

016 To Equip The Saints 2 **To Prepare Gods People**

Now lets take a closer look at the apostle.

To understand its full significance, it is important to understand the origin of the word.

The word is not a Hebrew based word but a Latin based then a Greek translated word.

The Latin word is ‘Apostolus’

The two Greek words to note are;

“*Angelos*”

“*Apostolos*”

Now an *angelos* was a mere messenger who was sent with a dispatch bag to deliver messages. A courier.

The word ‘*apostolos*’ was one who themselves was sent forth as an envoy or ambassador, or in today’s terms, the closest connection is a missionary, but even that doesn’t do justice to the word.

It is made up from two Greek words.

“Apo” meaning ‘from’ - and “stello” meaning ‘to send’.

The origin of the word was Latin used by the Roman Emperor’s to send an ambassador to a country or province with a specific task, normally to set up a miniature Rome in that province or country.

Let me explain using my home country of Britain as an illustration.

In 55 BC Julius Caesar first invaded Britannia (Britain) with the sole purpose of gaining a foothold in this land as part of his empire expansion. His second reason was to stop the people of Britannia who would cross the now English channel and help the Gaul’s (the French) in their fight of opposition to the Roman occupation.

He succeeded in planting a small garrison of soldiers in what is now called the county of Kent on the south coast.

One year later, he invaded again with a much larger army and **established a Roman presence**. (Now that is important to remember as we go on further).

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They marched north, crossed the river Thames, and came across a settlement called Londin. He renamed it Londonia, now known as London.

The next task was to set up a **little Rome in Londonia**. All those who were his soldiers and the company that remained in Britannia, were to have as much as possible, of the luxuries, facilities, finance, and administration of home here in a foreign land, they were to lack nothing.

A Rome away from Rome!

Although they lived in Britannia now, **they were not of that country, it's people, it's culture, or it's customs. They were Romans through and through, sojourners in a foreign land.**

The other reason for setting up little Rome's was that as the Roman sojourners lived their Roman lifestyle, practiced their Roman customs, imported the Roman culture, it would influence the lives and lifestyles customs and culture of the newly conquered territory.

As ruthless as Rome was with its military might when it had to be, it preferred to bring beneficial change and a better civilization than the peasants had ever known.

The person who came then from the Emperor to establish and bring Rome to Britannia was an apostolus, - an apostle. It wasn't just a case of being "a sent one" as is portrayed by the church today. **It was being sent by the Emperor to bring Rome to the people with ALL its wealth and Power. There was no lack of funding or authority for the apostolus.**

Having set up little Rome with the garrison of soldiers, and the company that came with them, he then would be moved by the Emperor to another place to do it again, leaving the garrison of the newly setup little Rome to influence the local community and bring advantageous change to their lives, and thus, they became allies of Rome and not adversaries. If there were any difficulty in the continuance of the Little Rome, the apostolos would return and correct anything necessary. After all HE was the one Appointed by the Emperor himself. He had the authority.

Where there was opposition to the new little Rome, then the military power of Rome came in vengeance.

Before long there were little Rome's in London, Colchester, York, Bath and a number of other cities. This way the different little kings and rulers of the different tribes and provinces across Britannia became **united** under 400 years of Roman rule and thus the earliest stages of the **United Kingdom** were established.

Much of the present government system in Britain today, stems directly to the Roman occupation and the cultural influences it brought with it.

This was their major philosophy of occupation all over the then Roman world.

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Now lets look at the scripture.

As was stated earlier, there was no Hebrew concept or word for apostle, yet Jesus himself is referred to as 'The apostle and High Priest.'

To best describe to the people what his task is and that of his followers, he uses a current word, taken from the Romans, who occupied Israel, so that they could relate to and understand his meaning.

Heb 3:1-2

*Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, **the apostle** and high priest whom we confess. 2 He was faithful to the one, who appointed him,*

So if Jesus was and is the apostle, he had to be sent by someone, an Emperor, a King. Someone of High office.

