

A corporate messenger

Are messengers like John the Baptist sent to us today? In a sense, no, in that John was the greatest and last prophet of that Old Testament order. Jesus came and sent twelve disciples, and then seventy more, as messengers to go before Him. They took the place of John the Baptist, and had such an impact that Herod thought John had come back from the dead. And so it was that a corporate administration took up the messenger task. In fact, the whole body of New Testament believers in Christ became one collective messenger to the nations.

All the members of Christ are sent out to bring the gospel of peace. We are sent out in peace to find sons of peace. We all have grace according to Christ's gift. At the same time, there is still an order by which the messenger voice of Christ is expressed: 'first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations'.

In practice then, we all receive and submit to one another, just as we are 'sent' to share the gospel with one another, as messengers. At the same time, there are specific gifts of grace that carry the authority of Christ as messengers. Apostles (one who is sent) are foremost in this, together with the prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers that comprise the five-fold ministry of Christ. If these five form the 'hand' of Christ, of which John wrote in the Revelation vision, then there are also seven messengers 'in' this hand; one messenger for each of the lampstand churches. Each of these 'messengers', symbolised as 'stars', is a collective messenger comprising watchmen, elders, deacons and faithful pillars of the church.

References:

Luke 9:7-9
Eph 6:15
1 Cor 12:28
Rev 1:20:2:1

Further Study

Rev 1

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 21

Members of Christ

The members of Christ who share the truth with one another, are all part of a corporate messenger. At the same time, there are ascension gift messengers with the hallmark of 'five' (the hand of Christ) and also 'seven' (elders-deacons), as seen in the book of Revelation. The important lesson is that we are able to receive the testimony of God from whomever it comes. This is how we live in a messenger culture. We are always receiving what is new, and not just patching what is old.

After hearing the message of John's baptism, it was necessary for his disciples to move forward to receive Christ and His collective messenger. In the New Testament account, we find there were many who did receive John's baptism. They heard his message, embraced the need for change and for repentance, but fell into a gap between the old and the new. As the gospel spread, the disciples of John needed direction in order to proceed in the new creation message.

Across the church today, many believers live in a condition that could be described as 'John's baptism'. Just like the multitudes around John the Baptist, many have heard and prepared themselves. But they have received no further direction as to how to move forward. The problem is the lack of messengers who are able to open our eyes to behold the Lamb. Jesus identified the problem when He found those who were 'willing for a time' to hear the message of preparation. However, they did not embrace the Lamb, the One sent with the life of new creation

References:

Matt 9:17 John 5:35
John 4:31-38 Acts 18:25
Acts 19:3 Rev 1:201
Cor 12:28 Eph 4:11

Further Study

Acts 18

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 22

Receiving the word

Like in former days, not all will receive and believe the word. At the time of John the Baptist there were thousands who heard him and spread out proclaiming across that middle-eastern region. They found the Lamb and followed on to participate in the new creation. But many stayed with the little they had received, and others plainly opposed the truth when it was embodied before their eyes. This brings us again to the matter of our first commitment; a commitment to receiving and believing the word. Our commitment does not begin with receiving Christ. It begins with receiving the messengers He sends with the word of life.

Are our broken hearts being 'exalted' and our proud hearts being 'brought low' so that we can follow the highway of God? Are we ready to reveal the life of someone else, namely Christ, instead of our own lives? Can we decrease so that He may increase? Are our hearts turned to the fathers and to the children? Are we breaking through to the way of God, the way of offering, of giving and receiving? Are our eyes open? Are we ready to follow the Lamb to the birthplace of fellowship? Are we prepared to come to the end of ourselves as we participate in His death? Will we now live to hear the word of God proclaimed to us by others; by those whom God sends? Will we obey that word, and make a highway for our God? We must repent in order to see what is being revealed to us, and we prepare to receive another kingdom entirely. We must commit to receiving what is beyond our own experience and knowledge. In this way, we will have a 'seal' that God is true.

References:

John 8:30-31 John 3:33
John 6:66, 68 Phil 2:16
1 John 1:1

Further Study

John 6

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 23

Receiving and revealing

The disciple John learned a great deal from John the Baptist. He was prepared as one of his disciples. When the cry came, 'Behold the Lamb', John, with Andrew, immediately left the Baptist and 'followed Jesus'. The Gospel accounts that 'Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi ... where are You staying?" He said to them, "Come and see". They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day.' We can only marvel at John's simple account of his own story. Right there and then, John was committed to following the Lamb wherever He went. He beheld the Lamb, and now the Lamb invited him to 'come and see'. Come and behold!

Concealed in this simple story was the simplicity of eternal truth. The Lamb! The Lamb is the whole story. To follow Him is to proceed to the absolute truth, from beginning to end. There is no greater declaration that comes to the ears of any man. 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'

Following the Lamb became the whole story for John from that day forward. In time, John would not only follow the Lamb, but learn to be 'of' the Lamb, and then see where He was leading. We should pause to reflect on the simplicity of this encounter. The disciples found fellowship with the Lamb. This was a meeting of persons, in a genuine desire to know and be known. The disciples manifested nothing but a pure and simple desire to follow.

References:

Rev 7:13-17
John 1:29, 35-39
John 21:19-22
3 John 1:3-4

Further Study

John 21

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 24

Looking for the Lamb

How much had John the Baptist told his disciples? Quite a lot, from what John told us in his Gospel, where he quoted from the Baptist's teachings. John the Baptist would have been aware of the prophecies spoken at his birth and, therefore, of the Old Testament prophecies concerning his mandate. How much did he teach those disciples from the Scriptures? Did he tell them about the Lamb?

He was barely six months older than the Messiah. Although the two were relatives, certainly John 'did not know Him'. But John the Baptist longed for Him to be revealed. He must have known this was the time. So he took up his ministry eagerly. He came baptising so that Christ would be revealed. Imagine John's delight when the Son of God came to him to be baptised.

We cannot forget that this one who was now baptising Christ had leapt in the womb thirty years earlier, when Mary, with child, had come to the house of John's parents, Elizabeth and Zacharias. What worship would have filled his heart on that day! He had found the Lamb. We're reminded of a similar scene in the book of Revelation where the disciple John wept until the Lamb was found; until He was found worthy to open the seven-sealed book, signalling the time of the end. Yes indeed, men and women weep until they find the Lamb. But in finding Him, there is pure relief. What hope and expectation is nurtured in the hearts of men and women as they prepare to meet Him! And, certainly, there is no joy equal to that of longing hearts finding the Lamb and the eternal fellowship that He offers.

References:

John 3:27-36 John 1:31
Luke 1:40-41 Rev 5:4
Isa 40:3-4 Matt 11:10
Mal 3:1

Further Study

Rev 5

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 25