

THE APOSTLES OF JESUS

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Introduction

I begin this book by first defining the word “apostle”. A simple definition that I use is “One sent”; but I want to go to Mr. Webster for a more complete definition:

“**APOS'TLE**, n. [L. apostalus; Gr. to send away, to sent.]

A person deputed to execute some important business; but appropriately, a disciple of Christ commissioned to preach the gospel. Twelve persons were selected by Christ for this purpose; and Judas, one of the number, proving an apostate, his place was supplied by Matthias. Acts 1.

Among the Jews, the title was given to officers who were sent into distant provinces, as visitors or commissioners, to see the laws observed.”

Easton’s Bible Dictionary gives this definition:

“Apostle A PERSON SENT BY ANOTHER; A MESSENGER; ENVOY. THIS WORD IS ONCE USED AS A DESCRIPTIVE DESIGNATION OF JESUS CHRIST, THE SENT OF THE FATHER (Heb. 3:1; John 20:21). It is, however, generally used as designating the body of disciples to whom he entrusted the organization of his church and the dissemination of his gospel, “the twelve,” as they are called (Matt. 10:1-5; Mark 3:14; 6:7; Luke 6:13; 9:1). We have four lists of the apostles, one by each of the synoptic evangelists (Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14), and one in the Acts (Acts 1:13).”

We will not be considering those who were given the title of “apostle” by the Jews; rather we will be giving our attention to the apostles of Jesus Christ. As we know Jesus chose twelve of his disciples to be his “apostles”; these twelve men were commissioned to preach and teach. In the beginning of their apostleship Jesus sent them to preach about the coming kingdom, the church that he would establish: (Matthew 16:18) “*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” Before Jesus ascended back to heaven to be with his Father he gave his apostles a very difficult task of preaching the gospel to “ALL the world”: (Mark 16:15) “*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*” These men were not given the luxury of choosing who they preached to; Jesus commanded them to preach the gospel to “every creature”. These twelve men were Jews, therefore if they had a choice they would only have went to the Jews. But Jesus commanded them to “preach the gospel to every creature” and that would include “all nations”: (Matthew 28:19) “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*”

To make their work even harder these twelve apostles met harsh resentment from the Jews. The Jews had waited for many years for the coming of the Messiah and when he came they rejected him and even crucified him! But crucifying Jesus did not end their rejection of him, they continued to reject anything that was preached or taught concerning Jesus. You and I should be very thankful for their efforts to preach the gospel; furthermore we should be thankful for their recorded words that begin in the book of Acts and conclude with the book of Revelation.

To illustrate the importance of the title and work of an “apostle” I would like to point out that Jesus Christ himself was an apostle: (Hebrews 3:1) *“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;”* Jesus can rightfully be called an apostle because he was sent by God to preach the gospel, work miracles and to do the will of God; his heavenly Father. (John 20:21) *“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”* From these words spoken by Jesus we know that Jesus was indeed an “apostle” in the truest sense; he was sent by God. Jesus was so intent on doing God’s will that he even gave himself as a ransom for the sins of all who would believe and obey.

From John 20:21 we see that Jesus sent his apostles; even as he himself had been sent. We will make every effort to learn as much as we can from the Word of God about these men whom Jesus chose to be his apostles and the effort they put forth in carrying out the great commission given to them by Jesus.

They Were Ordained by Christ

Jesus ordained twelve men to be his apostles: (Mark 3:14) *“And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,”* Of those that Jesus called to himself he ordained [or appointed] twelve men to be his apostles; the word “ordained” here does not mean what many think of as an ordination today, it simply means he appointed them. Jesus did this in order that they might be with him and so that he might send them out to preach. The Arabic version adds; “and called them apostles”. During the three years they were with Jesus might be considered a training period for their apostleship. Why did Jesus ordain twelve men? There may be no particular reason for choosing twelve but he might have chosen twelve so that they could be reputable witnesses of what they saw and heard. Some suggest that there were twelve because there were twelve tribes of Israel. In all honesty I can give no definite reply.

