

"The Foundation for the Apostles"

Part 3

Introduction: We are still in Acts 1 where we are looking at how the Apostles were prepared for what was before them. They were commissioned to carry the Gospel from Jerusalem to the utter most parts of the earth. In the past couple of lessons we have looked at how they were commissioned by the Lord and how they were promised to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. They were also reminded that there would be a day of reckoning when the Lord returned. This brings us to where we are tonight in our study.

1. They needed to obey orders.

Notice Acts 1:12

After the ascension of Jesus the Apostles returned to Jerusalem. This was obedience on their part for they had been commanded to do so.

Luke 24:49-52

49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

Notice Acts 1:4

This act of obedience was very important. It would be at Jerusalem that they would receive the Holy Spirit.

Application:

There are many commands given to you and me in the Word of God and obedience to each one is very important. When we are not obedient it makes me wonder what we miss. How many blessings have gotten away because we delayed in walking in obedience?

What happens when we receive a command from the Lord in His Word and we say, "Maybe later Lord." Or we decide to do it our way? Or even worse and we allow sin to have dominion over us? When these things happen, we grieve the Holy Spirit, and we quench the

Holy Spirit. This leads to a frustrated Christian life. We MUST walk in obedience if we expect to see the supernatural power of the Spirit at work in our lives.

1 Samuel 15:

16 Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.

17 And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?

18 And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?

20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

*22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? **Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.***

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

Too many believers are operating in their own power because they are not obedient to the Word of God. Let us pray as the Psalmist.

Psalm 139:23-24

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

2. They needed to serve in unity.

Notice Acts 1:13-14

Here we see the names of the eleven Apostles who went to Jerusalem to wait for the Spirit. This group of men are very interesting to look at. This is the only time that all of them are mentioned by name in the book of Acts. In the book of Acts we will see Peter, James and John mentioned by name but not the others. We will see only two mentions of the entire group in Acts 6:2 and 8:1.

Who were these men that are named here in Acts 1?

Peter, Andrew, James and John were ordinary fishermen.

Matthew 4:18-22

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.

¹⁹ And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

²⁰ And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

²¹ And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

²² And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

Matthew was a tax collector, and they were a despised group.

Matthew 10:2-3

² 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;

Peter and John were labeled as unlearned men.

Acts 4:13

*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.*

The entire group were just ordinary men whom God chose to be the Apostles who would introduce to the world the greatest and the most important message ever given. Now, there are some who would question why God would choose a group of men such as these? The answer is in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

²⁶ For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

²⁷ But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

²⁹ That no flesh should glory in his presence.

There is yet more to see here.

Notice Acts 1:13 again.

There are two men here that we need to see closely. Simon Zelotes is one of them. This man was a "Zealot." This does not mean much until we get a little back ground. The Zealots were a group of people who were very patriotic. They were strongly against the Roman government. They desired that Israel would be a free nation. They hated that Israel was dominated by the Romans. They wanted their nation to be freed from Roman rule. Their belief was so strong that they would go to great lengths to oppose the Roman government. They would use violence and even assassination attempts in order to strive for Israel's freedom. These Zealots would go to extremes much like extreme conservatives in the USA today. Simon had come to Jesus at some time. He had come to realize that Jesus came to set men free from sin, He did not come to free Israel from the Roman rule.

John 8:32, 36

³² And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

³⁶ If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

So, there was Simon the Zealot. Then there was Matthew the tax collector. Matthew worked for the Roman government! Simon worked to destroy the Roman rule and Matthew

worked on the inside of the Roman rule. To bring this into our day, it would be like placing an ultra-conservative with an extreme left leaning liberal.

Notice Acts 1:14 again.

Here we see that all these men were of in one accord. How do you get a tax collector who worked for the Romans to be in one accord with a man who wants to destroy the Roman government? You introduce them both to Jesus Christ! Apart from Jesus these men would most likely hate each other but in Christ they are functioning in unity. They are now focused not upon the government at hand, but they are all about the King and the Kingdom that is yet to come.

Application:

From this we can see that Jesus is the greatest need in our world today. When people are saved and focused upon Him there is unity within the body of Christ. There is unity where there was once great division.

Unity in the church today is so very important. It is one thing that sets the church apart from the world. Unity is a major part of our testimony. It should be something the world sees and longs to be a part of.

John 17:20-23

²⁰ *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;*

²¹ **That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.**

²² *And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; **that they may be one, even as we are one:***

²³ *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and **that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.***

When there are divisions in the church it is because the church has lost sight of its purpose which is to glorify Jesus Christ.

There is yet something else that we can see as we look into the Apostles. There were three of these men who made up an inner circle who were very close to Jesus. This was not partiality on the part of Jesus, but it was a longing within these three Apostles. The three are Peter, James and John. Let us consider the special privileges entrusted to them:

1. They witnessed the raising of Jairus' daughter.

Mark 5:37, 41-42

³⁷ *And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.*

⁴¹ *And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.*

⁴² *And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.*

2. They witnessed the transfiguration.

Matthew 17:1-2

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

² *And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*

3. They were permitted to go deeper into the garden.

Matthew 26:36-37

³⁶ *Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.*

³⁷ *And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.*

Conclusion:

Someone has said Jesus and these men were like a Shepherd and His sheep. Some of the sheep are close the outer edge of the flock while others prefer to graze close to the Shepherd.

Where are you grazing?