

The Gathering - Melbourne Update

The purpose of this monthly newsletter is to regularly affirm the vision of The Gathering-Melbourne, attempting to provide more continuity and momentum to what God is doing in our midst.

Why does The Gathering exist?

We hope that The Gathering serves as...

- ❖ an intersection point for believers and church communities from around the city of Melbourne who are on a journey to see a post-denominational Kingdom-shaped church.
- ❖ both a setting for building relationships that will lead to the multiplication of simple-organic churches across the city and a monthly event in which we come together to celebrate King Jesus as we pray for His Kingdom to come in the earth.
- ❖ a platform for equipping those who sense a call to be leaders and church planters in the vision for a Kingdom-shaped church.

All is fluid under the hand of God. Depending upon God sovereignly growing a citywide post-denominational wineskin 'The Gathering - Melbourne', as an identity, would dissolve. It is merely a seed.

For a full grasp of the vision and values: <http://www.lifemessenger.org/html/TheGathering.php>

JOIN US Saturday 4th September for The Gathering @ Arrow on Swanston Street
The Equipping School 4:00pm-6:00pm The Worship Gathering 6:00pm-8:30pm

COMING UP 2nd October 2010 Simple/Organic Church Workshop:

Instead of running the normal Equipping School in October, we'd like to host a workshop on the first Saturday of the month, 1:00pm – 5:00pm. (With the worship gathering in the evening as usual)

We will review the content that we have covered in the Equipping School over the last six months giving plenty of time for discussion and workshopping, aiming at some go-forward steps. Even if you have not participated in any or all of the sessions to date, you will benefit from this practical workshop in October. Registration will be required. Please watch this space for full details.

Regional Connections: Helping you connect with others in your area!

We would like to begin the task of connecting those who are either presently involved in a simple/organic church or those who would like to join a simple/organic church from around Melbourne and the surrounds. Our hope is that simple churches can find one another in regional areas and that those who are looking for a simple church community can find one. Please could you assist us in this initiative?

Simply click here to fill in this 3-minute survey monkey: www.surveymonkey.com/s/R8QWPRW

Yes, that's it. Once you've filled it in ... we'll get to work.

Melbourne: House Church Conference

Oikos, Australia and Transforming Melbourne are hosting Tony & Felicity Dale for a House Church Conference on Tuesday 24th August and Wednesday 25th August at The Factory, Mitcham Baptist Church. The Dale's lead House2house ministry and have been used by God in a wonderful way to resource the house church movement across the USA and abroad.

Please see the Oikos, Australia website at www.oikos.org.au and/or Transforming Melbourne at www.transformingmelbourne.org.au for further details.

This month's article: "An Encounter with the Lord of Glory"

Having crossed the river Jordan, Joshua encountered the "Commander of the army of the Lord"; a Christophany, a revelation of the pre-incarnate Son of God in the Old Testament (Joshua 5:13-15). In order to inherit Canaan-land, Joshua required a fresh download from above – a revelation of the Lord of glory. In like manner, to step into an apostolic call requires that we embrace a deeper revelation of Jesus, the "Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:16). God builds His church and advances His Kingdom on the foundational revelation of His Son (Matthew 16:18, 19).

Two things leap out from these three amazing verses in the fifth chapter of Joshua (vv. 13-15).

First, Joshua tuned into the frequency of heaven; his immediate response was: "What does my Lord say to His servant?" (Joshua 5:14).

The word "Lord" means, of course, "Owner". We still use this word today. If you pay rent like I do, we refer to the "landlord," the owner of the dwelling ... the person to whom I am accountable as the tenant. Jesus is the Owner ... and our task is to hear His voice and cooperate with His desires. Jesus poignantly asked, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

Joshua's first two victories – over the city of Jericho and Ai – are case studies in hearing and obeying the voice of God. (And his first defeat, in his first attack of Ai, was the result of not obeying God's specific directives). Each battle required its own M.O., each required its own strategy, each was so very different; in fact, these two battles set the precedent that there was no precedent – for God seldom does things the same way twice. While God's character is consistent, unchanging ... predictable (which is why we can sleep tonight!); His works are spontaneous, creative ... unpredictable.

Thus, we never graduate from the workshop of listening and obeying the voice of God; to comprise in the Spirit at this point is to compromise at every point. Just ask Samson. Compromise cost Samson his eyes and his strength. Similarly, *compromise causes us to lose our vision* – our sense of clarity – *and causes us to lose our vitality* – our spiritual capacity.

To stay tuned into the frequency of heaven means we need to continually break a spirit of apathy; our tendency to settle, to camp somewhere along the journey, to stop moving with the cloud. For in the moment we settle, *we start defending or preserving our positions rather than exploring and expanding our horizons.*

The second point that leaps out from Joshua 5:13-15 is God's instructions to Joshua: strip down!