Jesus was appointed an apostle by God Himself.

Luke 4:43-44

*43 But he said, "I must preach the good news of the **kingdom of God** to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." 44 And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.*

John 5:36-37

*36 "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the **Father has given me to finish**, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. 37 **And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me.** (Given me my credentials)*

John 5:30

*30 By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for **I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.***

John 6:38

*38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will **but to do the will of him who sent me.***

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John 7:33-34

*33 Jesus said, "I am with you for only a short time, **and then I go to the one who sent me.***

John 12:49

*49 For I did not speak of my own accord, **but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.***

So Jesus clearly established the fact that he was a sent one and was sent by none other than Father God.

But why was he a sent one. What was it he was commissioned to do as an apostle?

This is what Jesus was sent by the Father to do

Matt 4:23-24

*3 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the **good news of the kingdom**, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.*

Matt 12:28

*8 But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, **then the kingdom of God has come upon you.***

Mark 1:14-15

*14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "**The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!**"*

Luke 9:11

*11 but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them **about the kingdom of God**, and healed those who needed healing.*

He talked to them about the “**other Kingdom**,” what it is like, so different from the type of thing they knew and were living under. He then brought to them some of the benefits of the Kingdom “he healed those who needed healing.”

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Luke 16:16

*16 "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of **the kingdom of God** is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. **Becoming Allies.***

John 18:36

*36 Jesus said, "**My kingdom** is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now **my kingdom** is from another place."*

Mark 4:30-31

*30 Again he said, "What shall we say **the kingdom of God** is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it?*

Again in the Living Bible.

Mark 4:30-31

*30 Jesus asked, "How can I describe **the Kingdom of God**? What story shall I use to illustrate it? 31 It is like a tiny mustard seed! **Though this is one of the smallest of seeds, yet it grows to become one of the largest of plants, with long branches where birds can build their nests and be sheltered.**"*

TLB

I, an apostolus of the Emperor of Rome am here with strict instructions as to what to say and what to do.

Now how can I describe to you in Britannia what the Emperor wants you to understand about the Roman Empire? It is a small seed or settlement that is planted in this land and it will grow into a great tree or community and cover this country. You will be able to relax in its branches and rest under its shade.

I am here to set this up for you, then as a small community of Rome, enjoying ALL the wonderful benefits that it has for you, you can grow it and multiply it all across this country, while I will be planting that small seed again somewhere else.

Can you see the significance of Jesus using this word apostolos and the people understanding his implications?

Jesus was himself also the small seed planted in the ground. On that resurrection morning all the benefits, the blessings, the citizenship of the Kingdom of Heaven became a reality on earth and were open to everyone to embrace.

A small piece of Heaven was now firmly established here on earth.

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So what was the next step?

Well Jesus himself took this Latin come Greek word to describe the function and ministry of his disciples.

John 17:18 Jesus talking to his Father, said,
18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

John 20:21

21 He spoke to them again and said, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

The word "even so" in the Greek means 'the same as' '**In the same way**'
So it reads "As the Father has sent me, in the same way I am sending you"

Mark 3:14-15

14 He appointed twelve-designating them apostles-that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15 and to have authority to drive out demons.

Mark 6:30

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.

Acts 1:1-3

1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

Luke 9:2-6

*And he sent them out to preach the **kingdom of God** and to heal the sick. 3 He told them: "Take nothing for the journey-no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. 5 If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." 6 So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.*

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Matt 10:7-12

7 As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. 9 Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; 10 take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep. 11 "Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave.

You can see here that the disciples as they were sent on this particular missionary journey were appointed apostles for that particular mission. They were doing the same exact thing as Jesus himself.

They were sent by him.

He gave very explicit instructions as to what to say and do, how to conduct themselves and he sent them in pairs. – They apostled.

But now something changes.

Matt 28:18-20

18 He told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and earth. 19 Therefore go and make disciples in all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and then teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you; and be sure of this-that I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

This is not Jesus the apostle speaking.

