

# Church of God, The Eternal

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Warmest greetings to all this month:

With the advent of July, I shall continue the subject from the May issue of this Letter. The specific title given to this series of Letters is "Why We Are Not Doing a Specific 'Work' Now!" (By the term "work" we mean only an evangelistic mission.) In order to answer exhaustively that concept, it was necessary to give considerable background information. In May we addressed the subject of "God alone calls and commissions." Because of space, we were able to develop the thought only up to the time of the prophets -- material basically from what is commonly called the "Old Testament."

We are now ready to consider the subject from the time of John the Baptist up to and including the present. As indicated so many times, it will become quite apparent as the subject unfolds how consistent God was, is, and will continue to be for all eternity.

## Background

Men were created physical -- of the flesh, mere dust of the ground. As physical entities they are not knowledgeable of nor subject to things spiritual. That is, they could not understand or obey the Truth.

Because of this natural condition the whole world lies in blindness -- darkness -- and will do so until God wills and elects to change those circumstances. Once the Apostle Paul was called and became the recipient of revealed Truth, he understood this principle. He wrote to the faithful in Rome: "... whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:13-15.)

Those called to convey the Truth or specific message from God must be both called and sent. They are not free to make these choices themselves. Why? Because they -- mere human beings -- neither know

nor understand the Truth until it is revealed to them. Before they can carry out a specific responsibility they must be the recipients of that message. The Truth is the first and great message which proceeds from God. It cannot be known until God makes it known. Once revealed to a chosen servant, God must then commission that servant. A commission bears specific limitations -- these we will understand later.

The freedom granted to mankind by God has been his own undoing. He may not realize this fact yet; it nevertheless is an incontrovertible fact. As a result of this freedom many men have presumed to become the servants of God -- assumed servants without a call or commission. They were neither given a message nor sent, commissioned. However, in their ignorance, most of the world has wandered after these self-styled ministers -- ministers who are preaching without a delivered message the revealed Truth.

The point to remember: Without being called and becoming a recipient of the revealed Truth, no man can be a true servant of God. As Paul stated, ". . . how shall they preach, except they be sent?"

#### All "New Testament" Ministers Are Commissioned

John the Baptist was a transitional minister -- paving the way for the transition from the "old" to the "new." His is a most interesting case. Let us take time to consider carefully.

Many years prior to Christ's time, inspired prophets wrote about that historical era. In the writing of those days, for the most part, neither name nor specific date was given. Yet someone was destined, by special birth or specific call, to fulfill those prophecies -- prophecies which bewildered and intrigued humankind for generations.

Among those unique prophecies is one found in Malachi 3. He wrote: "Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Mal. 3:1-3).

The context of the above Scripture makes it quite obvious the general time involved is the period occurring just before and immediately following the Second Coming of Christ. Why? The Lord (Christ) is coming to the temple, the sons of Levi are being purified, and these

purified sons of Levi will be making righteous offerings. Such statements could not be made specifically concerning any other era of time.

However, do these "plain and obvious" texts have relevancy to any other time? Indeed they do. We shall come to that momentarily.

Another prophecy that interests us at this time is found in Isaiah 40:3. Let us get the message in context, reading from verse one to five. "Comfort, oh, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and tell her that her sad days are gone. Her sins are pardoned, and the Lord will give her twice as many blessings as he gave her punishment before. Listen! I hear the voice of someone shouting, 'Make a road for the Lord through the wilderness; make him a straight, smooth road through the desert. Fill the valleys; level the hills; straighten out the crooked paths and smooth off the rough spots in the road. The glory of the Lord will be seen by all mankind together.' The Lord has spoken--it shall be" (Isa. 40:1-5, Living Bible).

Can Isaiah be referring to any other specific time than that of the Second Coming of Christ? Has anyone, up to this time, seen the glory of Christ, let alone all mankind?

Though the text specifically refers to the time of Christ's Second Coming, does it, perhaps, have an earlier fulfillment in type? Indeed!

