire to be elevated is the reason why God has to humble us and put us down.

THE RANK OF APOSTLE

1 Cor 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

They tell me in the original language there is no rank after the third one, "thirdly teachers." "Firstly" means chiefly! The number one office of the christian church is apostle, the second office is prophet, the third office is teacher. All of these have to do with the ministry of the word. God has set them there. Are there apostles today? Yes! Are there prophets today? Yes! Are there pastors/teachers today? Yes! God has set them there. They are fixed.

v29 Are all apostles? (the answer is no) Are all prophets? (no) Are all workers of miracles? (no)

v30 Have all the gifts of healing? (no) Do all speak with tongues? (no) Do all interpret? (no)

v31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: (plural) and yet I shew unto you a more excellent way.

Follow the realm of need. Let love press you into the realm of need whether it is considered the greatest gift or the least.

Now, some people say, I thought all people were to speak in tongues? I believe they should, but not all people are used in a message in tongues. See, I speak in tongues everyday of my life but I have only given two messages in tongues in forty years. It is not my gift. I don't have the gift of tongues. I have a language that God gave me when He filled me with His spirit, that I can talk to him when I don't know what to say. When I cannot express the need, when I do not know what the will of the Lord is, I pray in tongues and the spirit within me prays according to the will of God. So I pray unto God, but this gift of tongues is a message to people and needs an interpretation.

So God has set these ministries there and these are ranked first, second & third in rank of God's estimation. Now whenever you have a true, you are going to have a false.

APOSTLES OF MEN

Rev 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

Now the pattern of Jesus in writing to these seven churches and writing to the angel of the seven churches (the messenger), was that He would commend them for everything He could and then afterward he would convict them for what they did wrong. He would tell them what they did good and he would also tell them what they did bad. And so he said after this, "You have lost your first love", I am no longer number one.

This word "tried" (if you look it up) means to pierce through. It was not just what was outward but what was inward; to pierce completely through, find out what was on the inside. And this church was commended of Christ for putting forth a test. So you see many people said they were apostles that were not apostles.

In the bible you had the original twelve apostles and their names are on the foundation of the new Jerusalem. And I believe Paul is a part of the twelve. Judas by transgression, fell and committed suicide. "His bishopric let another take" and they tried to do that when they were supposed to be praying. They ran out of things to pray about so they had an election and the lot fell on Matthias and you never heard of him again. He was an apostle of men and not of God. Christ was going to come along and replace Judas but they got in his way and caused Paul much trouble where he had to defend his apostleship in many places, but he was the twelfth apostle.

OTHER APOSTLES IN THE BIBLE

Now, there are thirteen others that you can isolate in scripture as also being apostles. Paul says, "are we" (Barnabus and himself) the only ones that cannot forbear working and lead about a sister or a wife?" So he is saying Barnabus was an apostle. And two times in scripture you have the word "messengers & messenger" which if you look up in the original greek, is the word that comes from the word for apostle. Now I will give you

the two because you wouldn't recognize this unless you went to the original language because it is translated "messenger."

2 Cor 8:23 Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.

Phil 2:25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send you to Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he ministered to my wants.

These words here mean "apostle". Paul was so proud of this guy who worked hard and got sick to help him that he said "hold such a one in esteem" (Phil 2:29-30). Now we would say, that fellow is crazy to work himself sick but Paul says,

hold that person in esteem. There was no one else to do the job so Epaphroditus took it upon himself to supply their lack and then became ill because of it. Verse 27 says, "For indeed he was sick nigh unto death."

We need to say there are false apostles in the bible as well as the true. So twelve plus thirteen is twenty-three apostles we can isolate in the scriptures if we had time to do it.

FALSE APOSTLES

2 Cor 11:13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

14 And no marvel; for satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

Now you say, how was it so easy for them to transform themselves into apostle? Well, you did not have the communication we have today. They had good Roman roads but still you didn't have cell phones, the internet or phones, and someone would come to the church and say, I am an apostle from some way out-of-the-way church. Now by the time you would find out who it was, it was six months later (which is slower than our mail). So they had a hard time refuting this and some of these fellows would forge letters with the name of the apostle Paul on it and then bring in their own doctrine. They were deceivers and liars placed there by Satan. They were out-and-out deceivers transforming themselves into apostles of Christ and so they had tests in the bible according to scripture. They had many things to check it out to make sure that this didn't continue as was going on.

