

The Mystery of Incarnation (7 of 9)

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing the pre-incarnate life of Christ, the sending of the Son, and the origin of true worship from the throne of heaven.

Duration: 1:06:39

Scripture: Isaiah 6:8, Acts 13:1

Topics: "Incarnation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the relationship between the Father and the Son in the context of the church and ministry. He highlights the need for humility and recognizing our position as creatures before the Creator. The speaker shares a personal experience of being overwhelmed by the presence of God and realizing his own insignificance. He also mentions a challenging moment during a speaking engagement in Africa where he felt the atmosphere was not conducive to delivering a prophetic message.

Transcript

One of the neglected considerations of the Church in our generation, but we have made faint allusions to it as we have been proceeding, is the pre-incarnate life of Christ before he took upon himself humanity. There's an immeasurable history of relationship with the Father and the Son before the advent of his coming into the earth that has been virtually ignored, as if history begins with the advent of Jesus in human form. But it begins before that, and the failure to consider that earlier history gives us an inadequate knowledge and understanding of both the Father and the Son.

We have to know the glory that the Son forfeited in coming, and in coming voluntarily and freely, and that the Father sent the Son is the first instance of apostolic reality. It's the first sending, and the first of anything is always a prototype, the classic formulation of every subsequent expression that contains the constituent elements of any sending, which is to say, of any apostolic act. So the sending of the Son was the first apostolic act.

And if you follow out the use of the word sending and sent, it confirms it in every place. Jesus said, as the Father has sent me, so send I you. And the first apostolic sending in Acts chapter 13 from Antioch, when the Holy Ghost separated unto me Saul, Paul, and Barnabas for their work, unto whom I have called them, so after they had fasted and prayed, they laid hands upon them.

So they being sent by the Holy Ghost went. So there's a reiteration of the word sent. There's a sending, and of course the Greek word, as I've already mentioned, apostolos means sent one.

God's lament about the false prophets is, I did not send them, yet they ran. And that's more a description today of what takes place under the words apostolic and prophetic. I did not send them, yet they ran.

So the issue of sending is critical, and it goes back to the beginning in the agreement between Father and Son to be sent, and the Son, in his own freedom, voluntarily agreeing. So my new favorite author, P.T. Forsythe, has a whole chapter on the pre-incarnate life of Christ, and that Christ's earthly humiliation had to have its foundations laid in heaven, and needs to be reviewed as a renunciation before the world was. The cross took place before the cross.

The cross had its origins in eternity. The agreement of the Father and the Son to be sent, and the renunciation of the relationship with the Father in the most pure form in which the Son enjoyed it, was already the expression of the cross. Got that? Well, failure to understand that, and to appreciate that, and to factor that in, robs us of a fuller appreciation of the whole mystery of the faith.

And maybe this is the very thing that cheats us from that final stage of love and appreciation, which is called adoration. And with adoration that I somehow suspect is the whole key to power, and the ultimate reality of expression and service in God, and that the issue of the pre-incarnate relationship between Father and Son is that missing factor that brings the fuller revelation, and brings us across that threshold of respect, admiration, appreciation, to the place of adoration itself. So, Forsythe is right that this earthly humiliation had to have its foundation in heaven.

It was not initiated in earth, but in heaven, in the agreement between the Father and Son of what the sending would require before the world was. It was an eternal resolve between Father and Son, an act within the Godhead. Isn't that a remarkable phrase? That nothing less will carry the fullness of faith, this is my statement, and that the adoration of Christ must go together with this view of him, that his sacrifice began before he came into the world, that there was a Calvary above before there was one below.

So the issue of the cross, and renunciation, denial, had its origin in heaven, though it was acted out in earth. But if you ignore the heavenly origin, you miss something of the greater glory of God and his character, because as she said, this was an act within the Godhead itself. This is very God, and we have lost the consideration, both of the pre-incarnate Christ and the post-resurrection Christ.

Isn't that interesting? There's very little consideration of the ascension of Christ. We dote on his earthly history, and well that we should, and then there's a resurrection, and we consider that as well we should. But the ascension of Christ and the enthronement lies in the same kind of neglect as does the pre-incarnate life, and yet one is the other side of the same coin.

The coming down and the going up is part of the total mystery of the great redemptive work of God that needs to be factored in and computed if we are to give God the full appreciation and recognition and devotion that he deserves. That's why I'm sharing this before you have your committees, that this will be taken into your consideration. Because Jesus said to Nicodemus, No man can ascend who has not first descended.

Something must go down before it comes up. Not only something, but I would almost say everything has to come down before it can go up, including and maybe especially our worship. Can you put your piper

away for the moment unless you're looking for it? I'm going to be talking in another minute or two about worship, and the issue of true worship has like the issue of anything that is apostolic to come down before it can go up.

