



Sunday February 07, 2010 The Maturing Church

We are seeing progress and new developments in almost all spheres of life.

The Church – the Body of Christ is also maturing, moving from glory to glory.

This is a vision-casting message, intended to show us where the Body of Christ is and where it is going – so that we as a community of believers will know where we are to go.

Ephesians 4:11-16

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—

16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Are there prophets and apostles in the Body of Christ today? Yes. All of the 5-fold ministry offices are to continue as long as vs 13-16 need to be accomplished, which definitely includes our day.

This means that apostolic ministry and prophetic ministry are valid for our day. All of these ministries are to equip believers. Each ministry reproduces after its own kind. The teacher establishes people with knowledge and understanding and consequently believers mature and start sharing knowledge and understanding of the Lord and His ways with one another. The pastor nurtures and cares for people, and consequently people grow up and start caring for one another. Similarly the prophet activates people to flow in prophetic ministry. The apostle empowers people to become apostolic, move in apostolic authority in their spheres of influence.

Acts 2:16-21

16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 'AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THE LAST DAYS, SAYS GOD, THAT I WILL POUR OUT OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH; YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS.

18 AND ON MY MENSERVANTS AND ON MY MAIDSERVANTS I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT IN THOSE DAYS; AND THEY SHALL PROPHECY.

19 I WILL SHOW WONDERS IN HEAVEN ABOVE AND SIGNS IN THE EARTH BENEATH: BLOOD AND FIRE AND VAPOR OF SMOKE.

20 THE SUN SHALL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS, AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE COMING OF THE GREAT AND AWESOME DAY OF THE LORD.

21 AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS THAT WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED.'

We are in the last days and part of what God will do extensively in the last days is that sons and daughters will prophesy – dreams and visions will abound. Prophetic ministry, supernatural revelation is to be common place.

We must learn to interpret the present in the light of the past, while keeping our eye on the future. And hence, we must know history to understand the present, and guide us for the future.



Lets do a quick review of where the Church has come from and what the Church has gone through.

Acts 2 : *The Church was born on the day of Pentecost.*

Early Church to 100 A.D. : *The years of the Apostolic Church*

The Church manifest much supernatural power through signs, wonders and miracles in the Holy Spirit. This was the norm.

A.D. 100 to A.D. 325 : *The Ante-Nicene Church (also know as the Post-Apostolic Period)*

The Ante-Nicene Period (literally meaning "before Nicaea"), or Post-Apostolic Period, of the history of early Christianity spanned the late first century to the early fourth century, with the end marked by the First Council of Nicaea in 325.

We have the writings of the "Apostolic Fathers" people such as Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, etc. From the lives some of these men such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and others we understand that the supernatural continued to be part of the life of the Church.

In A.D. 312 the Roman Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity, and while giving freedom of worship to all in the empire, made special favours to the church. Emperor Constantine called for the first General Council of the Church in Nicea in A.D. 325 and himself presided over it. He initiated the construction of large building to facilitate religious gatherings of Christians and introduced liturgy and worship style. Later, Christianity was elevated to the status of official religion of Rome. With the interference of the State in the Church we saw the beginning of the decline of the Church.

400–1400 AD : The Church became a spiritually feeble entity during the Dark Ages.

We see the establishment of monasteries and the Roman Catholic church where popes exercised evil as well as religious power over people.

Acts 3:19-21

19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,

21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

Revival and Restoration:

God initiated a process of revival and restoration. It is interesting to see that He almost always raised up an individual with a fresh new message, and with holy boldness to proclaim what He wanted released to the body.

A 100 years before Martin Luther, **John Hus**, who was a professor at the University of Prague and pastor of Bethlehem Chapel, preached justification by faith and the supreme authority of the Scriptures. He was burned at the stake as a heretic in 1415.

1500s the Protestant movement brought the revelation of salvation by grace through faith.

- **Protestant Reformation : Martin Luther** who was a Roman Catholic priest and professor of Theology, on October 31, 1517 nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany – challenging the church's abuse of authority, selling of indulgences for sin, etc. He contended that the Scriptures are final authority and salvation is by faith alone. This signaled the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.



1600s the Puritan movement brought an understanding of the importance of water baptism and separation of Church from the state.

- **Anabaptists** in Switzerland who insisted on baptism for believers only and rejected infant baptism. They also believed in the “prophethood of all believers and charismatic experiences.
- **French Prophets** : The Reformation hit France and around 1560 we see the French Protestants. Later in the 1600s these people experienced a powerful work of the Spirit in their midst and came to be known as the French Prophets because of tongues, visions, prophetic utterances being very common in their midst.
- **The Quakers** : Around 1650s, **George Fox** rose as a spiritual leader to a movement or group called the Quakers in England. They were called Quakers because of the response of trembling in the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit.