Recall, Joshua was preparing for war; yet God did not tell him to suit up, He told him to strip down: "Take your sandal off your foot" (Joshua 5:15).

At least two things were going down here. One, in the wholesome fear of the Lord, appropriate worship required Joshua to take his sandals off. This was a common response in the Old Testament. But, it seems to me, there was another reason.

In ancient culture, a tradition that continues in Asian society today, you took off your sandals when you entered another's home and life. This was and is a grateful and vulnerable response to another's hospitality, as you allow another to host you ... as you rest in their warmth and generosity. God was calling Joshua to strip down and rest in His All-sufficiency.

I remember God's word to me in the midst of a season of intense combat against the principalities and powers that opposed us as we were working in three very different nations at the same time; South Africa, Japan and Zimbabwe. I was battling exhaustion, taking hits from every side (emotionally, physically, mentally, spiritually and financially), facing immense confrontation. I was pulled apart by many things, good things ... all "God" things. There was nothing I was doing that could be dropped or handed onto some one else. I was doing God's will, as best as I could, yet I realised that I was losing ground. In seeking the Lord for help, I felt Him admonish me with these words:

You will never wrestle and prevail against principalities and powers until you learn to rest more deeply in My peace and sufficiency.

This was not a call to inactivity. Rest does not mean slothfulness and idleness ... I'm just as busy, in fact, probably more so ... it simply means "no more sweat" (or at least "less sweat", I'm still learning!) This was a call to a deeper rest in His sufficiency; an end to my striving as I learnt to yield more intentionally to His strength. "He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters ... You prepare a table before me even in the presence of my enemies" (Psalm 23:2, 5). The result was actually a deeper experience of prayer, greater power to overcome and more fruitful activity (and I kept my sanity – at least that's my story and I'm sticking to it).

In the Gospel of John, Chapter 5, Jesus headed off to Jerusalem for the "feast" (v. 1). On the way to the feast, He walked past the Pool of Bethesda, where "a great multitude of sick people" waited for the "moving of the water" (v. 3). You remember the story: when the waters stirred, the first sick person in was healed. Jesus walked to one man, "who had an infirmity thirty-eight years" (v. 5), healed him with a word (vv. 6-9) and then continued on his way to the feast (v. 13).

Jesus walked out of an area filled with sick and needy people, healing only one man. I'm almost 150% sure that I would *not* have done that. I'm sure I would have called a healing line, proclaiming: "God's power to heal is here!", if the man had been healed on my watch.

Jesus knew how to go to the feast in the face of need; He knew how to rest in the midst of activity ... because He wasn't driven by the need. The need will burn you out, Father never will. *Jesus didn't work for the need; He served to bring His Dad pleasure.* He didn't need to find rest from a place of work; instead He worked from a place of rest.

Joshua's encounter with the Lord of glory pressed upon him at least two things; first, the importance of continually tuning into the voice of God and, second, learning to rest in God's All-sufficiency. As we seek a deeper download of the King's glory, tuning into the frequency of heaven and resting more deeply in His sufficiency is essential to breakthrough and victory over the long haul.

All because of Jesus
Craig Kirkby

The Dwarka Vision: The issue of contextualization

Virginia Orton's vision for Dwarka has put a face on God's heart for the "nations" and urges us to start to engage with some of the challenges of carrying the Gospel of the Kingdom to "every creature" void of our cultural baggage. Although Virginia patiently waits on the Lord's timing – and while we join her in prayerfully seeking God's will – we would like to throw the spotlight on some of the issues involved through this part of The Gathering Update.

Virginia writes,

Jesus is the ultimate example of contextualisation, God in the form of man. He came as a man to man, and also, as a Hebrew to Hebrews. Jesus Christ fully entered into Jewish culture and community, and yet stood outside of it, to call it back to its redemptive purpose. Contextualisation seeks to bring Christ, incarnate, into a culture. Paul reveals this principle when he says,

"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the Gospel that I may share in its blessings." (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

We express Christ within different cultures, essentially becoming Hindu to the Hindus, leaving behind the western, traditional culture. However, there is a tension between being incarnational within a culture whilst not conforming to it – being in the world but not of it. John Piper speaks into this tension well:

"The Gospel can and must become indigenous in every (fallen!) culture in the world. It can and must find a home in the culture. It must fit in. That's the indigenous impulse. But at the same time, and just as powerful, the Gospel produces a pilgrim mindset. It loosens people from their culture. It criticizes and corrects culture. It turns people into pilgrims and aliens and exiles in their own culture."

Clearly, there must be a balance between being incarnational, yet remaining true to the purity of the Gospel, which will ultimately set believers apart from the ways of the world and surrounding culture. Jesus tells us to be *in the world but not of it*. An example of this is seen in the life of *Sadhu* Sundar Singh's, an Indian follower of Christ.