Something has to be given from the throne of heaven. Every true act, every true work, reality itself, has its nexus and its origin at the throne of heaven. So that's why Jesus said, No man can ascend who has not first descended, even the Son of Man who is in heaven.

Though his feet are in Jerusalem, his essential being is from above. So we've lost this consideration, and it needs to be restored. That true worship has to have its origin first from the Father, from the throne, before it can find its expression out from the earth.

But if it begins from the earth, humanly, however well-meaning the intention, and however aided and abetted by instrumentation, it's lacking that heavenly quality that is true, and becomes an issue of musicality, or enjoyment for the congregation. But it's not a worship unto the Most High. Did you ever hear me quote the brother who spoke once in our morning prayer meeting years ago and said, It takes God to love God.

I thought that was the best thing that I'd ever heard him say. Maybe one of the best things I ever heard anyone say. It takes God to love God.

That only God can convey the love appropriate to himself. And by the same measure, only God can convey the worship appropriate to himself. That's why he's got to send.

Because anything that issues from us, however well-meaning our intention, lacks the quality that only God can imbue in those things which he initiates and originates from the throne in sending. So the genius of the word apostolic is sent. And the presumption of a religious generation is to run though they were not sent.

God says, I never sent them. He had to send his son. And then his son sends his disciples.

And so the root of apostolic reality is struck from the very inception of redemptive glory in the sending of the son by the father before the world was. So that the issue of the cross is already in the Godhead itself and finds its expression in the sending of the son because the separation and the coming into the earth in that sending is sacrifice. Loss of the pure intimacy that Jesus enjoyed with the father in the eternal experience that was his before his sending.

And then the humiliation that awaits is coming into the earth. The humiliation of just being a man, let alone taking upon himself the form of a man, becoming a servant and dying in the cruelest form, even the death of the cross, was all foreknown and necessary and known in that sending. That's why Paul, who has had a greater sense of this in his apostolic knowledge, as a sent one, says, who can separate us from the love of God? Can persecution or deprivation or this or that or sickness or any factor separate us from the love of God? What made his statement so sublime and so sweeping? Because he factors in the love of God not just from the commencement of Jesus' earthly ministry but from the commencement of his sending.

The pre-incarnate sending is already the expression of the love of God that God sent his son. God so loved the world that he gave. And so he has a sense of that love that factors in much more than just the conduct and acts of Jesus in his earthly tenure but apprehends also the sending as being the very act of love.

He goes to the origin. And therefore he has a sweeping sense of the love of God that finds its expression in that remarkable statement in Corinthians. Who shall separate us from the love of God? How does he know it that deeply? Because he's apprehending and considering something that the Church by and large has neglected.

Namely the pre-incarnate life of Christ as well as the life that took place with his becoming man. And Forsyth says that in that sending he consented not only to die but to be born. Isn't that remarkable? He consented not only to die but to be born.

That he would take upon himself the form of a man and the humility of infancy and dependency and all those things to which he must come as very God. Reggie's showing me a verse that ties in perfectly in the Gospel of John. And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.

It would take a Holy Ghost inspired imagination even to begin to sense what that glory was as you're hinting at it. And that that was left behind and forsaken as part of a sacrifice of love in the willing voluntary obedience of Jesus as a son to the Father in Heaven to come down and enter this earth and to suffer birth and then subsequent death. That's why Forsyth calls it an act within the Godhead.

But it requires an act. It's inherent in the Godhead, it's intrinsic in the Godhead. It's the nature of the Godhead but required an act to explicate and bring that glory down to earth which the son voluntarily agreed to do in his own freedom and the father in his freedom in sending the son.

They're explicating and showing forth in an act what was already with them in their own nature. So when Jesus takes upon himself the form of a servant he's not taking up a pseudo identity he's revealing the truth of God. God is servanthood.

This ought to begin to stir in us some sense of what Heaven itself is and the glory that I had with you. What kind of an environment did the son enjoy with the father? Is that why it says that every good and perfect thing comes down from above from the father of lights and whom there is no shadow no verbenas of turning. Every good and perfect thing comes down from the father of lights from Heaven which is the nexus, the seat of glory of purity, of righteousness, of holiness.

That's why everything must come down and must be sent and anything that has its origin out except from that place is dubious and in question and even counterfeit if it dares use the word apostolic because it is not sent. So the first act is the sending from Heaven of that glory, out of that glory by the will of the father of the son is the root of what is itself apostolic and every subsequent act has in some way to have its character from that sending and be of like kind. You have a jealousy that you'll wait and not initiate anything that is expedient or humanly or religiously necessary if it is not given from above because every good and perfect thing comes down from above from the father of lights.

