

Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97440

Switzerland
Case Postale 2 701
CH 1002 Lausanne

Canada
P. O. Box 76946, Station "S"
Vancouver, B.C. V5R 5T3

May 1985

Warmest greetings again, brethren:

Issues, concerns, problems, and diverse questions continually arise in the minds of some who find it difficult to accept categorically the "faith once delivered." The Apostle Paul addressed this problem when writing to Titus -- a young minister of the common faith. He wrote, "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9).

The Truth of God has always been subject to the interpretations, "second-guessings," and rationalizations of men. Such actions of men are greatly expanded when complications, troubles, and adversities occur within the Body of "the faith." Events occurring outside the Body of faith do not seem to create the same level of doubts and concern. In a general manner, these doubts and misgivings come from an inadequate understanding of what the Scriptures reveal. On one occasion, Jesus said plainly, the people erred not knowing what the Scriptures said. To put all the textual material together which relates to a given subject requires much patience and effort. Too many people are unwilling to spend the kind of time required to pull together such material. For the most part, men are content to read a few texts and from them form a view which strictly proceeds from their own minds. We must remember, however, our thoughts and ways are not the thoughts and ways of God.

Many times we have been asked why we do not have a specific work -- why we are not broadcasting on tv or radio. The question is a logical one viewed from the premise of what others are doing. But it loses merit when considered in the light of the Biblical record -- a long history of God's dealing with man whom He had created.

In a series of Monthly Letters we hope to make every aspect of this subject clear and understandable. We want to be exhaustive and precise in the material presented.

Under the general term or heading, "Why We Are Not Doing a Specific 'Work' Now!" many subtopics arise. Who alone calls and

commissions? What is meant by the term "commission"? Are servants of God called and commissioned in the last days exactly as they were in the times of the patriarchs? The time of Moses? The judges? The prophets? What about the time of Jesus Christ? What about the apostles? The Apostle Paul? Was a Work done in the last days? Was a specific servant called and commissioned to do the Work of the Lord in the last days? What was prophesied to happen to the Work in the last days? What is the responsibility of the faithful? Is there yet a major work to be done by God in these days before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ? And to this list could be added many peripheral questions that will be answered in the writing of these Letters.

WHY WE ARE NOT DOING A SPECIFIC "WORK" NOW!

God alone has the authority to call and commission -- to commission any servant authorized to speak for Him. Men have created many works for themselves. Of this there is no doubt. Though these works are called "the works of God," is it possible that they fall into the category of those who have run but were not sent by God?

There is an abundance of textual material found in the Bible. To understand this subject properly, it is imperative that we take the time to review carefully the whole historical record of God's dealing with man. In this record is found the evidence of how God calls and commissions His servants at each period of time.

For this Monthly Letter we want to address one issue only: It is the fact, regarding Truth, that God alone calls and commissions. The material covered under this subject will be essential for an acceptable understanding of the remaining questions indicated above.

God Alone Calls and Commissions

God first dealt with the patriarchs. We will begin our review of God's work in their time and then follow history chronologically up to our very day.

The Patriarchs

We are all quite familiar with the history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God dealt with them in a very personal way in order to accomplish His purpose for the present as well as establishing the groundwork for an awesome plan which would encompass the whole history of man. These men were specifically chosen -- selected to carry out very detailed plans. These plans and purposes were not understood in that day. Their significance was revealed many years later. We need not

concern ourselves with them. History speaks for itself. But, let us note an example of how God sent and commissioned the patriarchs.

By the Spirit of God Joseph speaks of his call and commission. Note Genesis 45:7-8. Joseph said, "And God sent me. . . ." Again, he said, "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God. . . ."

Joseph was sent by God. He did not assume such an office or responsibility of his own volition. He bore the authority of God.

Being sent, one can automatically assume that a specific commission went with the call. Was Joseph commissioned? In order to understand this question, it is necessary to grasp the meaning of the term commission. Webster defines it as follows: ". . . a formal written warrant granting the power to perform various acts or duties . . . an authorization or command to act in a prescribed manner or to perform prescribed acts . . . a task or matter entrusted to one as an agent for another. . . ."

What was the commission of Joseph? We read, "And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance" (Gen. 45:7).

By this time, Joseph had come to share a very close personal relationship with the Pharaoh of Egypt. What if he had desired to show his special affection and regard for the Egyptians? Would this have been acceptable with God? Indeed not! When called and commissioned, a servant has the absolute duty to carry out the commission in every detail. He is not free to make his own decisions. He is under the authority of the one who commissions him.

Keeping in mind the above two considerations -- one must be called and then sent, and, if sent, a commission exists -- let us move across the mosaic of history, observing the application of those two principles. Not much elaboration will be offered. But these two basic concepts are imperative.

Moses as a Special Servant of God

Moses was called and sent by God. He did not make the decision to become a servant of God. He was chosen. God said, ". . . Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee." (Moses was not yet quite convinced.) He responded, ". . . Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover

unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you" (Ex. 3:12-15).