Jesus told these men that they had not chosen him but that he chose them and then he explained why he had chosen them: (John 15:16) *“Ye have not chosen*

me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” The word here that is translated “chosen” means elect and it no doubt refers to Jesus choosing or electing them to be apostles. These men did not choose Jesus to be their teacher or guide; instead he chose them to be his apostles. At the time that Jesus spoke these words Judas had departed; therefore he could say to the eleven that he had chosen them to “bring forth fruit”. I added this thought so there would be no misunderstanding; Jesus certainly would not want anyone to bear the kind of fruit that Judas produced. Jesus had chosen them that they might “bring forth fruit” through good works, faithfulness and preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Friends, when we become Christians Jesus expects much of the same work from you and me; he expects us to “bring forth fruit” through good works, faithfulness and taking the gospel to others. Jesus added; “that your fruit “should remain” instead of being like false teachers whose labors soon vanish: (Acts 5:38-39) *“And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: (39) But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”* And their works have remained because the church still exists.

So Jesus, himself being sent by God chose and ordained twelve men whom he could send out into the world to preach the gospel.

The Apostles Received A Title

Jesus had many disciples at this time and he could have simply called them disciples. A disciple is a follower or a learner; these men were to be more than just followers or learners; they were to be sent out to others. Jesus had greater things in mind for them than to simply stay by his side and learn. He was going to send them out to do some teaching themselves. For this reason he called his disciples to gather and chose from them twelve men “whom also he named apostles”: (Luke 6:13) *“And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;”*

In the business world today if the boss doesn’t want to give you a raise he will give you a title in an attempt to keep you satisfied. This was not Jesus’ motive in giving them a title; his motive was to make them fishers of men: (Mark 1:17) *“And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.”* Are you a fisherman of men? Some of these men had been fishermen by profession; now there is nothing wrong with being a fisherman as I too like to fish. But by making them fishermen “of men” they were given a more honorable

work as the souls of men is of much greater value than any trophy fish you might catch. Again I state that Jesus expects every Christian to be a “fisherman of men.” As Christians we can still be a fisherman for fish; but as “fishermen of men” the lure or the net that we are to throw is the gospel.

The apostles as “fishermen of men” were first to cast their nets [the gospel] in Judea and to the entire world. The fish that they caught was to be the souls of men; not just the souls of Jews but also the souls of Gentiles.

The Apostles Were Called By God

Paul stated that he was called to “be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God: (1 Corinthians 1:1) *“Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,”* It was the purpose and will of God that Paul be chosen to be an apostle to take the gospel to the Gentiles: (Acts 9:15) *“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:”* As Paul was on his way to Damascus he was met by the Lord and he was given the responsibility of taking the name of Jesus to the Gentiles because this was the will of God. The Holy Ghost of God spoke these words thus testifying that Paul had been selected by God: (Acts 13:2) *“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”* Paul was chosen to be an apostle not because of any works he had done that made him deserving; rather he was chosen because it was God’s purpose and will.

In writing to the Corinthians Paul stated that it was God who set some in the church to be apostles: (1 Corinthians 12:28) *“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles,”* Please notice that the word is “apostles” which is plural not singular; therefore Paul is referring to all of the apostles and not just to himself as being chosen by God.

Paul also said that he had been “called by the grace of God” to “reveal his Son”. (Galatians 1:15-16) *“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, (16) To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:”* This also shows that Paul was called to be an apostle by God.

The Apostles Were Chosen By Christ

In the gospel according to Matthew Jesus is said to call his apostles: (Matthew 10:1) *“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave*

them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.” Although they are called disciples by Matthew the number twelve suggests that he is referring to the twelve apostles. Matthew confirms that Jesus gave them power to cast out “unclean spirits” to heal “all manner of sickness” and “disease.” This was power that they would need in telling the Jews that the kingdom was very near. Through the miracles they performed the words they spoke was confirmed.

Paul declared that he had received grace and his apostleship from Jesus: (Romans 1:3-5) *“Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; (4) And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: (5) By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:”* We can see that Paul is not being boastful of his apostleship here because he states that he had received the grace of God. Without the grace of God he would not have been qualified to be an apostle; so he is giving God all the glory. But this was all made possible because of Jesus Christ.