This is a priestly jealousy and a priestly insistence so that it's interesting that Jesus is called in Hebrews 3.1 the high priest and the apostle of our confession. He could not be the apostle of our confession if he had not the high priestly regard for Heaven for the father, for the glory, for what is with God and its purity and then being sent down to communicate something of that reality into the earth. So we have it to the degree we have a priestly appreciation which means to wait from that which is given and not to commandeer let alone to misrepresent or to humanly affect something that only God can give.

That's why so much of our Christianity is bogus that's why so much of our worship is musicality but has not its origin from above and I'm going to get into that in just a few moments. So the origin of every true act is from God himself including this morning like I had no intention that we should have a class on Wednesday. Wednesday is not a class day Wednesday was given over to other purposes but something came in waiting upon the Lord of what I'm now attempting to express but it has to come down from above merely for man to insert something that he thinks is appropriate is sound and fury signifying nothing.

So can we be sons without being priests? Can there be a sonship of the kind that Jesus set forth before us in his own example by being both priest and apostle if we ourselves have not the priestly disposition to wait for what comes down from above and not to initiate to check that human impulse like the strange fire that was initiated by two sons in their own impulse, not waiting. And in Isaiah chapter 6 in the vision that Isaiah has he sees the Lord high and lifted up the voice of the Father says to the Son and whom shall we send and who will go for us? So wherever you look just take the Strong's Concordance and check out the word send and send and it's a remarkable catalog of the acts of God that wait on the issue of sending which is the root of the word apostolos Who shall go for us? Whom shall we send? And what does Isaiah say? Send me. So it's presumptuous to think that true worship or service can issue from ourselves independent of that source and that the miracle of incarnation is the miracle of ascending from heaven and an ascension that what came down went up in the receiving of the Son who was obedient unto death and that this is the master theme I don't know about musical terms but we talked once about symphonies and a great theme is sounded like Beethoven's fifth that struck from the beginning and then the symphony weaves in and out and intricately plays sub themes and then the great crescendo comes again at the climax and you come back again so what I'm suggesting, though I don't have any technical musical knowledge, but a love for the symphonic form which I believe that God imbued these great composers with is that this is the great is the sending of the Son into the earth this is the great theme struck that has at its heart the whole issue of what must come down from above and sent from the Father is that the whole nexus of reality and of the Church and of what is apostolic and what is prophetic is the issue struck first by the act of the Father and the Son that's the great theme.

Everything else is a plane on that theme Jesus was crucified and church legend says that Isaiah was sawed in half and he was sent to do what? To speak a word that would pronounce judgment upon Israel in which they are fixed even to this day if you read Isaiah 6 through. Speak this so that the ears will be closed, their hearts will be, that they cannot hear they cannot believe, they cannot be saved his word was a word of judgment and Israel still languishes under that judgment spoken by the man who was sent Jesus was sent for the purpose of judgment also to bear it himself so it's no light thing to be a sent one maybe that's why we prefer initiating our own activity because the consequence for us in that would be less than that borne by those who are sent if you're going to be sent, brace yourself there's going to be a weight and a responsibility and a consequence that will not be pleasing but it will be glorious think of the sending of the child Samuel after three times he's called by name thinking that it was the old man bidding him and he ran to him each time the two times and said if you hear it again it's not me it's God and so he heard Samuel and he, yes, thy servant heareth and then God gives him a statement of judgment that's to come upon Israel, to come upon Eli himself and his house and the old man when he wakens and he knows that Samuel has had a visitation, what did the Lord tell you? so the first expression of Samuel's prophetic call is to speak the words of judgment and it says because Samuel did not withhold the words of the Lord, God did not allow his words to fall and so a prophet had come to Israel with the obedience of speaking the sent thing though it was the word of judgment so this sending is not some little frothy like thing, it's costly it requires God but it's at the heart of reality itself of which Jesus is the first expression well I have here my

first message on this subject, Eileen was there in Brooklyn at a Hispanic church where they first expressed these thoughts publicly about the issue of worship contemporary worship, quoting from Oswald Chambers where he said, those times the times of the felt presence of God that is holy, holy, holy and transcendent are the gift of God entirely you cannot give them to yourself when you choose you can't fabricate this, you can't create humanly from below an atmosphere of that kind, it's a gift that comes down from above and the whole issue of the church and it's priestly call is to recognize that every good and perfect thing comes down from above and the ability and patience to wait for it and that when it is received, it is received with gratitude as a gift and even as a mercy because we're told that our destiny toward the Israel and the Jew is to extend mercy that they may obtain mercy but unless we are daily and Sunday by Sunday recognizing that what comes down to us is from above as a gift and as a mercy that evokes our gratitude, how should we have a mercy to extend?

