

## The Role of Intercessors

In the last two decades or so there has been an important prayer movement growing throughout the world. Twenty four hour prayer houses have sprung up throughout the United States and Europe. There is a growing sense that if we want revival we need to begin in the prayer closet. All past revivals started with a few who interceded and prayed to the Father for a spiritual rain of righteousness to fall on their land. The Spirit's travail calls out from within our hearts for an outpouring of grace. As the time for renewal draws near, that cry is amplified as many more join its sound.

As important as prayer is, it is only half of the intercessors' role. They are peacemakers, called to stand between two offended parties: God and humanity.<sup>22</sup> Resolution cannot happen on one end only. Praying to the Father alone will not finish the work. God is perfect and will only tolerate imperfection for a time. Intercessors literally stand in the gap between God and mankind. They run to one party, speaking and listening. Then they run to the other and do the same thing. In the process, the Father imparts His heart to the peacemaker, who then goes to proclaim His words and heart to the people. If they don't respond, the intercessor goes back to the Father, and the process continues.

Elijah was such a man. We may love to hear how he prayed for rain but must remember prior to that he prayed that it would *not* rain for over three years! Ultimately the greatest intercessor ever is Jesus Christ, as He asked the Father to forgive us while He hung on the cross.<sup>23</sup> He took the offense between God and man upon Himself and became its personification. A way of peace was paved between us.<sup>24</sup> God's just punishment fell on Him as justice was satisfied. He now stands in intercession before the Father. We can come back to our offended Father and receive forgiveness because of His cross. Sin's remedy is found in Christ.

Although prophets have many tools and gifts at their disposal, ultimately their office is one of intercession. Many today claim to be prophets, functioning in any one of the prophetic gifts. They may have visions or dreams. They may receive words of knowledge or proclaim future events. They may

even heal the sick and cast out devils. These are all legitimate functions of prophets, but they are not the central role. One who is called to the office of a prophet uses every gift at his disposal to bring the dominion of the Kingdom into men and women's lives. Submission to the Kingdom is their ultimate motivation. Their ministry complements and strengthens the work and function of the apostle.

## **The Office of an Apostle**

Under the Old Covenant, God raised up His servant, Moses, not only to lead Israel out of Egypt, but also to lay out the blueprint for His *natural* tabernacle.<sup>25</sup> Under his instruction, Israel raised a tabernacle where she could communicate with God.

When Jesus arrived, He laid out the plans for how the *spiritual* house should be built. Just as there were twelve tribes of Israel, twelve men were selected to start the project. To understand what an apostle is and does, we must understand the type and shadow in God's servant, Moses.

When Moses' brother and sister were angry with him over his selection of a wife, they spoke presumptuous words, forgetting Moses' unique position before God.<sup>26</sup> Instead of esteeming him as Yahweh's servant, they looked at him only as their brother. God heard their proud words and came down to rebuke them.

*And the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the tent and called Aaron and Miriam, and they both came forward. And he said, "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (Num. 12:5-8)*

God clearly contrasts the manner of His communication with Moses against that of the prophets. With the prophets, He spoke in visions, dreams, and dark sayings. They were not honored with a direct conversation with God. He used them and spoke to them, but not directly as with a friend. Their job could be done without perfect understanding or communication. Paul says, “For we know in part and we prophesy in part.”<sup>27</sup> As a man who had been dealt with severely until meekness was formed in him, Moses was able to receive specific instructions.<sup>28</sup> Yahweh desired for the entire nation to have that same relationship with Him, starting with the leaders of the twelve tribes. However, they were unwilling to pay the price. They never saw more than God’s mighty works in the wilderness, and were disqualified from knowing His ways.

*He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel. (Ps. 103:7 NKJV)*

Just as Yahweh met face to face with Moses, Jesus spoke face to face with twelve men for over three years. They were honored with a face to face demonstration none of us will have this side of heaven. God honored them with an unveiling of who He was, and the purposes He intended for the whole earth.

*Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.” (John 14:8-10)*

Because Judas hung himself, the disciples picked another man to fill the twelfth spot, knowing there must be twelve apostles just as there were twelve tribes of Israel.<sup>29</sup> However, God had his own man in mind. He selected the most unlikely candidate, revealing Himself to Saul on the road to Damascus.

*...and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And*

*he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." (Acts 9:3b-6)*

*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. (1 Cor. 15:3-9)*

Seeing the Lord after His ascension, Paul became in essence the twelfth apostle, born out of season.<sup>30</sup> Over 500 saw the Lord, so this alone did not make Paul an apostle. Just as Moses had received specific instructions for how to build the physical tabernacle, those called to be apostles were shown the blueprint for building the spiritual house God will one day dwell in.

*For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. (1 Cor. 3:9-10)*

As superintendents on the job, the apostles took their commission personally. Like parents, they were willing to suffer for their children. They not only preached the Kingdom, but they demonstrated it with power and love. They were beaten and imprisoned. They endured riots, stoning, shipwrecks, and slander. Their unrelenting commitment convinced men and women there was something more than common speculations of men. Eventually, most died horrible deaths as they stood by the Lord until the end. Like the faithful saints before, the world was not worthy of them.

## God's Generals

The history of the word apostle is an interesting one. There are no apostles in the Old Testament, at least in name. The word was passed down from Roman culture. Its literal meaning is “sent one.” When Rome subdued another nation with military might, she would move on to the next conquest. However, she soon realized that the conquered people were not assimilating into her culture. She could not hold her empire together with a fractured cultural network. In order to maintain the stability of her empire as she advanced and conquered, she had to re-culture the people she subdued. A new type of general was formed and called into service, the apostle. The Roman apostle’s occupation was to change the culture of the conquered nations. If he could change their culture, he could change their identity. Once the people took on the culture of Rome, they would forever see themselves as Romans and unity would be secured.