The Twelve Were Unlearned Men

They were not highly educated men and others recognized this: (Acts 4:13) *“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”* As Peter and John spoke before them they could plainly see their boldness and how firmly they spoke the words of truth. They were not afraid to speak the name of Jesus nor did they hold back from telling them that they had murdered Jesus. The words that they spoke did not tell others that they “were unlearned and ignorant men”; this knowledge came to them from what they had previously known of the twelve. These men had probably learned to read the scriptures from their mothers and were not taught by the doctors of that day. Actually if you look at some of the actions of the high priests you might conclude that they were “unlearned” men. If I were to judge the education of Peter and John I would be inclined to say that they had been taught by the greatest teacher that ever walked upon the face of the earth; that is Jesus Christ. It is said that they “took knowledge of them” which means that they knew and recognized that they had been with Jesus and that they personally recognized them to have formerly been disciples of Jesus. We can not be with Jesus in a fleshly sense but we can be with him in a spiritual sense and people will take notice of that association.

This goes to show that you don't have to attend some high powered school of training to be an effective preacher or teacher. After all we have the best reference book in the world; it is called the Bible! I recall receiving a compliment on a sermon that I had just given and was asked; "How do you do it?" I replied; "I have good material to work with." I was then asked; "What do you mean?" I said; "I have the Bible." If you preach and teach from the word of God you can't go wrong even though you may be an "unlearned" person.

Selected From Unlikely Walks of Life

Jesus selected fishermen to become his apostles: (Matthew 4:18) *"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers."* I don't find it strange to find Jesus walking by "the sea of Galilee" but no doubt some will find it strange that Jesus chose fishermen to be his apostles. It was no accident that Jesus was walking by the seaside at this time; he was there on a mission in which he would select men to be his apostles. Be honest; would you choose a smelly fisherman to be by your side? Christ knew that he would in a few short years be departing from this world so he must select men who could be trusted to carry on his work. He wanted men who would be honest, hard working and be good witnesses of what they would see and hear. This, I believe is the reason that Jesus chose these two fishermen.

In the book of Matthew all twelve of the apostles are name: (Matthew 10:2-4) *"Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; (3) Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; (4) Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him."* Jesus also chose another man to be one of his apostles that many would consider to be a strange choice; I'm referring to the apostle Matthew. Some would consider this strange because Matthew was a "publican." By the other gospel writers Matthew is mentioned first; but since he was writing this gospel he did not choose to put his name first which gives us an idea of what kind of man he was. The other writers don't mention that he was a "publican"; Matthew does confess to being a "publican" which expounds the grace of God; this may also be an indication of the great gratitude he had for receiving God's grace. God can and does use men of many professions. He even uses me! Needless to say a publican or a tax collector is not held in high esteem even today; but in the days of Jesus tax collectors were

hated even more because they were collecting taxes for the despised Roman government.

With the exception of Judas Iscariot all were Galileans and many of them were fishermen. The list of apostles may also be found in Mark chapter three and Luke chapter six. In Acts chapter one Luke gives the list again: (Acts 1:13) *“And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.”* Did you notice that there is one name missing here? Luke did not list Judas Iscariot at this time because Judas was dead. Since Judas had hung himself it was necessary that they find a replacement for him: (Acts 1:26) *“And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”* So now the number is back to twelve; but there was to be one more man added to the apostleship and that man was Saul of Tarsus who later came to be known as Paul: (Acts 13:9) *“Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,”* In all of his epistles except three Paul begins his writing by declaring himself to be an apostle: (Romans 1:1) *“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,”* So now the number of living apostles has increased to thirteen. Again it seems as though Paul would have been an unlikely choice because Saul or Paul was a persecutor of Christians and even Jesus himself: (Acts 9:4-5) *“And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? (5) And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.”* But God works in mysterious ways!

