

Apostolic Strategy: Part 2 of 2

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"In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers ... "

Acts 13:1

Prophets and teachers

It would appear prophets and teachers prepare the way for the release of apostles. Through prophetic teaching and declaration a shift occurs in the spirit realm that releases new or higher levels of the apostolic.

This kind of teaching is not just the transfer of information. It is not Greek academe – the teaching of seminaries or Bible Colleges, as useful as that is – but rather the kind of prophetic teaching that is truly transformational—the proclamation (*kerygma*) of the gospel of the kingdom of God. It is not merely man's wisdom acquired from book learning, but wisdom from God, taught by the Spirit to his apostles and prophets (Eph 3:1-10). It is food for the spirit that comes from the Father's heart through those sent as ascension-gift-ministries to the church (see Eph 4:11). They are those that Jesus promised that he would send as *"prophets, wise men and teachers"* (Mtt 23:34); they are John-the-Baptist-type prophets, reformers and revolutionaries sent to prepare the way of the Lord.

And as they prophesy, as did Ezekiel, there will be a *"noise, and a shaking as the bones come together, bone to bone"* (Ezk 37:4-8) – a re-formation of the church – in fact, a restoration of the *one body*, until their breath enters them and they *"stand on their feet as an exceeding great army"* (v 10)—a cohesive fighting force with *"one spirit, one hope, one Lord, and one God and Father, over all and through all and in all"* (see Eph 4:4-6); and so, *"from him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work"* (Eph 4:16).

The body of Christ is now entering a phase of prophetic teaching and declaration strategic to the restoration of apostles toward the rebuilding of the church of the city.

Prophetic worship birthing the apostolic

"As they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said ... " Acts 13:2

These kinds of prophets and teachers are given to the Lord in ministry to him. They know what it is to play to an audience of *One*. They are not ecclesiastical functionaries – professional ministers and church technicians – but men of the Spirit. Like David they have hearts after the heart of God and know how to lose themselves in him—to be abandoned to the Great-Heart himself. They do not `do' worship to bring God down, nor coerce him to perform in any way.

Priests after the Order of Zadok

They are priests after the order of *Zadok*. Having remained faithful to the Lord and to the sanctuary while others pursued their idols of growth and success they alone, in this new temple of the city-church – the mature corporate Christ – will be permitted to *"come near ... to minister before me"* (Ezk 44:16).

Those Levites who pursued other gods will bear the consequences of their defection. They will be permitted to minister at the gates of the temple *before the people*—but never in the sanctuary *before the Lord* (see Ezk 44:10-16). The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him (Ps 25:14); and so, his hidden counsels – the intimate things of his heart – will only be revealed to those who have denied all other lovers, remaining true in their devotion exclusively to him.

When the more obvious manifestations of renewal subside, the Lord will search our hearts to see whether we continue to pursue him, or resort to `business as usual'—to man's programmes and planning. Those who cross the invisible line of unfaithfulness in the past season will visibly wear the consequences in the next. They will be supernaturally withheld from

having significance in the restored temple of Ezekiel's vision—the new temple of the city-church. The most unlikely will emerge as the apostles and prophets of this new era of the church. Those who have lead churches and movements in their headlong pursuit of the Baals of growth and success – like Esau – will not regain their birthright even with weeping (Heb 12:16-17).

And so, the apostolic is born of spiritual intimacy. Union with Christ is the primary driver of true apostles, providing the foundation for the dwelling of God with men.

Out of intimacy with the Father the next season will see an increased level of prophetic teaching and declaration—a declaration of the counsels of God's heart regarding the mature corporate son; that is, the restoration of the one church of the city, built on the foundation of true apostles and prophets with Christ as the chief cornerstone (Eph 2:20-22).

To the surprise of the religious system a new breed of Zadok-like apostles and prophets will be released into the body of Christ to prepare for the harvest of the nations.

Rebuilding the *House of the Lord*

Once again God is calling out a remnant from the church's Babylonian captivity.