Regarding the first appearance of Christ, Mark had this to say: "As it is written in the prophets [plural], Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee" (Mark 1:2). Where is that statement made? In Malachi 3:1. Continuing, Mark says: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Mark 1:3). Where do we find that statement uttered and recorded by a prophet? In Isaiah 40:3.

We are elaborating upon the above particulars for very good reasons:

1. What appears obvious by even a studied evaluation of any given text may not be the "whole" Truth.
2. From the context of the above texts no one could have come to the conclusion that the first appearance of Christ was also intended -- not just the ultimate fulfillment in the Second Coming.
3. The messenger indicated was both specifically called and commissioned -- sent. This prophecy was not -- indeed, could not have been -- fulfilled by anyone who presumed to arrogate to himself that call or commission.

Isaiah and Malachi addressed the matter of Christ's first appearance. In all likelihood, they did not understand the scope and intent of the prophecies which they had written (I Pet. 1:10-12).

True to the character of God, He, at the appointed time, called and sent the one man who was to fulfill those very prophecies. Who was that man? Mark, under inspiration, wrote: "John [called John the Baptist] did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4). The one man, unknown until the time of fulfillment, who was destined to be born and fulfill those significant prophecies was John.

The Bible does not specifically reveal whether or not a number of people attempted to assume this office. Due to the nature of his work and his ultimate fate, it is highly doubtful if Satan prompted any man to presume this mission. In like manner, we have no record of anyone else's assuming Christ's office at His first appearance.

It is interesting, however, that the numbers are legion who have assumed an office involved in the Second Coming of Christ or the anti-typical fulfillment of the prophecies related to John the Baptist. Why? Though no one is informed specifically, one can only "assume" that men want only positions of glory and prominence -- not the sacrificial functions of Christ's first appearance and the ill-fated mission of John the Baptist. What man would look forward to an untimely death?

There were prophetic indications of a work to be done before the first appearance of Christ. The fulfillment could occur only at the time and by the individual chosen of God. Would anyone in his right mind contend that another individual had the right to assume either the office of Christ or John the Baptist?

If such perversity seems obvious and incontrovertible regarding a typical fulfillment, how much more implausible is assuming the right to fulfill the higher, more significant, meaning and purpose of the texts? Yet the world is rife with such deceivers and self-styled servants.

John the Baptist did not choose his mission. He was called and sent. He was the messenger mentioned in the prophecies. Jesus left no doubt about this fact (Luke 7:24-30, John 1:6-9).

The mission of John was unique. He was at one and the same time a culmination of the old way -- he was a prophet -- and the one who paved the way for the new way -- the new came with Jesus Christ.

As the type of someone to come in the last days -- just before the Second Coming of Christ -- he is a role-model for some called and

chosen servant in these last days, someone who is paving the way for the Second Coming of Christ.

It would be presumptive and ludicrous for us to go any further in the above comparison. The only points I desire to convey here are: 1) As John was called and sent, so must someone be in these last days; 2) By the specific call and commission, John fulfilled the requirements of the prophecies, yet he did not realize who he was; 3) Those who presume to preach the Gospel -- deceivers en masse -- who have arrogated responsibility cannot be the real servants! For the messenger is singular. Someone will preach the Gospel and prepare the way for the Second Coming of Christ; and, 4) The people will not necessarily recognize that servant when he appears.

I have spent much time evaluating the mission of John the Baptist. His case is pivotal. Now we must hasten through the other commissions from Christ down to the present.

### Jesus Commissioned

Christ's call and commission can best be comprehended by using a graphic delineation of components. Allow us to make a statement or ask a question and then to supply textual evidence -- in a concise form.

I. As the prophets had been sent, so was Jesus Christ.

- A. Mark 12:1-12 -- In a parable employed by Jesus, He made it plain that other servants had been sent to Israel prior to Christ. Finally, the Father sent His Son whom the people slew.