Sent To The House of Israel First

During his personal ministry Jesus sent them to the Jews: (Matthew 10:5) *“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:”* At this time the apostles were to avoid the Gentiles not being allowed to preach the gospel to them. Their mission was to *“go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”* (Matthew 10:6). When Jesus gave them his final commission they were to begin preaching the gospel to the Jews first: (Luke 24:47) *“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”* They were to begin preaching in his name at Jerusalem because this was where the word of the Lord was to go forth from: (Psalms 110:2) *“The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst*

of thine enemies.” After the Jews had received the gospel it was then presented to the Gentiles; the apostle Paul spent most of his energy preaching to the Gentiles: (Acts 13:46) *“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.”* The apostles were commissioned to preach the gospel to “all nations” but they were to go to the Jews first which they were faithful in doing. But Paul declared that since “you put it from you” making themselves “unworthy of everlasting life” we will give attention to the Gentiles. They had no one to blame but themselves since they had passed judgment upon themselves. It was at this time that the words of Christ began to be fulfilled as to what would happen to the Jews: (Matthew 21:43) *“Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”*

The apostles by going to the Jews were assured of success because they were doing as Jesus had instructed them and they also had the assurance that Jesus would be with them: (Matthew 28:20) *“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”* When Jesus stated that he would be “with them always” he meant that he would be with them until they died and this would be the end of the world to them. Therefore, he was with them when they went to the Jews first and he was with them when they later took the gospel to the Gentiles which included all nations as Jesus instructed them to do. Jesus also meant that he would be with the church as long as the world existed. There are to be ministers of the gospel as long as the world stands; they can be assured of success simply because Christ is with them in a spiritual sense through the inspired word.

Warned Against a Timid Profession of Christ

(Matthew 10:27-33) *“What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops. (28) And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (29) Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. (30) But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. (31) Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. (32) Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. (33) But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”* Here Jesus is encouraging his apostles to be plain, faithful and bold

in proclaiming the gospel; just knowing that Jesus was with them would also have given them courage to be bold; holding back nothing and not being timid in their ministry. Luke wrote that Paul and Barnabas were bold: (Acts 13:46) *“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.”* Paul was bold even when he was persecuted: (1 Thessalonians 2:2) *“But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.”* His boldness encouraged the brethren also to be bold: (Philippians 1:14) *“And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”* Anyone who is ashamed of the name of Jesus Christ is not worthy of him.

Peter and John were not timid when it came to professing the name of Jesus: (Acts 4:19) *“But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.”* It is acknowledged that magistrates are to be obeyed but not more than God. If magistrates ask us to do anything against God’s will we must be bold and not timid to obey God’s will rather than the will of magistrates.

The Apostles Were Guided Into All Truth

After Jesus ascended to heaven could their words be trusted? Yes, because they were guided by the Holy Spirit: (John 14:25-26) *“These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. (26) But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”* Let us remember that the apostles had been with Jesus for three years and it would have been impossible for them to remember everything that Jesus had said during that period of time. Most of us can’t remember everything that we said yesterday; therefore it was necessary that they have the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told them that he would send the comforter [the Holy Spirit or Spirit of truth]: (John 15:26) *“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:”* Would you not agree that since the apostles were guided by the “Spirit of truth” that their words can be trusted? We don’t even have to pick and choose what is to be trusted because they were guided into “all truth”: (John 16:13) *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak:*

and he will show you things to come.” Every word they spoke and wrote can be trusted.

This guidance began on the Day of Pentecost: (Acts 2:1-4) *“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. (2) And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. (3) And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. (4) And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* It was on this very day that Peter stood up with the eleven and began preaching (Acts 2:14) as he was guided and given utterance by the Holy Spirit. Throughout their ministry their words were confirmed by the miracles they performed. Yes, they were guided by the Holy Spirit and we can entrust our souls to the words they spoke and wrote.

Although Paul was not one of the twelve his words also can be trusted because he too was given the Holy Spirit: (Acts 9:17) *“And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.”* It was because Paul was filled with Holy Ghost that Paul did not have to go to Jerusalem to be instructed by the other apostles; he received guidance from the “Spirit of truth” and was able to proclaim the truth immediately.