As ancient Israel, when the seventy years had expired, were set free to return and rebuild the temple, likewise, the people of God in this hour (Jer 25:11-12; 29:10-14; Ezra 1:1-5). The prophetic clock has been ticking and the time for our release is imminent. But it is a release with a purpose: *“the restoration of all things spoken by the holy prophets”* (Acts 3:21), so as to restore and rebuild the house of the Lord.

Nevertheless, we have misunderstood the `house of the Lord'. We have believed that it was our `panelled houses' – our `local churches', denominations, and movements – while the house of the Lord lies waste (Hag 1). With myopic vision we have focussed exclusively on our *part*—our `panelled houses'; in reality, just another franchise outlet, whether it is for the latest `apostolic network', a new movement, or historic denomination.

We have forgotten the *whole*; that Jesus said, *“I will build My church”* (emphasis mine – Mtt 16:18); that he is single-minded about the restoration of *“one flock with one shepherd”* (Jn 10:16); the one church of the city according to Ephesians 4—not our sectarian spiritually bastardised versions of it (1 Cor 1:10-13; 3:1-9; 11:18; 12:25; 2 Cor 11:2-30; Eph 4:1-6).

We have prevaricated by saying, *“The time has not yet come for the Lord's house to be built”* (Hag 1:2). Nevertheless the time has come when the Lord is asking, *“Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your panelled houses, while this house remains a ruin?”* (Hag 1:4).

We have wondered why it's so hard to `do church', why there is so much `burn-out'—so much failure and frustration, and so little growth.

And so, the Lord is saying:

... Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little... You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home I blew away. Why? ... Because of My house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house.

Haggai 1:5-9 NIV

The Lord is about to stir the hearts of his people again. As they hear the prophetic sound of the Haggais and Zechariahs, the Zerubbabels and Joshuas – the apostolic builders, with a remnant people – will leave their sectarian and selfish interests to return to the work, to the rebuilding of the city-church and the raising up of the dwelling of God by the Spirit (Hag 1:12-15; Eph 2:19-22).

"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit"

But because the status quo – building our ministry, movement, church, or denomination – is such an immovable mountain the word of the Lord will again declare:

... 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit' ... 'What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'Grace, Grace!'

Then the word of the Lord came to me, 'The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it ... '

Zechariah 4:6-9 NIV

The mountain of entrenched patterns – eighteen-hundred years of religious traditions, structures, and sentiments, of self-effort and self-promotion – will fall before the omnipotent Spirit. What is impossible to man is possible to God. All things that can be shaken will be shaken, so that only the unshakeable will remain (Heb 12:26-29; Hag 2).

The release of God's people and the restoration of the city-church are imminent. Its foundation will be re-laid, but it will be by the Spirit, not by any human might or power—there will be no twelve-step city-reaching strategy to pull it off!

The foundation of apostles and prophets with Christ as the chief-cornerstone is the first step. And it will only be re-laid through a deep work of the Spirit. False foundations – denominational, celebrity, and self-seeking agendas – will be ripped up and discarded in this new move of the Spirit. A deep repentance will grip the hearts of many as they are called to *"raise up the age-old foundations"* (Isa 58:12).

All across our cities and nations these reformational forerunners are now being prepared for release; they have been called by the Spirit into places of obscurity and anonymity. Just as those who, in debt, distressed, and discontented were called out from Saul's palace to David at Adullam (1 Sam 22:1-2) in preparation for the throne – for the third and apostolic anointing – so too, a remnant forerunner company for the restoration of the apostolic city-church. They will prove to be the embryo of a new wineskin that will harvest whole cities and regions of the earth.

True servanthood – *"known, yet regarded as unknown"*

As 'no-name' apostles and prophets they will make way for the King. They will be buried in Christ as the chief-cornerstone – hidden in God – obscured in the anonymity of true servanthood—*"known, yet regarded as unknown"* (2 Cor 6:9). A foundation is never visible, except as it is being laid. And so, for a short season there will be a re-emphasis of their role in the process of rebuilding and restoration. But as they are put in place, in Paul's words:

... God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe...we are fools for Christ ...

1 Corinthians 4:9-10 NIV

As true apostles they will receive the sentence of death in themselves—they will decrease, so that the life of God may increase. And so, again in Paul's words: *"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ"* (1 Cor 3:11).