A *Sadhu** is a wandering holy man who has renounced all possessions, dedicating their life to achieving *moksha* (i.e. liberation). Born in the late 1800's, he came from an upper class Sikh family. Despite burning bibles and persecuting Christians, he was ruthless in his search for truth, finding it in an open visitation of Christ. He left his high caste life to become a *Sadhu*, teaching others about true *moksha*, resulting in tremendous success in winning souls. However, though many accepted his message readily because of the familiar cultural vessel, he also suffered extreme torture and persecution because of the content of his message!

An excerpt from his biography by Phyllis Thompson helps us to better understand the nature of contextualisation:

"One day he was at a railway station, he saw a Brahmin** who had been taken seriously ill and needed water. However, when the foreign stationmaster brought him some in a cup, he refused to drink it. He rejected the foreign vessel in which it came. Not until water was poured into his own brass bowl would he receive it even when he was dying of thirst.

"So the Hindu is more prepared to receive the Water of Life when it is offered to him in a vessel he can accept. The Sadhu is a familiar figure and gains readier hearing everywhere than the foreigner or even the Indian who adopts the western manner of life and general approach. The water is the same, but the vessel in which it is offered is different. If the vessel is acceptable, it is more likely that the water will be received."

*The *Sadhus* dress in orange to signify the flames consuming their life and are revered as holy. In this present day there are many *Sadhu*'s who've encountered Jesus, who have continued the life of a *Sadhu* preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom.

**The Brahmin is a higher caste/class in Indian society.

Craig continues,

“Paul declared: “Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without a witness” (Acts 14:17).

Historical research and the study of the origins of ancient civilizations confirm what we would expect. If God created mankind and was, therefore, at the roots of their existence, then surely – no matter how their basic belief systems may have “de-evolved” by today – there will be evidence of His Being in their origins. This is now an established fact ... polytheism followed monotheism. There is reference, in the origins of the oldest folk religions on the earth, to the One True God, His creation of the world, the fall of man and the need of a sacrifice to appease God’s judgment. In each of the oldest civilizations there are even references to the worldwide flood and the sudden appearance of many languages!

This is a crucial thought. Not only is it consistent with the Bible record but it highlights the following:

- 1> There exists a God-shaped vacuum in every human being that only He can fulfil (Ecclesiastes 3:11).
- 2> In every people group there is an essential connection with the True and Living God (Acts 14:17).
- 3> Mankind lost this connection and instead blindly placed his faith, initially, in the created world, and through “de-evolution,” into the myriad of false belief systems and religions that spawn the earth today (Romans 2:20-25).

We should therefore be greatly encouraged that God has prepared all peoples for His Gospel and should feel the privilege and responsibility to cooperate with Him, removing the blinders from peoples’ eyes, and thus, participate in the Great Commission.

Consider “The Priest of Salem” (Genesis 14:18-20), a Biblical example.

God revealed Himself to a *pagan* man named Abram, and gave him what we call the Abrahamic Covenant: “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). God sent Abram to the “nations” by directing him to Canaan in which 10 main tribes resided (Genesis 15:19), not to mention approximately 30 other entire “nations” spreading from Egypt to Chaldea that are mentioned in the first 36 chapters of Genesis. More ethnic subdivisions are given in these amazing chapters of the Bible than anywhere else.

While there were cities, such as Sodom and Gomorrah, steeped in utter decadence and others close on their heels, such as the cities of the Amorites (Genesis 15:6), Abram was in for a surprise if he thought he was the only follower of Yahweh. Abram arrived at a city which took its name from the Canaanite word for “peace” – Salem. This word would later give rise to the Hebrew word for “peace” – “Shalom” – and would later contribute to the name “Jerusalem,” meaning “the foundation of peace”.

At Salem, Abram met its king, Melchizedek; a combination of two Canaanite words: *melchi* meaning, “king” and *zadok* meaning, “righteousness”. The “King of Righteousness” among the decadent Canaanites? Moreover, he was also the “priest of God Most High [El Elyon]” who “brought out bread and wine” to Abram (Genesis 14:18). Both *El* and *Elyon* were Canaanite names for Yahweh; *El* appears in Ugaritic texts and *Elyon* appears in ancient texts written in Phoenician. These words later worked their way into a number of key Hebrew words such as *Bethel* (the house of God), *El Shaddai* (God Almighty) and *Elohim* (God). Amazingly, the Bible uses the Canaanite name for God, *El Elyon*, interchangeably with the Hebrew word “Yahweh”.

Melchizedek then blessed Abram saying, “Blessed be Abram of God Most High [El Elyon], Possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High [El Elyon], who has delivered your enemies into your hand” (Genesis 14:19, 20). Abram did not correct Melchizedek saying, “Excuse me, but the correct name for God is not *El Elyon* but Yahweh”! Nor did Abram reject the blessing saying, “I cannot receive any blessing in the name of your pagan deity”. No! Rather Abram “gave him a tithe of all” (Genesis 14:20). The writer to the Hebrews would later honour Melchizedek as superior to Abram and the Hebrew’s Levitical priesthood (Hebrews 7:1-17). “[Melchizedek] blessed him who had the promises. Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better” (vv. 6, 7).