The Apostles Were Devoted To The Ministry

As the church grew there was more work to be done and complaining arose: (Acts 6:1) *“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.”* Here we learn that it is nothing new for Christians to complain against other Christians, it happened in the early church also. But the apostles had more important work to do than just to see that everyone had their daily food given to them. (Acts 6:2) *“Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.”* What could be done to allow the apostles to be devoted to the ministry? The answer is found in verse 3: (Acts 6:3) *“Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.”* When this had been accomplished they could devote all their time and energies to the ministry: (Acts 6:4) *“But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”*

Apostles Were To Answer Adversaries

The apostles were not left alone in this area; they received words that they were to speak by inspiration of the Holy Spirit: (Matthew 10:19-20) *“But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. (20) For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.”* We might consider the first part of Jesus’ words here as a warning; a warning that they would be delivered up to counsels and magistrates. This would have struck fear in the minds of the apostles but Jesus continued with comforting words. He told them not to worry about what they were going to answer; he said the “Spirit of your Father” will “speak in you.” They did not have to study and prepare words with which they would answer; defensive answers would be supplied by the Holy Spirit. They did not have to tell their accusers; “Wait until tomorrow and we will get back to you”; words of defense were to be given to them immediately.

In Luke’s gospel account he makes it clear as to whom it was that gave them words of defense: (Luke 12:11-12) *“And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: (12) For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.”* Although the apostles were not weak men we need to understand that God will supply strength to the weakest of us when we are tempted or tried. When teaching his disciples how to pray Jesus said that God would deliver us “from evil”: (Matthew 6:13) *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”* Let us remember that any temptation that may come upon us other men and women have had the temptation: (1 Corinthians 10:13) *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”* Although we might think that we are the only person who has been tried in such a fashion it is not true; others have had the same temptations; this even includes Jesus: (Hebrews 4:15) *“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”* Even though Satan possesses powers God is still more powerful and will not allow him to tempt us above what we are able to withstand. Furthermore, God will provide a “way of escape.” We may not have the direct help of the Holy Spirit but God is still on our side and will give us all the strength we need to withstand Satan.

The Apostles Were Urged To Be Humble

Humility is needed by every Christian; but the apostles desperately needed to be humble as strife existed among them as to who would be greatest: (Luke 22:24-29) *“And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. (25) And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. (26) But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. (27) For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. (28) Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. (29) And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;”* Some think that this was the time that the mother of Zebedee’s two sons asked Jesus to allow one of her sons to sit on his left side and the other to sit at his right side. To settle the matter Jesus reminds them of the Gentile kings who exercised “lordship over them.” But he tells them it is not going to be that way with you [verse 26]. Even Jesus took upon himself the form of a servant [verse 27]. Christ presents to them how the one who sits and dines is greater than the one who serves. Now if Christ was a servant should they not consider themselves to be servants also and if indeed they were servants they had nothing in which to glory! Much of the same message can be found in Matthew 20:26, 27 and Mark 9:33-37].

Instead of seeking to be first the apostles were to be self-denying: (Matthew 10:37-39) *“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (38) And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. (39) He that fineth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”*

The Apostles Possessed Equal Authority

When speaking about building his church Jesus said that he would give the “keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:19) *“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* The “keys” would be the gospel since the gospel came from heaven. The preaching of the gospel established the church; the same gospel also enlarged the church in the days of the apostles and it is the power by which the church is con-

tinued to this day. It appears that Jesus is speaking directly to Peter on this occasion. In Matthew 18:18 it appears that Jesus is speaking to all of the apostles: (Matthew 18:18) *“Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* The message here is virtually the same as what he had spoken to Peter in Matthew 16:19. Through the words of Matthew 18:18 we understand that the apostles were to have equal power or authority. Of course the subject here is a brother who has offended and “whatsoever” things that they “bind” or “loose” it appears that they had equal authority to restore. Most Bible scholars agree that this has the same meaning as Jesus told Peter in Matthew 16:19. “Whatsoever” could be pertaining to the Jews or to the Gentiles. Peter was the first to give the gospel to Cornelius who was a Gentile. Oddly enough it took a dream or a vision from heaven to convince Peter to go to Cornelius. It should be remembered that Peter first used the “keys” that Jesus gave him when he preached on the Day of Pentecost; however, we need to remember when Peter preached the first gospel sermon that he was not standing alone: (Acts 2:14) *“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said un to them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:”* So one way or another the apostles all had a part in unlocking and opening the “kingdom of heaven.”