II. Christ was sent by God the Father.

- A. Luke 10:16 -- "... he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."
- B. John 6:57 -- "As the living Father hath sent me . . ."
- C. John 8:16 -- "... I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me."
- D. John 15:21 -- "... they know not him that sent me."
- E. John 16:5 -- "But now I go my way to him that sent me . . ."
- F. John 17:18 -- "As thou hast sent me into the world . . ."
- G. John 20:21 -- "... as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

III. Jesus made it very clear: He did not independently make the decision to come to the earth.

- A. John 7:28-29 -- "... I am not come of myself . . . he that sent me is true . . . I am from him and he hath sent me."

- B. John 8:42 -- ". . . I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me."
- C. John 12:49 -- ". . . I have not spoken of myself . . ."

IV. The Father sent Christ. He determined the bounds of His responsibility.

- A. Matt. 15:24 -- ". . . he answered and said, I [Christ] am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

V. Being sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, what did He preach?

- A. Mark 1:1 -- "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

VI. The content of that Gospel message was given to Christ.

- A. John 3:34 -- "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God . . ."

Note: As it was true with Christ, so it will be true of every servant called and commissioned by God.

- B. John 5:36 -- ". . . the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."
- C. John 12:49-50 -- ". . . the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. . . . whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."
- D. John 14:24 -- ". . . the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me."
- E. John 17:4 -- "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."
- F. John 17:8 -- ". . . I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me . . ."

VII. What were the specifics of the work which God, the Father, gave to Christ?

- A. Luke 4:18-19 -- ". . . he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."
- B. John 3:17 -- "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."
- C. John 4:34 -- ". . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me . . ."

VIII. What foundational objective underscored the complete work of Christ?

- A. John 11:42 -- ". . . that they may believe that thou hast sent me."
- B. John 17:3 -- ". . . that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."
- C. John 17:8 -- ". . . I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."
- D. John 17:21 -- "That they all may be one . . . that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."
- E. John 17:23 -- ". . . they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me . . ."
- F. John 17:25 -- ". . . the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me."

IX. What was Christ's attitude toward His duty?

- A. John 5:30 -- "I can of mine own self do nothing . . . I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."
- B. John 8:29 -- ". . . the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him."

Can anyone doubt the abundant testimony which proceeded directly from the lips of Christ? He was sent! The message was given to Him. The limits of responsibility were specifically enumerated. He boldly stated He did not come on His own.

As a chosen servant of God, He was sent and commissioned -- specifically. He did not assume or arrogate to Himself responsibility. Being sent, He was given a message. He knew exactly what He was to preach and to whom He was to deliver the message.

Were the details of responsibilities given to others during and following His day equally precise?

### The Twelve Disciples Commissioned

During the earthly ministry of Christ, He elected to train those who were destined to follow Him. Notice the parallels to the ministry of Jesus Christ. During this time of training they were disciples, not apostles.

- I. The Twelve are called to a ministerial service.
  - A. Mark 3:13 -- ". . . and callefth unto him whom he would."
  - B. Mark 6:7 -- "And he called unto him the twelve . . ."
  - C. Luke 9:1 -- "Then he called his twelve disciples . . ."

D. Matt. 10:1 -- "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples . . ."

II. Those Christ had called, He commissioned -- sent.

A. Mark 3:14 -- ". . . he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach."

B. Mark 6:7 -- ". . . called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two . . ."

C. Matt. 10:5 -- "These twelve Jesus sent forth . . ."

D. Matt. 10:16 -- "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves . . ."

III. As the servants of Christ, He imposed limits upon them.

A. Mark 6:7-11 -- ". . . gave them power over unclean spirits; And commanded them . . . take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip . . . be shod with sandals . . . In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart . . . whosoever shall not receive you . . . when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet . . ."

B. Luke 9:2-4 -- ". . . he sent them to preach the kingdom . . . to heal the sick. . . . Take nothing for your journey . . . whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide . . . And whosoever will not receive you . . . shake off the very dust from your feet . . ."