So every Sunday there's an issue being propounded before the church either to grow in its apostolic awareness and its reality, its gratitude for the gift that has come down from the throne even of the sense of God's presence and the ability to worship for which there's a thankfulness and a gratitude and a praise and a recognition that everything that has come down is purest mercy. We even prayed this morning for grace, even to share this morning grace Lord, you came full of grace and truth so the whole issue of the church, its reality its knowledge of God is the recognition of what comes down from the throne and what man cannot order you cannot give it to yourself when you choose.

When it comes it's a gift of God from the throne for which we need to express gratitude for the mercy of that gift. So the very elements that are constituent in the church that is the church is every Sunday at issue over the question of worship but if the worship that we perform has its origin from below and just at the command at a platform, then we cut off the source of the renewal of that reality that is at the heart of what is apostolic. And I'm speaking this into a church whose pastor is called an apostle and the message went over like I don't know what, like lead I'm even looking at them squirming in their seats while at the same time people are standing up in different places of the congregation spontaneously like wow, what are we hearing? This is truth so while that was taking place the pastor himself with his wife were greatly uncomfortable because it was challenging the whole structure of a church predicated on a kind of worship that does not look to the throne or wait for that which comes down from above as sent but has its origin from the platform itself by man and that the church is under obligation to present a certain environment conducive to the enjoyment of men because they're filled up every Sunday with hundreds of Hispanics who, as I said, their daily life in that week is essentially God-less, God-rejecting or indifferent.

So they come hungover dulled by a week of indifference toward God, needing a fix of an emotional or a soulful kind for which men cannot afford to wait if it will be given or given at all but they fabricate from the platform something needed for that emotional need to meet that emotional need and cut off the prospect of God's sending when he sees that he is being preempted and that men themselves are taking the initiative who do not believe that every good and perfect thing must come down from above, he draws back that dove retreats he will not compete with men, he just recedes and lets men do his thing.

And so every week something is going forth from below rather than from above and we're losing the vital connection and awareness that is at the root of what is apostolic, even while we're taking to ourselves the title what is so tragic is that Paul tells us in Romans 10 how shall they believe in him of whom they've not heard, speaking about the Jew and how shall they hear except one preach and how shall one preach except he be sent, for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God so that what Israel is really waiting for, unbeknownst to itself is a sent word because the apostolic word is more than information the

apostolic word is an event the apostolic word creates faith where it did not before exist because it comes down from above so the church that is forfeiting its

apostolic reality and identity by performing from below what must come down from above, loses that possibility, though it's smack dab in the midst of a Jewish Brooklyn which is the largest residential area of Jews in the world so there's a tragedy and a failure to recognize the nexus and heart of what is apostolic is the word sent from above it's extremely rare, something transcendent and that God himself is being honored and blessed, it's not something predicated by men for men and called worship in fact, worship has become the name of the game and which church is performing the best worship is where people will go for their enjoyment, but the word perform indicates where its origin is all of this ill and loss of apostolic reality even as the word apostolic is being commended and men

taking it to themselves is in proportion to the loss of the sense of the pre-incarnate life of Christ with the father before his coming and that the issue of his coming was the issue of sending and the issue of sending is the issue of apostolos sent one and that every good and perfect thing comes down from above, so that sending from above is at the heart of our faith and that's what Jesus represented in his coming as a sent one to fulfill the tasks of messiahship for atonement but we have lost the sense and we've cut off the connection and when we initiate from below God draws back I'm giving you the key constituent elements of what is apostolic awaiting for what originates from the throne as it is sent and because it comes down from above and it's pure and holy, there's a gratitude for

the gift of it, which is purest mercy because we're totally undeserving so, and that gift evokes worship that recognition is praise and worship and we recognize it the gift is a mercy so we are Sunday by Sunday, as frequently as God is giving this and we're waiting for it, and he waits to see if he's being waited for we are receiving mercy and as we receive mercy, we can extend mercy if this is cut off by religious activity by man we have no mercy to extend and yet in the economy of God the principle function of the church in the last days is to extend mercy that they may obtain mercy but if we're not obtaining ourselves mercy Sunday by Sunday in what issues from the throne as we wait how shall we have a mercy to give if we lose the apostolic connection of reality what kind of word can we