1 Thes 2:6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

1 Thes 2:11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged everyone of you, as a Father doth his children.

Remember, that is what I was telling you before when some would say if they pray someone through, they are a spiritual father and therefore, an Apostle. But it tells us here they did not demand what was the right of an apostle, which was to be cared for. Paul worked with his hands when they did not supply his needs and he didn't demand they help him. He just worked on his own. He said he was very gentle with them, as a father doth his children. He was like a nurse with them rather than being rough shod. So we should not even demand what is our right. Though you have the position and the right, don't demand anything. You just serve God and let Him take care of it. If people don't do you right, God will make up for it. He is a compensator.

1 Cor 4:14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.

Paul had led the Corinthians to the Christ and they were his spiritual sons.

1 Cor 4:15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

In other words, become like me, do like me. Now, if Paul had begotten them through the gospel, he wanted all the Corinthians to do like this. If being a Father is an apostle, than he is saying you all can be an apostle, do like I do and be an apostle. But you just don't become an apostle by having one characteristic. It does not make it. A spiritual father in the bible was one who could reproduce their spirit in people. Paul said, when Timothy comes to you, he will remind you of my ways, which be in Christ. He's a chip off the old block. He will remind you of me when he ministers. So that was reproducing his spirit in other people.

Keep adding up these together on aspects of what an apostle is and it eliminates the number. Not everyone is an apostle!

SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE:

1) PATIENCE

2 Cor 12:12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

Now, this is an inward quality, an inward quality of patience. We are to be patient with new converts, patient with all people. A sign is a miracle with the accent upon the pointing (pointing to this person as being an apostle) and wonder has the effects upon the observers (a miracle that creates wonderment). Mighty deeds can be translated as miracles (putting the accent upon the power of the act). And so there were mighty signs that backed up the apostles. They were given power over unclean spirits; they were given power to heal the sick; they were given power to raise the dead. Great grace was upon them all and the disciples had many signs and wonders wrought through the hands of the apostles. So the signs of an apostle are part of the test.

2) AUTHORITATIVE TEACHING: SPECIAL INSIGHT

The next aspect is they are not just a teacher, but an authoritative teacher.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

In other words, when the apostles spoke and whenever they taught, it became the apostles' doctrine and they were admonished to continue in the apostles' doctrine. The early church took the apostles' doctrine as "the" doctrine, and it was because of this special insight they had into the realm of truth. One of the rules of canonicity of the scripture is, was he an apostle? That would put a great weight on whether or not it could have been accepted in the canon.

2 Pet 3:2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior:

Now, "Build upon the foundation of the apostles and Prophets." In other words, they not only said this, they could give a commandment similar to the commandments of Moses. And so the spoken words of the Holy prophets and the commandments of the apostles: very important.

We have a lot of scripture here but I believe the test in the early church for an apostle was according to scripture.

Matt 13:10 The disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

If you trace back these disciples, you will come to the fact in Chapter 11:1, it came to pass when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples. This is the original twelve group which became apostles outside of Judas, who by transgression, fell. And so, it says here they had been given to know the mysteries (secrets) of the kingdom of God.

Matt 13:12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

When they said, "How come you're speaking in parables?", He explained it more to the disciples and gave them insight into it, because it was given to them to know the mysteries and secrets.

Matt 13:36. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came (these were His twelve disciples, which were called apostles) unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

So there was a special insight into the mysteries of God. Therefore, their doctrine became the doctrine of the church. They were authoritative by receiving doctrine from Christ.

Eph 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

3) FOUNDATIONAL LEADERS

Now, you're well aware that no other foundation can be laid except that which is laid in the Lord Jesus Christ. But in this particular situation, it is talking about the foundation being apostles and prophets. Jesus is the foundation but here, He is the capstone and the apostles and prophets are the foundation. You have to be a foundational person. You have to be person that can be built upon. You have to be solid. You have to be like a pillar. You have to be someone that has "stick-to-itiveness."

Now, an Apostle should not be someone who constantly wants to be seen or exalted to a position. Those that are in construction know that if the foundation is done right, you never have to hear about it again, it's covered up. The only time you'll hear about the foundation is if the building begins to crack. Then someone will say something is wrong with the foundation. But if you do a good job and there are no cracks, you will never hear about the foundation again. But there are people that want to blow their horn and say, "I am an apostle, I'm somebody. Make sure you call me by the right name. Say it in front of the marketplace. Say it where people are all around." But a foundation does not draw attention to itself. A foundation is just solid as a rock. It is there underneath, nobody sees it, nobody says anything about it. But if the foundation is not right, then you'll see some cracks, then you'll hear some people saying something about it.

CONCLUSION

So, God send us more apostles, send us more prophets, send us all the ministry. We want all the gifts and office ministries of the church. We want all the gifts of the spirit, but let us walk humbly with God. Let us not exalt ourselves because those who exalt themselves, God is able to abase.