While certainly mystery surrounds Melchizedek, the point must be clear: *God was at work in the Canaanite people, independent of Abram, and had actually progressed further in His revelation to – or through? – Melchizedek than He had to Abram at this stage in human history.* This means that we can and should anticipate the redeeming hand of God in the diverse history and origins of all “nations”. God has been revealing Himself to all mankind, even while His specific revelation and promise to Abram would bring about the redemptive key to unlock His blessing to all “nations” in Jesus Christ. “Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without a witness” (Acts 14:17)

The Old Testament writers were not alone in using “pagan” words for God. The New Testament writers did the same. The Greeks first used *Theos* as a general term for any deity, as we use “man” to refer to any man, rather than a personal name for any one man. However, Xenophanes, Plato and Aristotle – three great Greek philosophers – used *Theos* as a personal name for one True God.

Two centuries after Plato and Aristotle, the translators of the Septuagint – the Old Testament into Greek – used the name *Theos* to translate the Hebrew word “Elohim”. They wisely decided not to use the word “Zeus” – meaning “King of gods” because it had deep unbiblical, cultural meaning attached to it. Pagan philosophers had made Zeus the offspring of two other gods, Cronus and Rhea. An offspring of other beings could not equal Elohim, the uncreated One. *Theos* on the other hand, was error free, and so the Septuagint translators chose this word; as did Paul (Acts 17:16-34).

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus first used the term *Logos* which means, simply “word”, to designate the divine reason or plan which governs the universe around 600 B.C. John then used this favourite Stoic philosophical term – *Logos* – as a title for Jesus Christ. In his Gospel, he wrote, “In the beginning was the [*Logos*], and the [*Logos*] was with [*Theos*], and the [*Logos*] was [*Theos*] ... The [*Logos*] became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:1, 14). Using these two Greek words in relation to “Elohim” and Jesus Christ, *the Bible reveals itself as cooperating with, rather than destroying, something valid in Greek history!*”

Next month we will include some true, historical accounts of God’s work in the nations to whet your appetite and provoke your thinking.

Apostolic Strategy

David Orton

"...the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work...'" Acts 13:2

God is restoring a new level of the 'apostolic' to His church.

But for this to occur we must cut through the extraneous and get to the foundational. In an age of communication and information overload we are desperately in need of distinguishing between the primary and the peripheral.

And so, in this teaching my object is to uncover the primary strategy for an apostolic release and show how the kingdom of God may increase on earth.

Distinguishing between 'Strategy' & 'Tactics'

To do this we must understand two terms:

'Strategy' - the art of war the planning and direction of the larger military movements and overall operations; and

'Tactics' - the art of disposing armed forces - the carrying out of the larger strategy through manoeuvres in actual contact with the enemy.

The former consists of foundational principles which are inviolable and universal, applicable to all peoples and all times. They look at the big picture - to where, when, and why troops and resources are best directed to ensure victory.

The latter consists of situational procedures - methods that will vary depending on circumstances to deliver troops and resources in implementing the strategy. For example, troops and supplies may be dropped in by parachute, or they may be landed by boat. It deals with the logistics of a specific mission.

Tragically the church devotes most of her energies to the 'tactical', trying to implement and improve practical programs, assuming they are integral to God's larger 'strategy'.

The 'tactical' must come out of the 'strategic' and relates to the management of either the church (this management is called the 'diaconate') or the sphere of the apostle (the 'apostolate' which is managed by the ministry of 'helps and administrations'). This opens the difference between the 'church' and the 'work' which we will unpack later in this study.

The 'strategic' is macro-leadership the 'tactical' is micro-management. But one must flow out of the other - the latter out of the former.

This article therefore will take us into the 'war room' - into the macro. There we will explore the apostolic strategy for the global expansion of the gospel and the increase of His kingdom on earth.

Defining the term 'Apostle'

To do this we must first define the term 'apostle'. The Greek word 'apostolos' simply means a sent one. Jesus used the verb form of this word when He declared, "As the Father has sent (apostello) me, so I send you" (Jn 20:21). Every believer clearly has an apostolic

commission. The marching orders have already been given. But how are those orders delivered in a given situation so that the body of Christ might move into the apostolic - into its commission as a sent one?

This is where the apostle kicks in. Along with the prophet, they are the pivotal ascension gift ministries for the healthy functioning of the body and the releasing of the saints to the work of ministry (Eph 2:20; 4:11-14). In other words, the body cannot function 'apostolically' without the full and mature functioning of the apostle.

The use of the term 'apostolos' in classical Greek is highly instructive. First, in the context of Roman colonial expansion, it was used to refer to the commander of a naval expedition sent out to establish a new colony; and secondly, to the whole fleet and colony which was founded by that commander.