Paul wrote that he was not inferior to any in faith, gifts or preaching the gospel to any of the apostles: (2 Corinthians 11:5) *“For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.”* One might think that Paul was a little arrogant with this statement if it were not for the word “suppose.” By using the word “suppose” Paul is saying in his mind that he does not think that he is inferior to any of the other apostles. Peter, James and John seem to be chief among the apostle; but Paul thinks that he is equal to them. Paul is not attempting to be boastful with these words; he is simply saying he was just as faithful in preaching the gospel as anyone was.

The Apostles Were Not of This World

The apostles were told by Jesus that they were “not of this world”: (John 15:19) *“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”* If they had been of the world they would have held to the same principles and practiced the same things as the worldly people practiced. If they had acted and practiced the same sinful things that the world practices the general population of the world would have loved them. The apostles were born of the

world, brought up in it and at one time had practiced the same things that the world practiced. But after they were called by Christ there was a change in their lives. As disciples of Christ they came to be Christ like; I feel positive in saying that Jesus Christ was not of the world; if they became Christ like they would not be of the world. This is a character that only belongs to Disciples of Christ; anyone who professes to be a Christian and who is truly a Christian is not of the world. Jesus told them that he had “chosen” them “out of the world”; which had nothing to do with their eternal destiny, instead it refers to their being separated from the world. It was because they were different from the worldly that they were hated by the world. They were not to be unhappy by the world’s reaction to them; rather they were to rejoice!

Jesus was not of this world: (John 17:16) *“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”* These words are repeated from John 17:14 where they are given as a reason for the world hating them. Jesus warned the apostles that they would be hated: (Matthew 10:22) *“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”* This was to be the forthcoming fate of the apostles. We could easily see this as a sad comment as it most certainly would include friends and family who would come to hate the apostles. This has not changed today; many of us have had friends and family to desert us because of our stand for Christ. Everyone will agree that the Jews certainly hated the apostles; this is not to be understood that all Jews hated the apostles because only a few of them were converted to Christianity. Friends, this is exactly what we should be attempting to do; convert our friends and family to Christianity. The message of Jesus is to “endure to the end” or we are to be faithful to the very end. The hatred that we experience is another tool that Satan uses in an attempt to get us to be unfaithful to Christ.

Later Jesus reminds them that they shall be hated: (Matthew 24:9) *“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.”* You must know that we can strengthen our brethren by reminding them that they face hatred; we need to also be aware that sometimes it is our brethren in Christ who hates us; but we must remember what Jesus said, “endure to the end.”

Jesus told them and us that the world hated him before it hated them and us: (Matthew 24:9) *“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.”* Here Jesus says that this hatred goes beyond the Jews; it includes “all nations.” No doubt the Jews continue to hate Christians to this very day but we are also hated today by those who are not Jews!

The Apostles Received Persecution And Sufferings

Jesus forewarned the apostles of the dangers that awaited them: (Matthew 10:18) *“And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.”* Just before giving them this warning Jesus told them how they were to conduct themselves: (Matthew 10:16) *“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”* There is beauty in the words of Jesus when he told them to be as “wise as serpents” as the serpent is represented as prudent to excess, being full of cunning; through his cunningness he was able to beguile Eve: (2 Corinthians 11:3) *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”* They were to maintain the innocence and harmlessness of a dove. In other words they were to be humble in all of their dealings with mankind.

Jesus warned that they would be betrayed and even put to death: (Luke 21:16) *“And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.”* Perhaps you have been betrayed by family or friends because you encouraged them to obey the gospel or not to forsake the assembly. It is important to be aware that Jesus asked nothing of them that he was not willing to do himself: (John 15:20) *“Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”* Often times when we are persecuted those who persecute us think they are doing God’s will: (John 16:2) *“They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.”* I have never been put out of the church; but things can be so unpleasant that I have left!

