

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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Apostolic Mistake

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Introduction

The Spirit of the Lord keeps prodding me about deception among and within the People of God. The result has been the last couple of issues of Present Truth Teaching Letter and, since I can't seem to get away from it, this issue also. It is not that I want to keep harping on the negative, but, rather that the negatives, the deceptions, have become so widespread that many are having their faith trashed and their lives shipwrecked. Many new converts are building on faulty foundations because of the deceptions. These are foundations that will not stand during the shaking of all things that God is going to unleash. We may even be seeing the beginning of the shaking now. When it is all over only the things of the Kingdom of God will be left (Hebrews 12:26-28).

The current burr in my saddle is the “apostolic” talk that is circulating in the aftermath of the Lakeland/Todd Bentley debacle. There has been a lot of focus on “apostolic networks”, “apostolic associations”, “apostolic covering”, “apostolic alignment”, “apostolic commissioning” and other similar nonsense. Yes, I said nonsense because none of this type of talk is the least bit biblical and in some cases directly against what the Lord has said.

I am sure that most of those involved in all of this type of thing are sincere and desire to serve the Lord. However, you can be sincerely wrong and sincerely deceived. They are like Apollos who was fervent in Spirit and sincere about the Lord. However, Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and explained the way of God more accurately to him (Acts 18:24-26). Many of these so-called or self-called apostles need the way of God explained to them more accurately. Of course, they have to receive the correction and make adjustments just as Apollos did.

Some then may ask if I believe in the apostolic? Absolutely! I believe that Jesus gave gifts of men to His people and that apostles are one of those gifts and that they are operating today as they have among the people of God since the day of Pentecost. But, I don't believe in the “apostolic” as presented by the modern promoters of the “apostolic reformation”.

What the Apostolic is Not

“Apostle” is not a title that is attached to a name; neither is it an office that one occupies. Paul never called himself 'the apostle Paul'. He would refer to himself as 'Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ'. Apostle means “one who is sent, messenger” and by implication, one who is sent for a specific work or with a specific message. The one who is sent has no inherent authority outside of the parameters of the specific work for which he was sent.

Apostles have no scriptural authority to ordain, commission, send out, or authorize other “apostles”. During this age apostles are only sent out by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 13:2 NASB

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

Acts 13:4 NASB

(4) So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

After the Holy Spirit spoke about setting Saul and Barnabas aside for the work, the other prophets and teachers did what we would expect:

Acts 13:3 NASB

(3) Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

This verse sounds like the prophets and teachers sent them out, that they had the authority to do so, but the next verse makes it very clear that they were sent out by the Holy Spirit. After this, the two are called apostles—sent ones. If the Holy Spirit has not done the sending, then there is no scriptural evidence that one should be called an apostle.

This shows that any form of apostolic network is overstepping its scriptural boundaries when it tries to commission or otherwise authorize so called 'apostles' even if this is done under the guise of 'covering' or 'fathering', which in themselves are teachings that are far removed from scriptural guidelines.

Apostolic Alignment? Huh?

As far as I know, all of the 'apostolic networks' operate as a pyramid; that is, there is a hierarchy of authority with someone sitting at the top of the pyramid. This type of operational model is condemned by Jesus.

Mark 10:42-44 NASB

(42) Calling them to Himself, Jesus *said to them, "**You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them.**

(43) "**But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant;**

(44) and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.

The Jesus authority model is quite different from that of the world—even the 'sanctified' world of the modern church. So, the idea of coming into “alignment” with some authority structure that is outside of the local assembly of God's people is non-biblical.

The clearest example of this in the scriptures is Antioch, which was not founded by any apostles nor associated with any apostles nor in any way “apostolically aligned”. Let's take a look at the development history of Antioch.

The Example of Antioch

Acts 11:19-21 NASB

(19) So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.

(20) But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and *began* speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.

(21) And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

After the persecution of Stephen, the believers were scattered from Jerusalem but the Apostles stayed. These believers preached Christ in Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch to the Jews only. Some of these from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch and preached to the Greeks, that is , Gentiles also. The Lord was with them and a large number became believers. So, this was done without any “apostolic” involvement.

Acts 11:22-24 NASB

(22) The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.

(23) Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and *began* to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain *true* to the Lord;

(24) for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.

The church in Jerusalem heard about what was happening in Antioch and sent Barnabas, apparently to check it out. Notice that the church sent Barnabas, not the apostles. And even though the church sent him, he is not called an apostle. It is only years later when he is sent from Antioch by the Holy Spirit is he called an apostle.

Barnabas encouraged them and ministered in Antioch and considerable numbers became believers. So, we have a growing and thriving assembly of God's people in Antioch still without any apostolic involvement.

Barnabas realized that more help was needed and went to look for Paul in Tarsus. Notice that Paul was not “apostolically aligned” with anybody either. While he had visited Jerusalem, they didn't exactly take him under their wing either.

Acts 11:25-26 NASB

(25) And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul;

(26) and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Barnabas and Saul met with the church at Antioch and taught for an entire year. The Antioch church grew and matured; again without any apostolic involvement, alignment, or so called “spiritual” covering.

Why We Have This Problem

The only reason that we have this problem among the people of God today is because the modern institutional church doesn't operate in a scriptural manner. If it did there would be opportunity for the Lord to raise up ministry and leadership from among the brethren. They would have a proven local ministry with proven character because they would be accountable to the local believers. Then, whenever the Holy Spirit would desire, He would send forth those whom He had called to a trans-local work. A church model that works correctly would have no need of any “para-church” organizations and certainly no need for 'apostolic networks'.

In the scriptures Paul and Barnabas split up after their first journeys together. Barnabas took a team and went in one direction while Paul took his team and went in a different direction. We have no record that they formed any type of 'apostolic network' with their two teams. There was no alignment, covering, accountability or anything else between the two teams. Each went and did what he believed that the Holy Spirit had sent him to do.

It is only our own egos that want to bring everything into our own structure. The work of the Lord falls into the sovereign domain of the Lord. He already has a plan that He has implemented. He is perfectly capable of directing His workers without any help from self-appointed apostles.

So, enough “apostolic alignment”, “apostolic reformation”, “apostolic movement”, apostolic whatever talk. Let's just do what the Lord has said do. If we will walk in the Spirit, we won't fulfill our fleshly desire to build our own kingdom or lord it over others.

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