Nature & Function of the Apostolic

The Holy Spirit has lifted this term from its classical context and embedded it within the sacred text to describe for us both the nature and function of the apostolic.

Sent from God, the primary function of the apostle is to plant the colony of heaven on earth. This is far larger than just planting new churches. It encompasses this, but has more to do with the increase of the kingdom both in a quantitative and qualitative sense - the raising up of a new humanity enjoying "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17; see also Rom 8:29; Heb 2:10).

This is born through the corporate and plural nature of the apostolic. We have just seen in the original usage of the term the thought of leadership (the commander) and the corporate (the fleet and the colonists).

While not teaching explicitly the corporateness of the apostolic ministry, the Scripture does teach it implicitly by way of a model.

Paul, for example, on his 3rd missionary journey returning from Greece "was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia" (Acts 20:4). Through this corporateness the gospel spreads and the kingdom is expanded.

Paul said of his associate Timothy, "For I have no one else of kindred spirit...But you know of his proven worth that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel..." (Phil 2:20, 22). Likewise, Luke in his record of Paul's 2nd missionary journey provides us clear testimony to the corporateness and effect of Paul's ministry in the spread of the gospel. "And a vision appeared to Paul...a certain man of Macedonia...saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Act 16:9,10). It is important to note that while 'he' (Paul) had seen the vision 'we' (Paul's team including Luke) sought to go. Through the apostle, Luke concludes that "God had called us to preach" - a vivid picture of what could be called the 'corporate apostle'.

It appears that Paul's apostolic gifting was the catalyst for the release and function of other ministries. His life and dynamic irrepressibly found expression in a company of intimates (see Rom 16:1-16). These men and women, while free, subordinated any individualistic pursuit of ministry, resulting not in an organisational structure, but in a pure and powerful demonstration of the body of Christ - of free men walking together in relationship as love-slaves to Christ.

Paul the Prototype Apostle

And so, the history of God's activity through the church is primarily a history of 'men and movements'.

He calls and commissions 'apostles' through whom he raises up a work. After the ascension of Christ Peter, James, and John, all had their spheres of ministry from which flowed related movements of followers and co-labourers.

However, as significant as these men were I would suggest that there is one man and movement which is the normative model - the prototype.

This, in my view, is Paul - the pioneer 'apostle to the Gentiles' (Gal 2:8). A man sent to the ethnē - to all tribes, tongues, peoples, and nations (see Acts 26:16-18). His mission was universal - to ALL nations.

Let me explain.

Peter, by contrast, was recognised as an 'apostle to the Jews'. This was according to a divine commission, as was Paul's apostleship to the Gentiles (see Gal 2:7,8). James and John were also established as 'pillars' in Jerusalem - the Hebrew church (see Gal 1:19; 2:9, 12; Acts 15:13; 21:18). Although, tradition later places John in Ephesus (living out his days towards the close of the first century as an old and venerated leader of that church); and Peter in Rome.

However, Paul was the chosen instrument to take the gospel to the nations in accordance with God's purpose (see Acts 9:15; 26:15-18; 13:47; Isa 49:6; Rom 1:1; Gal 1:15). This was primarily an issue of call and revelation:

"...God who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles..." (Gal 1:15-16)

Because of his call to the nations God entrusted a unique revelation to Paul. This revelation was not received from any man, nor revealed to previous generations,

"...the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man...I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:11-12).

He did not receive it from Peter, James, or John. In fact Paul's revelation was so unique he could describe it as 'my gospel' (see Rom 2:16; 16:25; 2 Tim 2:8; 2 Th 2:14; 2 Cor 4:3).

He also warned of a 'different gospel' in contrast to the gospel that he had preached (see 2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6, 8, 9). Paul's gospel was so distinctive in contrast to that of Peter, James, and John, and so integral to the establishing of the new covenant order that he publicly withstood Peter in Antioch to protect it (see Gal 2:11-14). Peter, writing many years later, acknowledged that Paul's revelation was 'hard to understand', but had evidently accepted the rebuke affirming his writings as 'Scripture' (see 2 Pet 3:16).

So, what was the revelation that others found so hard to understand - and what was unique about it?

Paul explains,

"Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation... In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of ONE BODY..." (Eph 3:2-6).

It is the revelation of the 'ONE BODY' in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile (see Eph 2:11-18; Col 3:11; Gal 3:28; 6:15; Rom 2:28, 29). Until this revelation the gospel (with the exception of Cornelius's household - Acts 10) was viewed as exclusive to the Jew. And even after the outpouring of the Spirit at Cornelius's house the Gentiles were still subjected to the ritual law. Certain individuals came from James in Jerusalem to Antioch demanding the Gentiles submit to circumcision. Conflicting with Paul's revelation of the

gospel this precipitated the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) and triggered Paul's later confrontation with Peter at Antioch because of his withdrawal from the Gentiles (Gal 2).