This is Jesus the King of the Kingdom speaking.

"All authority has been given to me, now as the King I am sending you, 'Go into all nations and make disciples, and teach them what I have taught you'"

Here was the apostolic commission in a universal way, given to his disciples. Plant the seed in all nations and the Kingdom of God tree will grow and cover the earth.

Now again there was a change.

It was here that the disciples became
"The Apostles of the Lamb"

Rev 21:14

The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

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Hab 2:14

*14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,
as the waters cover the sea.*

It was through the book of the **Acts of the Apostles** that we find little Kingdoms of Heaven being set up all across the region, starting in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria and eventually across the Roman Empire.

The eleven were directly appointed and sent by Jesus, Matthias was elected by those in the upper room to take the place of Judas. But the point the scripture makes is that they were not appointed to an position, but a sending on a world wide missionary service that made them apostles.

Eph 2:14-22

4 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,

16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,

20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Here Paul is talking about the abolition of the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles. The Old and the New. The foundations of the Old were the Prophets and the foundations of the New were the apostles of the Lamb as in the previous verse in Revelation 21. The point of contact or support of both is Christ himself as the chief cornerstone, holding it all together so we can, Jew and Gentile, become Gods Holy Temple.

So the apostles of the Lamb were the foundation apostles of the church.

These were the ones commissioned by the Lord to take this **other kingdom**, from heaven, and establish it all over the world, so it's influence will change this strange and foreign land, which once rebelled against it's Heavenly King, and bring it back under His Kingship.

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The apostles of the Church

Eph 4:1-13

*4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the **unity** of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to one hope when you were called- 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

***7 But to each one of us** grace has been given **as Christ apportioned it**. It was **He who gave some to be apostles**, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach **unity** in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

It is very important to note that the very function of the Ephesians 4 ministries has but one purpose. "To Prepare God's people" from a basis of humble Love and gentleness. This includes the apostle.

Look at this verse.

1 Cor 12:27-28

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.

Now does this refer in any way to superiority or the top of the pile, as it were? Well hardly, look at what Paul himself said about the function of the apostle.

1 Cor 4:9-13

For it seems to me that 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, to angels as well as to men.

10 We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored!

11 To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless.

*12 **We work hard with our own hands**. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; 13 when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.*

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Of course it doesn't mean the top or the bottom. It means the apostle is the first in function in establishing the Kingdom of God.

Jesus was the first in function.

The apostles of the Lamb were the first in function.

The apostles of the church are the first in function.

They are the ones that go ahead, teach, and then demonstrate the goodness of the Kingdom of Heaven and the amazing Love of the Father. This begins to influence the natives, it changes them, and thus they establish a small, growing little Kingdom of Heaven here on earth.

The apostle moves on and repeats it all over again, and again. He goes in first.

This is exactly what Paul and the New Testament apostles (of whom there were many) did. Establish little Rome's as it were, until it was said

"Acts 17:6

"Paul and Silas have turned the rest of the world upside down, and now they are here disturbing our city,"

Lets take a look at Paul as an apostle to the church seeing a big portion of the Acts of the Apostles was about him and he wrote the larger part of the New Testament.

In Acts; 9 we find the conversion and call of Saul by the Lord himself from heaven. Here is a clear indication that the Lord will call, change, equip who he will at the time he decides, how he wants it to happen, where he wants it to be.

Acts 9:1-9

9:1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.

4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.

6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

7 The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone.

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8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus.

9 For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered.

11 The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.

12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

13 "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem.

14 And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.

16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord-Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here — has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized,

19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.

NIV

Saul was going about in brutal opposition to the people of the "Way".

On his way to Damascus with letters of authority from the religious hierarchy to persecute the new Christians there he had one of the most dramatic encounters with the Lord ever recorded in the New Testament.

Jesus told Saul to get up and go into the city and he would be told what he must do.

The Lord had a little discussion with Ananias.