proclaim for which they wait, because how shall he believe except one preach, and how shall one preach except he be sent we have cut off the whole foundational premise of the faith and the Jew therefore, suffers that deficit and his restoration and the nation is set at abeyance by all failure which is exactly where we stand today so if Isaiah required an enablement to be a sent one what do we require in order to worship God in spirit and in truth if he does not send that ability, what is the character of our worship it issues out of our own humanity that is the issue of music so this issue is every Sunday being affected that is the whole issue of the church and the church's destiny for that every good and perfect thing must come down from above that God needs our assistance that we have

to pump and that we have to fan is presumptuous and puts an undue emphasis on man and a disregard for God as God so what kind of a church are we that has merchandise in God and takes such liberties in our attitude what are we conveying when we convey but a cheapened and depreciated God whom we have robbed of his autonomy as the source of everything and think that we can duplicate and act out of ourselves to create something of a kind even acceptable to him and our condition is so poor that is acceptable to us in a high moment in the recent trip to Africa where I was assigned to be the speaker on the prayer for Africa day in Cameroon that was supposed to begin at 2 and didn't commence till 5 in the typical African fashion and they had a bunch of ministers each coming up on the platform

having a shot at it to knock the ball out of the park no one succeeding and a musical group on the platform that was deafening the loudspeakers were overwhelming and the crowd was being whipped up it was getting dark and I went up to the leader of the prayer time I said I want to withdraw myself as a speaker I said the atmosphere that you have created is not amenable to the prophetic word that I have for the continent he said well you have at least you've got to come up to the platform I went up to the platform I said I had a word from the Lord for Africa on prayer day but the atmosphere to which you have given yourself is totally inhospitable to this prophetic word I cannot speak it and I walked off the platform so you know that happens more often than we know that my greatest

discouragements and repression has come in conflict with worship groups and worship leaders in my experience in the church I have a word pulsating waiting to be delivered but the atmosphere created by the so called worship is inimical and opposed to that word that I cannot bring it I remember one particular instance the Lord was quickening something on the millennial glory I had never ever spoken on it and it was so ethereal a kind of word that you you have to have a setting that's conducive but the time the guy finished I could not speak it I had to bring something other and less so the worship ironically rather than inducing a word inhibits it and there's even a kind of a rivalry of who in fact is where the action really is the bearer of the word or the leader of the worship we have

been reduced to such a place so this priestly waiting upon him is predicated on profound respect and acknowledgement is at the heart and foundation of the church and it's here that the whole game is won or lost if we forfeit this reality of what is sent and start fabricating our own what shall we have to give and this is every Sunday being affected or denied we talk about what comes down as gift but how does it come down and what does the gift that comes down from above reveal about him who is the gift giver someone has talked about when Jesus broke bread and dipped and gave a morsel you not only receive from the hand of Jesus but there's something in the operation of the gift as it is being given that enhances an appreciation for the one who is breaking the bread so it's not just we

receive the gift we're so American we want the benefit but what is revealed in what God gives as a gift giver and the manner in which he gives it how much is that a revelation of something of the character the personality of God himself that we lose when we forfeit and will not wait for the gift that comes from the giver we lose both the gift and the nature of the giver by which our knowledge of God would grow week by week as we wait in a priestly way for this remarkable phenomenon because we're absolutely determined that every good and perfect thing must come down from above all the more when you think that heaven is the headquarters of reality the throne is not some governmental place though it is government of creation but it's the issue of reality itself it's God at his throne it's at

the heart of everything so what measure of reality do we have if we forfeit that there's so much more than I can begin to touch and what is at issue in our failure to wait and to receive from the giver the gift because what it communicates of God who is the nexus of reality we come into the condition that we're in where we duplicate our own which is unreality so we're freaking out the want of reality is the ground for every kind of psychic disorder every kind of physical disorder so we have congregations of the sick and the unhappy and the broken marriages and everything that results waiting then for some visiting speaker who's going to bring a kind of a magic that will alleviate our ill or heal us and then there'll be another long line of people in need of healing because the atmosphere

itself is not conducive to health it's not reality it's a man created environment that has got to breed the kinds of psychic, mental, physical disorders social disorder that we see in the church as every bit as in the

world God is health, God is sanity, God is reality he's worth waiting for so our impatience is a it's the antithesis of priestliness it's because we're governed by our own need and want to fill the silence or we've allowed a people to live in a casual indifferent attitude toward God through the week and coming Sunday for their fix and if you don't provide it, they'll go out and find it in another place that will, and so you lose their finance and their tithes and so the whole economy of the church it's interesting that in this church where I'm speaking this for the first

time and the poor pastor is writhing in his seat that when I finished, he made reference to their 7.5 million dollar building fund that they want to put up some kind of a school and this is what occupies him so that in the deeps it's the issue of finance people in their seats, giving and to please them and satisfy them that they remain and that they give, that the program will be fulfilled the building will go up and on the sign the name of the man as not only pastor but as apostle while the whole issue of what is apostolic is itself contradicted and lost, that's the tragedy what does it say even about the sending of Jesus that when the fullness of the time had come God sent his son, so even the father waited for the appropriate moment in his own wisdom for that sending so the father

himself in his nature is priestly, the son is the high priest as well as the apostle of our confession if God can wait, why can we not wait and if we will not wait, we're going to find ourselves being visited by those who have sent themselves for Paul warns us in 2 Corinthians 11 such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ and it's no marvel for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light, therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness whose end shall be according to their works.