C. Matt. 10:5-15 -- ". . . Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel . . . preach . . . The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils [demons] . . ." See above texts for other particulars.

In sending out His trainees, Christ emulated precisely the circumstances effected in His own call and commission. The twelve disciples were being prepared for a much larger mission -- soon to befall them.

Before we come to the commission of the apostles, let us briefly note another group called by Christ -- the 70.

#### The 70 Were Commissioned

I. They were chosen -- appointed.

A. Luke 10:1 -- ". . . the Lord appointed other seventy also . . ."

II. After appointment, they were sent.

A. Luke 10:1 -- ". . . and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place . . ."



B. Luke 10:3 -- "... behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves."

III. The 70 had restrictions imposed upon them.

A. Luke 10:1-11 -- Please note the specifics of that commission.

Christ's own ministry -- the work He was given to do -- is coming to a conclusion. He had taken the time, earlier, to train apostles who would walk in His footsteps. As Christ was commissioned, so would they be.

### The Twelve Apostles Commissioned

I. The twelve apostles did not volunteer, they were chosen.

A. John 6:70 -- "... Have not I chosen you twelve . . ."

B. John 13:18 -- "... I know whom I have chosen . . ."

C. John 15:16 -- "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you . . ."

D. Acts 1:15-17, 21-26 -- The selection of the one to fill the vacancy created by Judas' failure is ample evidence of the seriousness placed upon the call and commission of a servant to do the bidding of God. Qualifications had to be met. Choice had to be made. Only God can determine these things -- things which belong in the province of God only.

II. Once chosen, the Twelve were commissioned to do the work of God.

A. Luke 11:49 -- "... the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles . . ."

B. John 20:19-21 -- After Christ's resurrection and His return from His meeting with the Father, He met with the congregated disciples. Jesus said to them, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

Note: The word "as" can mean only "in like manner."

C. Matt. 10:16-23 -- The commission and the conditions to be expected are clearly delineated. What they are undertaking will also manifest themselves at the time of the Second Coming of Christ, verse 23.

D. John 17:18 -- "As thou hast sent me [Christ] into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."

III. As the successors of Jesus Christ they bore exactly the same limits.

A. John 17:23 -- "I in thee, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me . . ."

Note: The proof of the ministry of Christ is oneness. Such a condition can transpire only by the presence of Christ, by

the Spirit, in us. Argumentation, strife, doubt, agitation, and contentiousness are not of God. Such manifestations are the evidence of a wrong spirit. The world will recognize us (including the ministry) only as we perfectly emulate Christ -- regardless of time.

- B. Matt. 16:19 -- ". . . I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Christ could give only what He possessed.
  - C. John 17:18 -- "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."
  - D. Matt. 28:19 -- "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . ."
- Whom? The twelve whom Christ was now commissioning (v. 16).

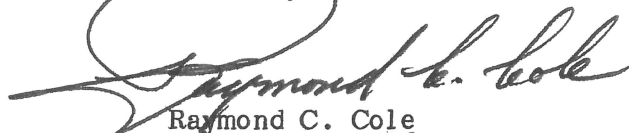
IV. What was the fate of one who wanted to usurp a part of the ministry?

- A. Acts 8:21 -- "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter . . ." Simon was neither originally chosen nor selected by lot at a later date.

Complete analyzation will not be given until after we submit information regarding these last days. It seemed most appropriate to hold this Letter to the ten-page limit and content ourselves to present the evidence of commission in these last days in the September issue. A more thorough documentation can be given at that time. Appropriately, a full and comprehensive analyzation can be given in the same issue -- including the last days.

We hope and pray for a great summer for you all. Despite trying times we can have the peace of God and Christ. To do so we must remember what God's purpose is for this world. Let us always live our faith and conviction.

As always, much love,



Raymond C. Cole



Bryce G. Clark