1700s the Holiness movement brought an understanding of sanctification, of the Church being separated from the world.

- **The Moravian Revival : Count Zinzendorf** was a leader among the Moravians who experienced a powerful outpouring of the Spirit during the 1700s. The Moravians were first to start 24/7 prayer where they had a group of 77 people praying in shifts 24/7. They were among the earliest to send out missionaries to Europe, North and South America, Asia and Africa.
- **The Methodist Revival : John Wesley** rose up as a spiritual leader in England, sparked a revival that birthed the Methodist movement. He emphasized sanctification, or holy living, subsequent to the new birth. Wesley also had powerful encounters with the Holy Spirit.
- **The Great Awakening** (1726-1750) in America under the leadership of **Jonathan Edwards** who was the pastor of a Congregational Church in Northampton, MA, and **George Whitfield**, who arrived in America, from England. George Whitfield, was a friend of the Wesley brothers. Signs and wonders accompanied his preaching.

1800s the Divine Healing movement brought a revelation and demonstration of God’s healing power for the physical body.

- **The Second Great Awakening** (1800-1840) saw the spread of the Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist churches across America. **Charles Finney** was used powerfully as a revivalist across America. Several other leaders include **A.J. Gordon, D.L. Moody, and R.A. Torrey**.
- **Healing Evangelists** : Starting in the 1800s and on into the 1900s we see many men and women of God used powerfully to bring divine healing to people. **Maria Woodworth-Etter, John G. Lake, Smith Wigglesworth**, and others.

1900s the Pentecostal movement brought a revelation of the Holy Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues.

1900 Charles Fox Parham at Bethel Bible College, in Topeka, Kansas mid-night 1900-1901, prayed and saw one of their students baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues.

1904 The Welsh Revival under Evan Roberts

1905 William Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival, Los Angeles, CA

1905 outpouring in Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission, Kedgaon, Maharashtra

1909 Revival in South America



Following the Pentecostal movement, there have been several clearly identifiable moves in the Church that have caused the Body of Christ to rise to higher realms in God. The five-fold ministry gifts of evangelist (1950-60s), teacher (1970s), pastor (1970s), prophet (1980s) and apostle (1990s) have each been restored to the Body have Christ.

2000s the saints movement

We are now in that time in God's calendar where the saints are being equipped and released into the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11,12).

God has brought about a great work of restoration in the Church and is leading the Church forward to where He wants it to be.

What are we seeing in the Church today. While there are many diverse and notable things, I want to bring your attention to 7 major movements in the Body of Christ, which we must not miss:

1. The release of prophetic – prophetic ministry affecting prayer, intercession, worship, art, business and touching almost every sphere according to Acts 2:17,18
2. The rising of true apostles, apostolic ministries and apostolic churches – causing the expansion of the Kingdom of God geographically and into several spheres of society that otherwise was untouched
3. The supernatural being released through every believer according to Mark 16:17,18
4. 24/7 Prayer and Worship
 - More and more churches around the world are sensing the desire to come together in 24/7 prayer as in Leviticus 6:13
 - On September 19, 1999, the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Missouri, under the leadership of pastor Mike Bickel, started a prayer and worship meeting that has continued for twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week ever since. The prayer room has been designed to reflect the tabernacle of David (1 Chr. 22–24); where we never cease worshipping the Lord and interceding for our world. There are twelve, two-hour prayer sessions a day which transition every two hours; each is guided by one of two prayer formats: intercession, and worship with the Word. They have added Healing Rooms and Prophetic Rooms where people can come and receive ministry.
5. Seven Mountain Assignment and the Equipping of Marketplace believers
 - In 1975 God simultaneously gave both Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade and Loren Cunningham, founder of YWAM, a message to share with each other: "The culture is shaped by seven mind-molders or mountains of society. If we can influence each of these areas for Christ, we will win the culture of our nation." What are the 7 mountains? Arts & Entertainment (or Celebration), Business (or Economy), Education, Family, Government, Media, Religion
6. Believers responding to the problems of society
 - Once again this is not something new. The Early Church practiced addressing the social needs as in distributing food, and sending relief in time of famine. During the period of modern missions – the establishing of medical hospitals, educational institutions, were part of what missions included to address the needs of society. However, we are seeing a revival in this area as believers are proactively and wisely addressing social evils present in different cultures.
7. Introduction of forms of ministry and worship that are relevant
 - We are seeing the church welcome creative arts, drama, contemporary music and creative media both in to the worship and in to outreach to people.