The last days is going to be a harvest of false prophets and one of the things that the Lord applauds in one of the churches in Revelation is their ability to see those men who say that they are apostles and they are not so false apostles and false prophets will characterize the last days in an age of deception when people are not schooled in a priestly disposition to wait and to discern and that there are vacuums to be filled in which men will rush if they can create worship what else will they not also establish out of their own religiosity that is false the whole church then fails to be what it must it's witness to the Jew waits and it's a tragic standoff for the want of priestly disposition so just to repeat what Chambers said the times are the gift of God you cannot give them to

yourself if you choose not only that you cannot but that you should not you should not choose to give them to yourself when God gives it it is in his time as was also the sending of his son and his time is perfect and we ought to desire to wait for it and not choose to present our own alternative we ought not to choose it let alone to produce it or we'll get the false thing the false the unreality that pervades the church in the world today that there are times when you command your soul to bless the Lord oh my soul you don't wait there's something that must come from our own will but this is not in opposition to the theme of God and the basic apostolic nature of things that requires priestly waiting and total dependence of what comes from above so we need to discern when we should and

even in those things God gives us the incentive to exert our will and praise this is part of the tension of being a saint one of the things that we see reiterated in the Psalms over and over is the Psalmist crying out how long Lord they're crying for a deliverance that can only come from God when God will but by every reckoning it's a deliverance that should have taken place long before because the Psalmist or the nation is suffering judgment and ridicule of its enemies and every kind of thing that contradicts even the reputation of God to deliver his own so when the Psalmist cries out how long Lord he's not only crying out

for his own deliverance he's crying out for God to honor his own name and to be to his sons what he ought but how often do we see that indicating that God is not at

our fingertips and to be commandeered at our will because we see an urgency that we think he needs to meet now if he's not meeting it now we should have the confidence in his great sovereignty and majesty and love that their purpose is being served that will defer his action and we can afford to wait however painful that waiting is in that condition God never intended us to be isolates who are struggling this out by ourselves in fact the issue of one who will be sent to preach the word in the hearing of which Israel will be saved how shall they believe except one preach and how shall one preacher be sent is not just the issue of the individual being sent but the individual being sent from a sending body that's why that message was to a church being called to apostolic reality that they

might be a sending body out of which men can be sent to proclaim the word which was exactly the first sending in the history of the church out of Antioch in Acts 13 Paul is addressing a congregation and in Acts 13 we see how diverse that congregation is, black and white, Jew and Gentile Cyrene, Mediterranean, the whole motley mix of all of the elements that compose that piece of the ancient world but when they were found worshiping together without an overhead projector in their differences in the racial and ethnic differences that in the world around them made for conflict they were at a place where they could worship God together and when the Holy Ghost saw that he said separate unto me and he named the two men who will reflect this heavenly reality that has come to the mix of the world

and bring it into the ancient world that men might know that there's a way of peace that these men will represent that reality that has come to Antioch and is reflected in their worship their worship was not a technique their worship was not a methodology their worship was the statement of a reality to which they had come of a heavenly kind that mirrors and reflects the reality of the Godhead himself Father, Son and Holy Spirit in a cordial and self-deferring love one with another had come to men on earth in their racial and ethnic differences and out of that body can one be sent so that's the first historic record of ascending by which the word apostolic in fact Saul becomes Paul in that being sent Saul becomes an apostle who is a teacher until the sending the sending is the whole coming

forth now of a new quality of reality but it had to come out of a body that God can address because when they had laid hands upon them having prayed and fasted so then they were sent forth by the here's the word send again, by the Holy Ghost that God equates the laying on of the hands of men as the sending of the Holy Ghost and what kind of power did they have in authority? these are they that turned the world upside down there was something in that sending as Reggie shared with us that in being sent something of the sender is imparted as enablement because the purpose for which you are sent is beyond your human ability to perform whether it's worship or apostolic service the sending itself by God because it has its origin in heaven the Holy Ghost said separate unto me sets in motion a

new quality of reality called apostolicity that has a power to penetrate and turn the world upside down because the world in its present configuration is upside down and needs to be rectified and set right it needs to be brought into a heavenly an awareness of a heavenly alternative to an earthly hell by men who are sent who bear that reality and have it in themselves they not only bear the message they are the thing in themselves and they have come to it in the environment of an apostolic kind that is priestly and that waits isn't it interesting? nothing is told us about the church at Antioch only that out of Antioch, not out of Jerusalem but out of Antioch comes the first apostolic sending all the more because of its diversity but when you dwell upon it you can imagine the investment of