The Apostles Saw Christ In The Flesh

When choosing a replacement for Judas Iscariot this was one of the requirements: (Acts 1:22) *“Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.”* Even the apostle Paul saw Jesus: (1 Corinthians 9:1) *“Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?”* Paul used this as proof of his apostleship. The apostle John declared he had seen Jesus: (1 John 1:1) *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;”* The apostles were not only blessed

by seeing Jesus they were also blessed by being with him daily and being taught by him.

The Apostles Were Witnesses of The Resurrection and Ascension of Christ

(Luke 24:51) *“And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.”* This was a sad time for the apostles; yet at the same time it was a glorious time. It was sad because they knew their friend and teacher was being taken from them and they would no longer be able to see or be with him on this earth. But at the same time it was a glorious time to see Jesus being glorified and rising up to heaven to be with his heavenly Father.

For more information concerning their witnessing Jesus’ resurrection see [Luke 24:33-41, 51; Acts 2:1-9].

Paul makes a clear statement concerning the resurrection of Jesus and to there being witnesses to this wonderful event: (Acts 10:40-41) *“Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; (41) Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.”* Jesus lay long enough under the power of death to prove that he had actually died. But it was not possible that he should be held by death’s power: (Acts 2:24) *“Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”* According to Acts 10:40 God showed him openly; thereby proving that he had been resurrected after his death had been proven by lying in the grave. Our Christian faith is based upon this truth.

Paul, himself saw Jesus after he had been crucified, buried, resurrected and ascended to heaven: (1 Corinthians 15:8) *“And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.”* Paul first encountered Jesus when he was on the road to Damascus and later when he was caught up into the third heaven and when he was in a trance in Jerusalem. Paul considered himself to be “born out of due time” because his conversion occurred after Jesus death, burial and resurrection. He had not talked with Jesus while Jesus was alive and walked upon this earth as the other apostles had.

The Apostles Were Empowered To Work Miracles

The apostles were given special powers to work miracles by Jesus: (Matthew 10:1) *“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of*

sickness and all manner of disease.” Jesus informs them of this power: (Matthew 10:8) “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.” As mentioned earlier they were given this power to “confirm” what they said: (Mark 16:20) “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.” This certainly had an affect on the people who witnessed the miracles performed by the apostles: (Acts 2:43) “And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.”

Conclusion

There is a denomination that claims to have apostles today; it is true that they do send these young men out to preach a perverted truth but they are not apostles in the truest sense. Jesus only had twelve apostles and later Paul also became an apostle for Jesus. Nowhere in the Bible are we informed of anyone being a successor to even one or all of the apostles. There is no need to have apostles today as the ones whom Jesus sent has given us everything that we need to be saved and stay saved. We may send men to preach in foreign places; whether in be in our own nation or across water but they are not and should never claim to be an apostle. The apostles that Jesus refers to are the men that he; himself sent. Those who claim to be apostles today cannot confirm the words they speak by performing miracles; the apostles that Jesus refers to could confirm their words with miracles. Do not be deceived by anyone who claims to be an apostle!

All Christians are grateful and thankful for God’s love, grace and mercy as well the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made on our behalf. However, we must also be grateful and thankful for the apostles as well. It was the apostles who established the church after Jesus purchased it with his own blood: (Acts 20:28) *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”* Let us remember it was to the apostles that Jesus gave the keys to the kingdom of heaven that is the church (Matthew 16:19).

In our nation preachers are allowed to preach the gospel with little or no fear; it was not so with the apostles as they were in constant danger. It is believed that all the apostles died a violent death except the apostle John who lived to be an old man. We should be thankful that these men had so much love and faith that they were willing to sacrifice themselves for the gospel.

We should be grateful that they wrote by inspiration the books of the New Testament. I cannot even imagine not having a Bible. It is through their inspired

writings that that we know how to obtain salvation and what God expects of us after we become Christians. To this I say; “AMEN”.

I have hardly mentioned the work the apostles did; therefore I would encourage everyone to read about their efforts and teachings beginning with Acts chapter 2 and read through Revelation chapter twenty two verse twenty one.

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