This revelation of the 'ONE BODY', is the essence of the apostolic mandate.

Antioch the Prototype Apostolic Church

Before we expand on the revelation of the 'ONE BODY', viewing Paul as the apostolic prototype for the universal church, let us explore the beginnings of that ministry.

If we are to understand the intent of the Holy Spirit in any given direction, we must go back to the first instance of that direction. This provides the model for all future development.

To do this we must return to the city of Antioch. It was from here that the Gentile mission was born, becoming the true parent of the universal church. The action of the Holy Spirit in this city creates the DNA for the apostolic - it becomes the prototype for gospel expansion and kingdom increase.

Focussing on Antioch, Acts chapter 13 divides the record of Acts in two the first section (ch 1-12) finding its focal point in Peter's mission to the Jews, and the second (ch 13-28) finding it in the unfolding Pauline mission to the nations. Significantly, the first reference to Paul as an 'apostle' does not occur until chapter 14 (vs. 4, 14) - after he has been sent from Antioch.

Acts 13, therefore, provides the ingredients for the release of the apostolic.

Let us examine this in more detail:

A 'Gateway' City

First, we see that Antioch was a 'gateway' city.

Antioch, in Syria, the third largest city of the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria, was a commercial and political hub. Close to the frontier between the Greco-Roman world and the Orient, it contained a highly cosmopolitan population. It was the gateway between West and East a city through which commerce, government, many nationalities, and belief-systems found access to larger geographical regions and spheres of influence.

The international complexion of the city and therefore of the church is reflected in its leadership -

"In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch) and Saul." Acts 13:1

In addition to Barnabas from Cyprus and Saul from Tarsus, the leadership consisted of Simeon called Niger (meaning 'black') obviously from Africa; Lucius of Cyrene, from Libya, in North Africa; and Manaen, 'brought up with Herod', a member of the Jewish aristocracy.

As the master-strategist, in this melting pot of the nations, the Holy Spirit chose to give birth to the apostolic. It became the launch pad for the Gentile apostolic mission - for the colony of heaven invading earth.

And so, the 'Antioch model' illustrates that the Holy Spirit is strategic in choosing 'gateway' cities for the raising up of the apostolic.

Even so, it must be remembered that 'forerunners' and 'saviours' most often come from or minister in obscure places before strategic expansion. He sent, for example, John the Baptist into the wilderness; Amos was called from a small country town, and Jesus came from Nazareth. Paul was also taken into Arabia for a season before his strategic placement in Antioch (see Gal 1:17, 18).

The Church of the City

"...in the church in Antioch..." Acts 13:1

God is restoring the church of the city. The coming worldwide visitation will be so extensive, and so, intensive, that one group will not be able to contain it. It will demand a new wineskin - the emerging city-church.

The apostolic church knows nothing of our modern denominational divisions. It was not denominated by theologies or celebrities, but by geographies. Geographical boundaries and civil jurisdictions alone determined the church's boundaries. They were not in competition with one another. When the apostle addressed a church he would speak, for example, to the whole 'church of God in Corinth' (1 Cor 1:2). Evidently, the church, even in these large cosmopolitan cities, was functioning as one unified body.

This brings us again to the content of Paul's revelation of the mystery - 'that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of ONE BODY...' (Eph 3:6).

The revelation of the 'ONE BODY' was not only the 'message' but also the 'method' of Paul's apostolic mission to the Gentiles. Once received it was modelled in the city-church of Antioch and then in Paul's apostolic team. Conceived in the womb of the city-church it was thrust out from the 'ONE BODY' of Antioch to plant and nurture the corporate Christ, city by city, throughout the nations. Paul and his team had hands laid on them by the Antioch church and were 'sent' (apostello) out (see Acts 13:3). And so, "the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, 'Let us go at once to entreat the Lord and seek the Lord Almighty'" (Zech 8:21).

This is in vast contrast to many of the 'apostolic networks' we currently see operating.

Flying the flag of a particular 'network' new members are 'recruited' to that network rather than 're-formed' into the 'ONE BODY' of the city. Consequently they are defined and denominated by their membership with that particular 'apostolic network' rather than by the church of the city. This in my view is not effectively different to our existing denominational divisions.

Because we are in transition this deficiency is understandable. We are emerging from a sub-normal Christianity. And so, the fullness of the apostolic ministry will occur only in harmony with the restoration of the city-church. This will occur as a work of the Spirit and will require distinguishing between two very different spheres of ministry - between the 'church' and the 'work'. It will also demand that one serve the other, but more of this in Part 3.

The apostolic Gentile mission began in Antioch and will continue until the 'full number of the Gentiles has come in' (Rom 11:25). As the parent of that mission, Antioch has imparted its DNA and will, therefore, play out in every authentic expression of the apostolic.