Where is all this taking the Church –

- To be the kind of Church Jesus spoke of in Matthew 16:18,19
- To disciple nations (Matthew 28:19,20 Matthew 24:14)
- To be a bride that would be ready for the Bridegroom (Ephesians 5:25-27)

As with a new move in the Body of Christ, we need to be careful of any extreme or improper emphasis that takes our focus away from God and His purposes. We need to navigate through every wrong wind of doctrine and yet catch the wind of the Spirit so that we go where He is taking the Church.

The Early Church had to navigate through such transitions:

Acts 10,11 – when God wanted to extend the Gospel to the Gentiles, He spoke to Peter. Peter after he went and ministered to the Gentile family of Cornelius was the apostles and other Jewish brethren “contended with” Peter (Acts 11). This is how it is with every “new” thing that the wind of the Spirit takes the Church in to. There are those who do not understand and who contend against it.

Right after this there came a wind of wrong doctrine. God was doing His thing and along came some Jewish brothers compelling the new Gentile believers to follow Jewish customs in order to be truly saved!

Acts 15 – so the apostles met, and this time Paul and Barnabas shared what God was doing and then the apostles corrected the erroneous teaching that had crept in, around a new and genuine move of God.

For example some of the dangers of each of the above movements taking place in the Church:

1. The release of prophetic
 - Danger of believers not understanding how to test and interpret prophecy.
 - Danger of believers substituting God’s written Word with personal prophecy.
2. The rising of true apostles, apostolic ministries and apostolic churches
 - Danger of abuse of apostolic authority
3. The supernatural being released through every believer
 - Danger of not understanding the balance between the natural and the supernatural
 - Danger of the fear of the supernatural move of God
4. 24/7 Prayer and Worship
 - Danger of not going out in to the world to make a difference
5. Seven Mountain Assignment and the Equipping of Marketplace believers
 - Danger of believers being overcome by the culture and world in the process of attempting to change it
6. Believers responding to the problems of society
 - Danger of relishing good works instead of personal intimacy with God.
7. Introduction of forms of ministry and worship that are relevant
 - Danger of dependence on the latest and greatest creative expression instead of the supernatural power of God.

And yet we cannot allow any of the potential dangers to keep us from moving forward and going with God.



We as a church must set our sails to the wind of the Spirit and go where the Spirit of God is taking the Church – the Body of Christ.

1. The release of prophetic – prophetic ministry affecting prayer, intercession, worship, art, business and touching almost every sphere
2. The rising of true apostles, apostolic ministries and apostolic churches – causing the expansion of the Kingdom of God geographically and into several spheres of society that otherwise was untouched
3. The supernatural being released through every believer
4. 24/7 Prayer and Worship
5. Seven Mountain Assignment and the Equipping of Marketplace believers
6. Believers responding to the problems of society
7. Introduction of forms of ministry and worship that are relevant

We must learn, we must equip ourselves, we must move forward. We may make mistakes – but we learn, wise up and keep moving ahead.

How are we going to do this?

1, New Wineskins

Matthew 9:17 Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

When God releases new wine, it is our responsibility to adapt and present a new wineskin. Will you and I be willing to adapt and present a new wineskin to God, so that He can release the new wine of His Spirit in our midst.

Our wineskin includes :

- our mindsets about God, His Word, His Spirit, His Church
- our beliefs on who God is, How He works, etc.
- our ways on how we do things
- our will on what we want, etc.

2, Equipping

Weekend School of Prophetic Ministry Mar 20,21 (Sat,Sun)



USEFUL RESOURCES



Watch our online Sunday Church service live stream every Sunday at 10:30am (Indian Time, GMT+5:30). Spirit filled, anointed worship, Word and ministry for healing, miracles, and deliverance.

YOUTUBE: <https://youtube.com/allpeopleschurchbangalore>

WEBSITE: <https://apcwo.org/live>

Our other websites and free resources:

CHURCH: <https://apcwo.org>

FREE SERMONS: <https://apcwo.org/resources/sermons>

FREE BOOKS: <https://apcwo.org/books/english>

DAILY DEVOTIONALS: <https://apcwo.org/resources/daily-devotional>

JESUS CHRIST: <https://examiningjesus.com>

BIBLE COLLEGE: <https://apcbiblecollege.org>

E-LEARNING: <https://apcbiblecollege.org/elearn>

WEEKEND SCHOOLS: <https://apcwo.org/ministries/weekend-schools>

COUNSELING: <https://chrysalislife.org>

MUSIC: <https://apcmusic.org>

MINISTERS FELLOWSHIP: <https://pamfi.org>

CHURCH APP: <https://apcwo.org/app>

CHURCHES: <https://apcwo.org/ministries/churches>

WORLD MISSIONS: <https://apcworldmissions.org>