When confronting the Pharaoh of Egypt, God told Moses what his response was to be. He said, ". . . thou shalt say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee. . ." (Ex. 7:16).

Many days later, when the children of Israel were in contention with Moses, Moses said to them, ". . . Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind" (Num. 16:28). The people had accused Moses of assuming his position and authority.

Samuel understood the veracity of history -- history as recorded by God. He said, "When Jacob [Israel] was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron. . ." (I Sam. 12:8). It is easy to accept the authenticity of an individual when we are receiving the expectations of our minds. But, the real test comes when we accept that individual when we are required to act in accord with concepts contrary to our desires or expectations. History substantiates the call and commission of Moses regardless of a broad and continual rejection during his time of service. Therefore, proof of call and commission is not based on what the people accept or reject.

Many years later David, through the Holy Spirit of God, understood the fact of Moses' call and commission. He wrote, "He [God] sent Moses his servant; and Aaron whom he had chosen" (Ps. 105:26).

Still many years later, Micah was inspired to write, ". . . I [God] sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam" (Micah 6:4). From the lips of God he emphatically states: "I sent before thee Moses." Is there any room for doubt?

Without doubt Moses was sent as a servant of God. Being sent by God, he bore a specific responsibility. What was the commission God gave to him?

Moses Was Given a Specific Commission

While routinely tending the sheep of his father-in-law, Jethro, Moses was visited by God. He said to Moses, ". . . I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land. . ." (Ex. 3:6-7).

How and by whom was God proposing to deliver Israel from the confines of the nation of Egypt?

"Come [Moses] now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt" (Ex. 3:10). How? See Exodus 6:6.

God worked in a direct and miraculous way with Moses. God, speaking to the children of Israel, said: "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently [margin: plainly], and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (Numbers 12:7-8.) Because of this rejection of the call and commission of Moses, the people had to pay a very great price in human misery and suffering. Because the people had turned from Moses does not mean that God, who had called him, would also turn away from him. No, as long as the servant remains faithful to his commission God will remain faithful to that servant.

Continuing, from our earlier reference to I Samuel 12:8 we see that Samuel knew about the commission of Moses. He said, ". . . then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place."

There were other duties for which Moses was commissioned. He was to deliver the Law of God to the children of Israel. He was to ratify a covenant relationship between God and Israel. There were many duties for which God had called him. In every case he was specifically called and commissioned. In no case did Moses assume any responsibility not given to him. He carried out only the duties God delivered.

Moses was a called, commissioned spokesman for God. God Himself spoke of Moses in the following manner. Rest and stability was to be the domain of Israel ". . . only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them" (II Kings 21:8). Moses, as a human being called of God, was commissioned to deliver the Law to Israel. How can a more specific commission be given?

Moses was commissioned to do mighty works among the Egyptians. In the Psalms David wrote of this charge. "They [Moses and Aaron] shewed his [God's] signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham" (Ps. 106:27). Moses did not assume this responsibility. He was chosen of God to do these specific works. It would seem perverse to assume Moses behaved, mentally, in the same way people of today do when they arrogate specific responsibility to themselves. Somehow the situation today is assumed to be totally different than that of the past. No one deems it necessary to answer the question of why!

According to Jeremiah, one of the specific responsibilities of Moses was to deliver, by command, the laws, statutes, and judgments of God. In Jeremiah 7:23 we read, ". . . this thing commanded I [God] them saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you." Although Moses did the actual speaking, God reveals that the messages were from Him. God commanded Moses, as His chosen servant, and it was his duty to deliver the messages to Israel.

Again, Moses did not presume. He received a specific call from God and was delivered the very message, the words, which he was in turn to deliver to Israel -- the recipients of God's direct action.

For any specific commission to be valid, it must have a messenger, the specifics of the message must be spelled out, and the object of the message must be made known -- that is, to whom the message must be delivered.

Next let us turn to the times of the judges.

The Judges Were Sent

Space will not be taken to analyze each judge. A representative example should be sufficient to show the call and commission of the judges during the approximately 480 years Israel was under their rule. An analysis of the other judges will make it plain they, too, were called by God and charged with a specific work -- commission.

The example we will use is that of Gideon. The story of his responsibility is found in Judges 6.

Gideon was going about his routine business -- he was out in the field tending to his crops. Suddenly an angel appeared to him. Gideon was chosen at that very moment. The angel said to him, ". . . The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour" (vs. 12).

What was his commission? ". . . The Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" (Verse 14.) In verse 16 the commission was expanded. For God told Gideon, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

Samuel Was Sent by God

Samuel bore a multifaceted responsibility as a commissioned servant of God. He is frequently referred to as the "king maker." Samuel was used mightily during the early days of the Monarchy. He was chief counsel to King David.

Samuel did not presume. He was sent by God. For of himself he said, when addressing King Saul, "The Lord sent me. . ." (I Sam. 15:1). Samuel was an obedient servant. He did that which the Lord required of him.