Just as the Church of Ephesus, 'tested those who claimed to be apostles... and found them false' (Rev 2:2), contemporary apostles will also need to be measured and tested.

The marks of an apostle apart from the 'miraculous' (signs, wonders and miracles - 2 Cor 12:12), are seen in the 'man' (in their fellowship of Christ's sufferings for the sake of Christ's body - see 2 Cor 4; 6:3-13; 11:16-12:10; Phil 3:10; Col 1:24-27); in their 'message' (the revelation of the mystery - the one body - Eph 3:2-6); and in their 'method' (the Antioch prototype as discussed here).

The revelation of the mystery of the Father's purpose to raise up a MATURE CORPORATE CHRIST in every city is shown to the 'apostles and prophets' (see Eph 3:5). It will drive them not to build empires and networks but to spend their lives in growing the

`church of the city'. This is the peculiar mission of apostles, prophets, and teachers who are set in the body as the spearhead of heaven coming to earth in a given locality (see 1 Cor 12:28). They do not exist for themselves to be a successful and growing network but for the body of Christ of each locality to come to `the fullness of the stature of Christ' (see Eph 4:11-14).

This DNA only comes by the Spirit - "...it is now being revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets" (Eph 3:5); and is therefore one of the proofs of true apostleship.

Without it, new `apostolic networks' will only prove to be an aberration as self-serving, sectarian, and schismatic as the historic denominations.

And so, when Paul planned to visit Rome, for example, he addressed himself `to all in Rome (to the whole church of the city)...I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong..' (Rom 1:7, 11). He was concerned to impart something of the Spirit to the whole church of the city that would add to their corporate maturity. His apostolic passion and purview took in the whole horizon of the city-church. He was not looking for recruits to grow his own network.

It is time to ask ourselves whether we are merely building a `successful' network or the corporate Christ!

The `Church' and the `Work'

"In the church at Antioch...the Holy Spirit said, `Set apart Paul and Barnabas for the work...'" Acts 13:1-2

Despite the apostolic message and method finding its focus in the city-church, the ONE BODY, there is a clear division of labour. Paul and Barnabas, at the direction of the Holy Spirit, were to be separated from the `church' to the `work'.

This is the birth of the apostolic. Hands are layed on them and they are `sent' (apostello), immediately embarking with John Mark, on the first missionary journey into Asia Minor (modern day Turkey), preaching, winning disciples, planting churches, and appointing elders. On returning to Antioch they give an account of their labours and after a lengthy stay Paul returns, this time with Silas, to "see how they are doing" (Acts 15:36), thus providing oversight for the towns and cities previously visited.

The `church' and the `work' are distinguished in missiology as the `modality' and the `sodality'. They are two distinct spheres of calling. The former referring to the local sphere of congregational life. The latter referring to a trans-local sphere - in fact, to the brotherhood, or association of an apostolic company, separate from the former but given to the work of serving it along with a larger region.

This pattern has been reflected throughout the Christian movement in the various reforming movements, brotherhoods, and missionary movements of both the Catholic and Protestant traditions. However, because of the subnormal condition of church life they have been limited in their ultimate effect despite the often reforming nature of their origins. They have in most cases been born of a true apostolic or prophetic commission.

Even so, in response to the spiritual malaise of the church they have separated from it and given themselves to specialist areas such as missions, prayer, education, or mercy - but, in isolation to the true apostolic burden of the ONE BODY, the corporate Christ of a city. And yet this is the DNA of the original `sodality' of Antioch.

Consequently, our current understanding of so-called `para-church' ministries is aberrant (so also our understanding of the `local church'). As the Holy Spirit restores the fullness of the apostolic and prophetic foundation of the `new thing' God is doing, many `para-church' ministries will either become a part of the city-church diaconate or become fully-fledged apostolic movements serving and facilitating the restoration of the ONE BODY, the city-church, across whole regions of the globe. Others may become ministries

of 'helps' to those movements that have a true and proven apostolic commission. And some will be shut down as the Father plucks up all those things He has not planted.

The Foundation of Apostles and Prophets

If apostles and prophets, in union with Christ as the chief cornerstone, truly are the foundation of God's dwelling (see Eph 2:20-22), these transitions and realignments will only occur as the foundation is re-laid.

This is why intimacy with God is so foundational to what is going down right now, but more of that in a moment.

In any building process first things must be first - first the foundations and then the superstructure "...God sets first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then..." (1 Cor 12:28). This means that for the "dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit" to be raised up across a whole city - for a citywide revival - apostles and prophets are not optional. In fact, without them it begs the question as to what we have really been building. It explains in some measure why the church has stalled in the West, particularly the new city-reaching and church growth technologies.

