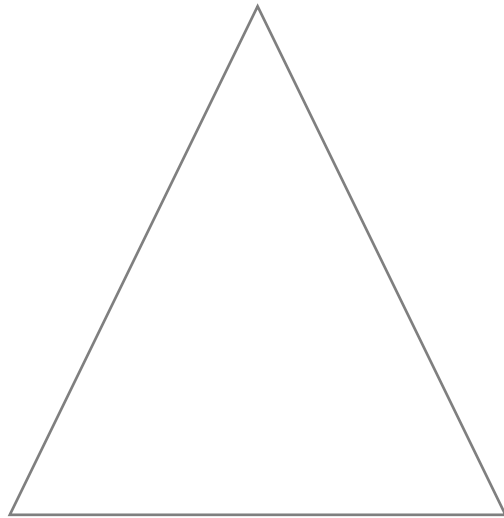

What is Apostolic Doctrine

A Brief Document on ACTS 2:42



1HOPE an Apostolic Arrow

Christian Publication

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KEY NOTE

The fundamental point of truth is that it cannot be almost truth, part truth, a form of truth, a half truth. So it is important when we communicate scripture we do so accurately and with the confidence in which we hear the Father's heart and voice. There are many voices in the earth and for many Christians we follow blindly without given a second thought to what God is saying progressively through His word. It seems church has gone rogue on serious issues of the faith and doctrine in which we are to contend for. As believers it is imperative to hold fast to the accounts in which foundations were laid to secure an accurate stream of relationship between Father God and the Sons of the earth through Christ Jesus. Apostolic Doctrine, therefore is not a new and novel teaching of someone who claims to be an apostle, it is the message of Christ Jesus. His redemptive work and His call to selfless discipleship that is found in the 27 books of the New Testament.

The Apostolic Witness

Acts 2:42 is a reference to the original eyewitness accounts of Jesus by the 12 apostles. This doctrine consists of their first hand reports of His life, teachings, death and His resurrection. This was at first an oral message spread by the twelve disciples and those that heard them. It was later written down what we know as the Synoptic Gospels. Paul's writings were later added to this original testimony and with the addition of James, Jude, Hebrews, 1&2 Peter, 1,2,3 John, and Revelation there came into existence what we know as the New Testament canon.

The New Testament canon contains the original, apostolic testimony and teaching and the church are dependent on its measure of rule which comes from them. We are an apostolic generation a sent people, the early apostles are the original witnesses, their testimony the original testimony and their mission the original mission.

The Significance of the twelve and Paul

Although there are other apostles in the New Testament, it is obvious that the twelve chosen by Jesus are a select company who occupy a unique place in God's purpose for His Church. This is borne out by the fact that throughout Scripture they are referred to as 'The Twelve', a set number neither to be added to nor subtracted from, note the following scriptures;

Matthew 10: 1-4

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. 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; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

Matthew 26:14-16

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

Mark 9:35

And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

Luke 18:31

Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

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.

1 Corinthians 15: 4-5

And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

Their uniqueness is clarified by the fact that Jesus tells them that in the age to come they will sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel {[Matthew 19:28](#) *And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*}

After the apostasy of Judas, the disciples in the upper room felt it necessary to choose a replacement so that the number would not be diminished by his demise {[Acts 1:15-26](#)}. The disciples chose Matthias to replace Judas and, according to the {[Acts 1:26](#)}, He was numbered with the eleven apostles, thus bringing the number back to twelve. The uniqueness of the twelve is also borne out by John's vision of the New Jerusalem that comes down from God out of heaven a picture of God's redeemed and triumphant people {[Revelation 21](#)}. John describes this city in glorious detail and says that the wall of the city has twelve foundations, And on them were written the names of the Twelve apostles of the Lamb {[Revelation 21:14](#)}

Distinguishing Characteristics of the Twelve

What seems to distinguish the Twelve from other apostles in the New Testament is that they were a part of that first group Jesus discipled and, therefore, eyewitnesses of His Life, Death, and Resurrection. When Peter presented the proposal to fill the vacancy left by Judas' Apostasy, he said that the replacement must be one who had accompanied Jesus from the time of His baptism by John the Baptist and had been, a witness with us of His resurrection {[Acts 1:21-22](#)}. Succeeding apostles cannot measure up to this criterion.

This indicates that the Twelve were particularly chosen by Jesus to be eyewitnesses of His life, ministry, death, and resurrection. They would proclaim, not myths, legends or hearsay, but events they had witnessed first-hand. In this sense, their testimony of Jesus would be foundational for succeeding generations. According to Christian tradition, all of the twelve, with the possible exception of John, were martyred for their testimony of Jesus. Although he may have escaped martyrdom, John was banished and possibly burned in oil for his testimony. The eyewitness accounts of the twelve were later written down in the four gospels and in certain epistles. Their apostolic calling, therefore, cannot be repeated, but God calls Paul one who was not part of the first apostles yet in status and apostleship he counts himself the least yet an exceptional bond servant to Christ and indeed a father of church building sonship in the spirit to go out and declare the Good News, in the spirit of Christ.

Paul's Message given equal status with the twelve

Even though it is clear from Paul's epistles that he was convinced of his equal status with the twelve {[2 Corinthians 11:5-6](#) *For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.*}

He apparently deemed it necessary to confirm that the gospel he was preaching to the Gentiles was in accord with the original eyewitness accounts of the twelve and the teaching they had personally received from the Lord {Galatians 2:1-2 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.} The twelve accepted him and affirmed the Gospel that he was preaching. Paul says that they gave to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship {Galatians 2:9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.} Thus recognizing the necessity of making sure that his own revelation was in harmony with the original eyewitness accounts.

The New Testament is the Standard by which Teachings and Revelation are to be measured

The eyewitness accounts of the twelve and the revelation received by Paul eventually became canonized in our New Testament. Paul wrote 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament. Luke, a close associate of Paul wrote the gospel of Luke and Acts. Matthew and John, both members of the twelve, wrote the gospels that bear their names. Mark, a close associate of Peter, wrote the gospel of Mark. Peter himself wrote, 1 and 2 Peter. John, in addition to the gospel wrote 1,2,3 John and Revelation. James was written by the brother of James, probably another half brother of Jesus. The author of the book of Hebrews is unknown but many believe it was Paul. The entire New Testament was, therefore, written by one of the twelve, or Paul or one of their immediate associates. This means that the New Testament contains the original apostolic testimony and teaching. As such it is the standard by which all succeeded teachings and revelation must be measured.

End Note

When Acts 2:42 says that the early church **continued steadfastly in the apostles teaching**, it is referring to the oral teaching of the twelve which was later canonized in the New Testament. Like the early church, the church today must also continue steadfastly in the apostles doctrine or teaching. How? By hearing and adhering to the original apostolic message that has been preserved for us in the New Testament.

Apostolic doctrine, therefore, is not the new and novel teachings of someone who calls himself an apostle. Apostolic doctrine is the message of Jesus, His redemptive work, and His call to selfless discipleship that is found in the 27 books of the New Testament. It is time that we asked ourselves are we continuing in the light of the original mandate.

Grace and Peace