Samuel was not only sent by God, he was commissioned. That is, he bore a specific responsibility as given by God. What was his commission regarding this relationship with Saul? Again, considering verse one, we read, ". . . The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord."

Samuel was specifically sent -- sent by God. He was told to whom he should go. He was plainly told what to do. And, he was told when to perform the task. Plainly, Samuel did not presume anything. How different from those who "think" to presume either commission or duty.

Prophets Must Be Called and Commissioned

As though God anticipated the deceptive nature of man, when speaking with Miriam and Aaron He said, ". . . If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream" (Num. 12:6). When things are of God there is no need for doubt or presumption. Presumption proceeds only from the arrogance of man. Doubt results from a loss of orientation or the fact one never was called to understand or know the truth of any given matter. Those called, and who remain faithful to that call, know and understand.

From the many texts which speak of the call and commission of prophets, let us select a few that are clear and to the point.

". . . The Lord removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets" (II Kings 17:23).

". . . The Lord spake by his servants the prophets, saying. . ." (II Kings 21:10).

"Yet he [God] sent prophets to them. . ." (II Chron. 24:19).

"Wherefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Amaziah, and he [God] sent unto him a prophet. . ." (II Chron. 25:15).

"Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his

dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy" (II Chron. 36:14-16).

". . . The word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear" (Jer. 25:3-4).

God said, "Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying. . ." (Jer. 44:4).

None of these prophets presumed or arrogated responsibility or message to themselves. The purpose of their call was delivered to them directly by God.

The general message of God to His people Israel is to be found in II Kings 21:10-15. This is a message that was repeated over and over before the patience of God wore out.

"And the Lord spake by his servants the prophets, saying, Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols: Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down. And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies; Because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day" (II Kings 21:10-15).

"And they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the Lord; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear. And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord" (II Chron. 24:18-21).

"Wherefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand? And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that the king said unto him, Art thou made of the king's counsel? forbear; why shouldst thou be smitten? Then the prophet forbore, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel" (II Chron. 25:15-16).

"They [the prophets, verse 4] said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever: And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the Lord; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt" (Jer. 25:5-7).

Continuing, God said through Jeremiah, ". . . I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them. . ." (Jer. 35:14-15).

Over and over Jeremiah emphasizes the fact that God sent the prophets and gave them the messages which they were required to deliver to the people. See also Jeremiah 44:2-10. In II Chronicles, referring to the Prophet Jeremiah, emphasis is placed on the fact the prophets did not address the people as a matter of personal choice. On the contrary, they spoke the messages which came from the mouth of the Lord (II Chron. 36:12).

God Delivered Messages Through Specific Prophets

Isaiah was called and commissioned. He was made a fit receptacle for carrying the messages of God. He, as a result of God's choosing, made himself a willing servant (Isa. 6:5-8).

In no way did Isaiah presume anything. The very message to be delivered, the people to whom he was to go, and the very success of his mission were all given to him by God. Isaiah was a vehicle for carrying out the messages of God (Isa. 6:9-12).

Jeremiah was a specifically chosen vessel. He was sent by God (Jer. 1:7). He was given the messages which God wanted delivered (Jer. 1:7). The entire scope and success of his work was given to Jeremiah by God (Jer. 1:7-10).

Many times God required that Jeremiah review Israel's history with them. He had sent many prophets through the years, but Israel had been completely obstinate (Jer. 7:25-28). Yet God commissioned Jeremiah to speak the same words to these rebellious people. He was sent and commissioned by God. His purpose was laid out for him. He presumed nothing. Jeremiah made this plain in Jeremiah 25:3-6.

Ezekiel was the recipient of words directly from God (Ezek. 1:1-3). He was commissioned by God to go directly to the House of Israel and deliver the words which God had given to him (Ezek. 2:1-5). Regardless of behavior, Ezekiel was required to deliver the words of God to the appointed people (Ezek. 2:6-8). His commission was expanded in Ezekiel 3:1-11.

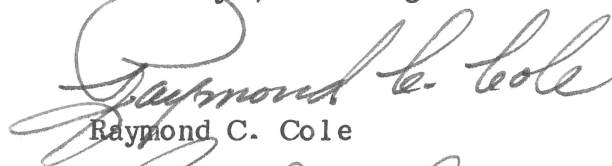
The Prophet Haggai was sent by God (Haggai 1:12). He, too, was specifically instructed by God -- the very words given to him (Haggai 2:2-9).

In like manner, Zechariah was sent by God (Zech. 2:8; 4:9; 6:15). And the length and breadth of his commission was given to him, as was true of all the prophets who preceded him (Zech. 1:1-6; 2:8-11).

In the next Monthly Letter we will cover the times of Christ, the twelve apostles, the Apostle Paul, and on down to our present time. In this panoramic survey of how God dealt with His servants we can readily see evidence that there has never been a change from the beginning to the end.

May we once again convey our deep love and affection to all who earnestly and sincerely seek the will of God and determine to obey Him regardless of the price which has to be paid.

As always, fond regards and love,


Raymond C. Cole


Bryce G. Clark