God in bringing them to the reality for which he has waited and that same God is waiting still and the pity is that the word apostolic has now become popular and fraudulent men who have no right to the claim and have appointed themselves such transforming themselves into ministers of light are now circulating and setting up entire districts by which they establish other luminaries to be the minister of this and minister of that that the whole world is being sliced up and partitioned by men who think that they are apostles who are not sent we are reaping a judgment for our failure to jealously guard the great words and to wait for that which can only come down from above I know some of these men personally I've been on the platform with them personally I know what they are made of and

where they are coming from they are not the real thing that where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst so you start with who you are and what you have at hand the little nucleus, yourself and your wife and the one guy who stuck it out with you and then just trust as God, as the church he added to the church daily such as shall be saved let the Lord find the nucleus of authenticity of priestly waiting and let him add and don't be numbers conscious it may well be that the church of the last days will hardly be anything more than little conglomerates of saints of this kind that are waiting and obedient I don't know how numerous the church at Antioch was in fact we might well suspect that where the churches are increased in numbers there the reality is least to be

found or even to be expected because numbers themselves are inimical to the reality that we are talking about which requires intimacy, relationship honesty, speaking the truth in love confronting one another, reproof, correction how do you do that when you have a congregation of hundreds or thousands who are anonymous figures in a congregation and have no personal identity or relationship with one another what kind of communion are they taking when they hold a little plastic cup waiting for the command to drink together who are not together communion means together but can you have it when you are lost in a large crowd and that people prefer that anonymity because Paul says when you come together each one has a tongue and interpretation a prophecy, a revelation, a hymn so that Paul could

leave the congregations that were initiated through his evangelistic activity and come back two years later and they are still there not only are they there but they are flourishing and they have grown because each one has when they come together there is an opportunity to interact and to receive the benefit of the spirit of God moving through the different ones and the gifts that have been imparted and Paul only recognizes upon whom the mantle of authority has fallen and just sets him in before the congregation in a way in which they have already recognized that such one is called to be an elder in the place of authority that was the original pattern so we are so removed from that and have to find our way back so in the absence of any existence of such reality you may yourself have to be

it and as I often encourage people remain in the larger church but it's not your church, it's your field of ministry it's your mission field to be a witness in that place but your church, the place where you share the Lord's table and where you receive counsel or reproof and intimate fellowship however small is the church, you have to distinguish between the church and the place of ministry which is the mission field which is the larger congregation itself so it's a lonely call but this reality has got to be found when it comes it's a gift when it comes it's a mercy and maybe it would come more often if we were not ourselves pre-empting God by creating an equivalent of our own and maybe when I was emptied I found myself on my face I don't know what time it was, maybe 3 in the morning but

the sense of God as I had never known it began to flood my soul and all of a sudden I was aware that I was a creature and that I was prostrate before the creator and I can't I don't have a word for it, it

devastated me it was like an awesome foundational understanding of who I am relative to who he is that if we don't get that set in our spirits where do we go from there?

Every reckoning will be askew if we have not foundationally understood who we are relative to who he is and it did not come until much fasting, much prayer, much emptying and prostration before God but once it comes, something is set in that will affect all of your subsequent days you will not presume upon God so that may have been the worship that is recorded in Acts 13 that when he found them ministering unto the Lord together the Holy Ghost said, when we read that we think they must have been in the midst of their choruses what if they were in the midst of being on their faces what if they were in the midst of their priestly silence and a long period of time and prostration before God, recognizing their finiteness and their limitation and the magnificence of the father who is the creator and from whom every good and perfect thing must come didn't they know there was a world dying about them? that they should rush out and minister? didn't Elijah know that there was not another soul left, that the priests were killed and that he alone why didn't he go out earlier? because he waits, because he's priestly because he trusts, and it doesn't allow himself to be governed or motivated by need apparent need, but only by the God who sends.

The last day's trap for the church will be it's response to need it sees need and will rush off to meet it and be diverted from the thing that only God can direct because he alone has the sublime and perfect knowledge of the end from the beginning.