And this foundation is more than the doctrine of Christ. It is not knowledge *about* Christ; rather, it is being immersed in the knowledge *of* Christ – a union of spirit – the intimacy of bride and groom. As Paul explains, *"you have come to know God, or*

rather to be known by God" (Galatians 4:9 NASB). It is an intimate two-way experience.

Imparting this knowledge – through prophetic worship, declaration and teaching – prophets will prepare the way for a new release of the apostolic in the spirit of the Antioch prototype.

Apostolic strategy for maximum impact

But, once launched into the nations these new-breed apostles will employ a certain strategy—one that, for Paul, harvested cities and nations.

They will go to the 'Jew first', signifying the old order of man's religious systems, with a prophetic challenge (see Rom 1:16; 2:9,10, Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:17-31). From them a believing remnant will come out, identifying with the 'new thing' that God is doing. Nevertheless, as the old order resists the time will come to withdraw and go to the Gentiles—this will signal a new kingdom era and ingathering of the nations.

Specifically, this pattern is revealed during Paul's third missionary journey.

In Ephesus:

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

Acts 19:8-10 NIV

True to the apostolic prototype of separation between the 'church' and the 'work' (ie 'modality' and 'sodality' – refer above on Acts 13) there is no indication Paul presided over the infant *church* of Ephesus in any kind of eldership or pastoral role. Rather, he gave himself to the apostolic *work* of teaching and training for the sending out of workers.

The School of Tyrannus became an 'apostolic training centre' that impacted the whole region. Ephesus, being the commercial and religious hub for the whole of Asia (modern day Turkey), was the strategic choice for maximum impact.

Apostolic anointing for miracles and multiplication

How did this work? on the principles of *replication* and *multiplication*. Paul, through a fathering relationship, instructed Timothy:

and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

2 Timothy 2:2 ESV

Four generations of leadership are embedded in this one apostolic directive. Paul not only *replicated* his life and ministry in Timothy, but it then *multiplied* through him to the third and fourth generation and no doubt beyond. Even so, the success of this strategy hinges on two factors: *character* and *capacity*. Timothy was to entrust the apostolic teaching only to *faithful* men (character) who will be *able* to teach others (capacity).

Along with "extraordinary miracles" this is how "the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power" throughout the whole

of Asia (Acts 19:11, 20). It is no coincidence that when the apostles, at an earlier date, released themselves from administration and were given to prayer and the ministry of the word that "the word of the Lord spread" and that "the number of disciples increased (multiplied) rapidly" (Acts 6:7).

Addition is one thing, multiplication another. Believers were `added' to the church initially, but as the apostolic ministry was released they began to `multiply' rapidly (cf Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7; 9:31, 35, 42; 11:21, 24; 12:24; 14:1, 21; 16:5; 17:12; 19:20).

From Christ, as the "Apostle and High Priest of our confession", this apostolic anointing for *miracles* and *multiplication* will exponentially flow into his body as it comes to maturity.

In Ephesus, healing and deliverance occurred through handkerchiefs touched by Paul (Act 19:11-20). The seven sons of Sceva, using the name of Jesus presumptuously in an attempt to exorcise demons, were turned upon by the demons, as they mocked, "*Jesus I know, Paul I know, but who are you?*" The whole city was seized by fear and the prince demon of Artemis (Diana to the Romans) was so shaken that a citywide riot against Paul ensued, pouring into the 25,000-seat theatre. The temple built to Artemis was four times larger than the Parthenon in Athens and the cult was so powerful that it presided over the religious, economic, and cultural life of the whole city and region. However, through the apostolic anointing for miracles and multiplication this dominant supernatural principality was conquered from that time, never to fully rise again. While there is no record of Paul confronting this prince power head on in prayer, at a later date there is extra-biblical evidence that John stood before the altar of Artemis commanding the demon to leave. Instantly, we are told, the altar split into pieces and half the temple collapsed!

Apostolic anointing and strategy leads to maximum impact! It is time to return from our Babylonian captivity, from our self-seeking and self-effort, to re-build the temple of the city-church—and rediscover the foundation of apostles and prophets with Christ as the chief-cornerstone.

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