A restoration or rebuilding process demands the 'uprooting and pulling down' of all that is not true to the original plan. Only then can the 'building and planting' proceed. This is the work of reformation as God shakes all things that can be shaken, so that only the unshakeable will remain - every human system, structure, and sentiment will be shaken until the Kingdom only remains. Our present 'local church' structures are currently experiencing this. The traditional model of a pastor-led congregation operating as a denominational franchise will phase out as the city-church wineskin built on the foundation of apostles and prophets replaces it. This is the Father's original pattern a MATURE CORPORATE SON revealed in every city (see Eph 4:11-13; also for a full explanation see chapter 9 of the author's book, 'Snakes in the Temple: Exposing Idolatry in Today's Church').

And as it was at the first the heavens will again, at this end of the age, resonate with the Father's pleasure as He declares over the CORPORATE CHRIST, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased. Listen to him!" (Mtt 17:5). God will rivet the attention of whole cities and nations as a visible cloud of glory descends over them sweeping multitudes into the Kingdom.

But how will this occur - and how will the apostolic foundation be restored.

The Antioch prototype provides the strategy.

Prophets and Teachers

"In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers..." Acts 13:1

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, but rather that kind of prophetic teaching which is truly transformational. It is not man's wisdom acquired from book learning, but a wisdom taught by the Spirit. It is food for the spirit which 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" - they are John-the-Baptist-type prophets, reformers, and revolutionaries sent to prepare the way of the Lord (see Mtt 23:34).

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 and the city-church.

Prophetic Worship and Intimacy 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 fall into the Great- Heart Himself.

They are not `doing' worship to bring God down - trying to coerce Him to perform or manipulate Him.

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 my table to minister before me" (Ezk 44:16).

Those Levites who pursued other gods will bear the consequences of their unfaithfulness. They will still 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 - and so, His hidden counsels, the hidden things of His heart, will only be revealed to those who have denied all other lovers, remaining true in their devotion to Him.

Over the last five years, with some of the more obvious manifestations of the current renewal subsiding, the Lord has been searching hearts to see whether we would continue to pursue Him, or resort to `business as usual' - to man's programs and planning. Those who have crossed the invisible line of unfaithfulness in the present 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 - from 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 whole churches and movements in their headlong pursuit after the Baals of growth and success will not regain their birthright in the intimate things of God even with weeping.

And so, the apostolic is born of intimacy. Union with Christ is what true apostles are all about, 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 secret things of God's heart as they pertain to the MATURE CORPORATE SON - to the restoration of the city-church built on the foundation of true apostles and prophets with Christ as the chief cornerstone.

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 the Bride for the harvest of the nations.

Rebuilding the `House of the Lord'

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

Just as ancient Israel, when the seventy years had expired, were set free to return and rebuild the temple, so too the people of God in this hour (see 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' (see Acts 3:21) - to restore and rebuild the house of the Lord.

But we have misunderstood the 'house of the Lord' - we have thought it was our 'paneled houses' - our 'local churches' - our franchise outlet for the latest so-called 'apostolic network', new movement, or historic denomination.

We have forgotten that Jesus said, "I will build My church" - that He is completely single-minded about the restoration of "one flock with one shepherd" (Jn 10:16) - the one church of the city.

We have prevaricated by saying, "The time has not yet come for the Lord's house to be built" (Hag 1:2). But the time has come the Lord is asking, "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled 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." Hag 1:5-9

The Lord is about to stir the hearts of His people again. As they hear the prophetic sound of the Haggais and Zechariahs, Zerubbabel and Joshua, 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 - the raising up of the dwelling of God by the Spirit (see Hag 1:12-15).

"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 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...' Zech 4:6-9

The mountain of entrenched patterns - two-thousand years of religious traditions, structures, and sentiments - of self-seeking 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.

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 Cor 4:9-10

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.

Buried in this knowledge (through prophetic worship, declaration and teaching), prophets will prepare the way for a new release of the apostolic according to 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 remnant will believe and come out identifying with the 'new thing' that God is doing. As the old order resists the time will come to withdraw and go to the Gentiles - this will signal the harvest of a new kingdom era.

In particular, this pattern was evident 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

True to the apostolic pattern of separation between the 'church' and the 'work' ('modality' and 'sodality' - refer Part 3) 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.

The School of Tyrannus became an 'apostolic training centre' which 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, out of a fathering relationship, instructed Timothy,

"...the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will also be qualified to teach others." 2 Tim 2:2

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.

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 gave themselves 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 grew 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 flow into His body as it comes to maturity.

In Ephesus healing and deliverance occurred through handkerchiefs touched by Paul. The seven sons of Sceva, using the name of Jesus to exorcise demons without faith, were mocked and overpowered as the demons screamed, "Jesus I know, Paul I know, but who are you?" The whole city was seized by fear and the prince demon of Artemis (Diana) 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 it was bound from this time. While there is no record of Paul confronting this prince power head on, at a later date John stood before the altar of Artemis commanding the demon to leave. Instantly the altar split into pieces and half the temple collapsed!

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