Acts 9:15-16

But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

Most of the today's apostles would not want to hear that kind of calling Word from the Master. The only thing that could have sat comfortably with him was to carry the name to the people of Israel. The rest was totally against everything he believed and stood for.

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The Lord Chose who He wanted, to do what He wanted, and changed the individual to accommodate His will.

As we read the book of Acts, we see the outworking in detail of the call of Paul.

One of the most significant things that stands out is that nowhere in the New Testament is the word apostle used as a name or title. Paul Never referred to himself as “I apostle Paul”. Always as Paul an apostle...

Another important factor in Paul’s life was he never did his ministry as a lone ranger or in isolation. Paul needed the inspiration of the prophet. He needed the enthusiasm of the evangelist. He needed the tenderness of the pastor. He needed the enlargement of the teacher, although he expressed all those ministries to some measure.

Who is an Apostle

1 Sam 8:5

They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

From days of old there is within us a need, this requirement to have a ruler over us. From the Garden of Eden, the requirement to rule was replaced with the need to be ruled over, because of Adams sin.

Yet down through history, mankind has rebelled against being ruled over, but we set up new societies and structures and create new hierarchy systems with someone at the top.

Even in America when in those early days the people rebelled against British rule and authority, a new system was set up with rule and authority and one person at the top again.

In church life down the centuries, the same thing has happened. There is the breakaway church from the breakaway church and in so often it is due to the fact of rule and other people governing over other people. But again we set up a new liberated system, where finally someone is set up at the top.

It is significant to me that in the late 70’s and early 80’s, the house church movement in the United Kingdom, broke away from the “establishment” of formal church life and structure, yet gradually they began to centralize again, buy new buildings, and form their own hierarchy.

We now have the apostolic head of this stream and the apostolic head of that stream.

To soften the sound, the in word now is, “the father figure.” We honor him as the father of our stream. Of course we do not have denominations now, that word is out, - they are streams or networks or ministry associations, international fellowships of churches, all presided over by a king, a pope person, a father figure, a bishop, an apostle.

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There is within us still so much of that old nature that looks for a king to be like other nations. Now don't misunderstand me here. I am not saying that these leader people are striving to hit the top seat, although I believe some do, most don't.

It is more often that we the people crave for the king, and put leaders on that kind of pedestal, then soon these leaders start to function from that pedestal.

One has to be an extremely strong individual, with very deep-seated convictions, to stay the servant and not allow anyone to make you king.

So what are the Biblical Characteristics of someone functioning in the ministry of an apostle?

- 1 The recognition they are called of the Lord.
- 2 The evidence of His anointing on that ministry.
- 3 The truth of their teaching and preaching.
- 4 The confirmation by signs and miracles following the preaching.
- 5 The willingness to sacrifice for the Lord.
- 6 The obedience to go wherever the Lord sends you to.
- 7 The commitment to the purposes of God's Eternal Kingdom.
- 8 The true expression of authority with all humility
- 9 A genuine love for the saints
- 10 A walking reflection of God's amazing Love and Grace.
- 11 A willingness to confront false teaching and doctrine.
- 12 To bring correction to the wayward.
- 13 An outworking of the gift of the Word of Knowledge.
- 14 A real demonstration of the Word of Wisdom
- 15 A love and commitment from those who recognise and accept their apostolic ministry in their own lives by a loving and humble following response.

All these characteristics are found in the apostle of the New Testament, but fore mostly in the Lord Himself.

Are all those ministering as apostles operating universally?

No. Peter was an apostle to the Jews. Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles.

To each is given a sphere of operation. The apostolus to Britain was not an apostolus to France or Spain or anywhere else. He was only the apostolus to the sphere the Emperor allotted to him.

So it is today. If the Lord has commissioned you to helped plant churches, or are invited in because of extensive relationship, then that is your sphere of service.

Remember always, the ministry is to equip the saints in harmony with the other ministries in humble servant hood, and not to be the top of the pile.