But if we're governed by needs and in fact a great taunt in the early history of Ben Israel was what are you doing? what are you performing? what ministry are you performing? what are you guys doing up there in the boondocks? and we had nothing to show and nothing to say but it's very intimidating when active churches ask you what are you doing and you have nothing to answer or to show we're waiting on that thing that comes down from above there's no apostolicity without priestliness that's the Logan that's short of it and the son of God, Jesus, is the high priest and the apostle of our confession his priestliness had it's origin before his earthly career it was already something that was the issue of his identity with the father in his pre-incarnate life his servanthood as priest was

something made manifest in the earth but the origin of the reality was with him in his eternal identity as the son with the father before he came in and we need to take this into our deepest consideration and recognize what that sending represented it was the revelation of God in his mercy and his love at great cost to himself and to the son but to our great benefit we can spend time, and we should on identifying what is the nub and essence of priestliness what is the issue of waiting what is the jealousy for God the father and his glory, that we will not seek to displace by anything that we initiate out of ourselves we have so high a regard for the authenticity of God and the good and perfect thing that must come down from above, that we will not seek to initiate out of ourselves that

every action, every thought, every conduct has God as it's center this is the jealous love of the son for the father this is sonship this is the relationship between the son and the father that is exhibited by Jesus his every thought, his every consideration was the father, how will this affect his purpose his fulfillment, his honor, his glory and therefore Jesus never initiated anything out of himself the words that he spoke and the things that he did all from the father so he is the high priest in every sense of that word and because he is the high priest he is also the apostle for were he not a priest, neither would he be the apostle somebody gave me a little composition entitled the mush god of today that says the mush god has been known to appear to millionaires on golf courses he

appears to politicians at ribbon cutting ceremonies and to clergymen speaking the invocation on national TV at either democratic or republican conventions the mush god's presence is felt during brotherhood week and when Rotarians come together he is the lifeless deity that former president Carter was referring to when he suggested peace might come to the middle east because the Egyptian president and the Israeli prime minister both worshipped the great mushy one the mush god has no theology to speak of he is a cream of wheat deity he has no particular credo, no tenets of faith nothing that would make it difficult for believers and unbelievers alike to lower one's head when the temporary chairman tells us the reverend rabbi father mufti so and so will lead us in an innocuous harmless

prayer for this god of public occasions is not a jealous god you can even invoke him to start a hooker convention and he or she won't be offended he's the god of the rotary, god of the optimist club protector of the bloody system the mush god is the lord of secular ritual of the necessary but hypocritical forms and formalities that hush the divisive and the derisive the mush god is a serviceable god small g, whose laws are not chiseled on tablets but written on sand open to amendment, qualification and erasure this is a god, small g that will compromise with you, make allowances and declare all wars holy and all peace hallowed that's the god that prevails today for the want of the god who is god for whom we've not sufficiently waited and trusted and believed that every good and perfect

thing comes down from above and needs to be sent so lord, gracious god on high there's a cry in the earth for reality and there's a world that's dying for the want of it and the victims are everywhere broken in mind and in body and in spirit because they are inhabiting an unreality that is not conducive to sanity or to health and because the reality that is reality that is heavenly must come down for those who wait and lord, we as the church are the greatest what's the word? the greatest offenders in self-initiating activity that we dare call worship that has not its origin in you and far from blessing you is a stink we're guilty of what Israel was guilty of in which you said in Isaiah your sacrifices are a stink in my nostrils I don't care for your holy days while at the same time you

have no knowledge of me so lord, we are guilty of Israel's sin and we ask forgiveness lord and mercy we ask for reality we ask for true sendings we ask for expressions in the earth my god of a priestly people who wait and that you will bring us my god the prostrations that are true prostrations because you're pleased to give that sense of yourself that you jealously guard and you don't bandy about but that you'll bestow by those who will not displace you in their own activity come my god and restore the great words apostolic and prophetic and save us from the terrible indictment I did not send them but they ran and may this morning not be an example of something humanly initiated but something divinely given and we bless you for it lord let it find its place in our consideration as we go

now to consider the questions you gave us two days ago in view of what you spoke since that time that this word and the whole issue of incarnation man and the deity the remarkable union that came in the sending of a son that agreed to be born that he might die would sink into our deeps lord and rule us in our own conduct so we bless you lord, precious god on her we need mercy lord, we need mercy my god we're dull, thick vain, selfish, impatient we're human all too human lord we have not the regard for heaven and the throne as we ought so come my god and forgive us for our impudence our failure to wait, our lack of priestly disposition and grant us by your grace those very qualities my god that were incorporated in your son and intrinsic to your own nature impart to us my god what we

cannot fabricate for ourselves and we thank and give you praise for the mercy of it that receiving that mercy we may soon one day extend mercy and fulfill even the destiny of the church toward Israel in Jesus

name we pray and god's people said amen

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