

7 Attributes of the Early Church

1. Last week we learned about the 3 workings of the Holy Spirit in scripture...how our own experience may differ...with the same HS...and the same Jesus
 - a. This week...I want to show us 7 things the first church were doing well
 - b. Last week we ended on verse 8...I want to take a moment and revisit the verse...because Luke gives us the outline of the book of Acts in verse 8
2. Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." NKJV
 - a. The Greek word for power is dunamis...which means a special force...or a miraculous power...in which we get our English word dynamite
 - b. Here is the basic outline for the book of Acts...
 - c. Through the Dunamis power of the Holy Spirit...the apostles will witness about **Jesus**...which is such an important point...it is all about Jesus
 - d. Starting in Jerusalem...then to Judea...then Samaria...and then to the ends of the earth
 - e. Chapter 1-7...is the gospel going to Jerusalem...chapter 8-9 covers the gospel going to Judea and Samaria
 - f. Chapters 10-28 have to do with the gospel going to the ends of the earth...or going all the way to Rome...which takes about 30 years to do

3. Acts 1:9-11, 9 Now when He (Jesus) had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come...in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." NKJV
 - a. Luke tells us in His gospel...in chapter 24...that they are in Bethany when Jesus ascends
 - b. Bethany is a little village on east side of the mount of Olives...
 - c. Here is what we know so far about Jesus's ascension
 - d. Jesus leads them to Bethany...in His resurrected body...then Jesus blesses them...commissions them....and ascends into a cloud
 - e. Jesus then sends two angels as witnesses...to reveal a promise
 - f. That Jesus is not gone forever...He coming back...Jesus will descend in the same manor He ascended...what we don't know...is when
 - g. The event of Jesus's return...has been prophesied for us in the book of Zechariah...let's look at this prophecy in
4. Zechariah 14:3-5, 3 Then the Lord will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle. 4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south. 5 Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to

Azal. Yes, you shall flee As you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come, **And all the saints with You.**

NKJV...keep a finger in Zechariah because we will return here

5. Map...

- a. Imagine the movie scene...Jesus descends to let's say Bethany...and His toe touches the ground...the mount of olives split apart
- b. Now there is a valley between the temple and Bethany
- c. The Jews are running for their lives...escaping from Jerusalem through the new valley created
- d. And Jesus walks into His temple...through the new split...in the mount of Olives
- e. Verse 5 said...and all the saints with Him...that's the church...that's us
- f. Boy...is that a way to make an entrance or what
- g. But that's how the King of kings...makes an entrance into the temple of God
- h. This is not the rapture event...the rapture happens before the 7 years of tribulation even starts
- i. Zechariah is telling us...about the event when Christ returns...the second His feet touch the mount of Olives...it splits in 2
- j. This event...happens at the end of the tribulation...which is also...the beginning of the Millilumen kingdom
- k. In Jesus's first coming...He was born of a virgin...to offer a new covenant of Grace...through the sacrifice on the cross for sin

- l. In Jesus's second coming...He will descend from heaven...to go to battle for Israel as before...and rule the earth with a rod of Iron
 - m. One of Satan's temptations in the wilderness...was for Jesus to jump off the top of the temple
 - n. So His angels would bring Him down safely...as a way to mimic His second coming...when Jesus returns as the concurring Messiah
 - o. The temptation for Jesus was...to skip going to the cross for sin
 - p. What I want us to see is...that Jesus will return...in the same manor...as He left...descending most likely in Bethany
6. Acts 1:12-13, 12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. NKJV
- a. Now the 11 apostles return to Jerusalem...without the 12th apostle...Judas
 - b. Some of us may think...good...that traitor is gone...but I believe they were hurting inside...they just lost a friend...a brother who lost his way
 - c. They ministered together...they served Jesus for 3.5 years together
 - d. You would think...that after serving the Lord for 3.5 years together...you would get to somebody really well
 - e. Even at the last supper...none of the disciples knew who would betray Jesus...they asked the Lord if it was them
 - f. Jesus gives Judas the bread to identify him...but none of them understood

- g. Later...here comes Judas with the Sanhedrin to arrest Jesus
- h. That's how they found out...what Jesus was talking about...what a shock this must have been
- i. I know how it feels to serve the Lord with someone you consider to be a brother...for them only to betray you later...it doesn't feel good
- j. But instead of feeling defeated...this early church continues to serve Jesus with these 7 attributes

7. Slide...They were obedient

- a. We know they were obedient...because they returned to Jerusalem without fully understanding what was to come next
- b. Verses 9 and 10 told us...they stood there and watched Jesus ascend
- c. How long they stood there I don't know...too long I guess
- d. Because Jesus has to send two angels to get them going...with the promise that Jesus will return...just not today
- e. Here is the lesson...we can trust Jesus...even when we are confused...even when we don't understand fully...that's why it is called trust
- f. We are to stay obedient to God...and trust God's word...because His plans for us...are much better than our plans for us...if we trust Him
- g. Here is what they did after arriving back in Jerusalem

8. Acts 1:14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. NKJV

9. Slide...The second thing is, They were people of prayer

- a. This verse has 4 important lessons in it

- b. Slide...They were faithful in prayer...they continued to pray
- c. Slide...They had unity in prayer with one accord
- d. Slide...They had humility in prayer...they prayed in supplication
- e. Slide...The men and women are praying together in unity

10. Acts 1:15-17, 15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, 16 "Men and brethren, this Scripture **had to be fulfilled**, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; 17 for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry." NKJV

11. Slide...The third thing is...They were men of the scriptures

12. Slide...The fourth thing is...They studied prophecy

13. Slide...The fifth thing is...They believed scripture was inspired by God

- a. It is important to have the word of God in our minds...but it is more important...is to have the word of God go into our hearts
- b. Because once it is in your heart...then the Holy Spirit can minister to you in a relational way...by bringing scriptures from your heart...to your mind
- c. This is one of the ways the HS can minister to us
- d. Realize this is the first meeting of the early church after the ascension
- e. The first order of business...is to deal with the shocking report about Judas
- f. They have to deal with the tragedy of the suicide of an apostle... also a friend...who betrayed Jesus for money...here is the key
- g. They dealt with this tragic event...as a community

- h. Peter is telling them...this is part of the plan of God...because it was foretold in the scriptures
- i. Jesus foreknew who would betray Him...and how...but the disciples had no idea...yet Peter stands up...to reveal the truth in the matter to the 120

14. Acts 1:18-19, 18 (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. 19 And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.) NKJV

- a. This is quite a speech from Peter so far...I think the kids today use the expression...TMI...or too much information
- b. Peter...could have just say he died...He committed suicide.
- c. But no...Peter's a fisherman...He's a rough...bold man of the earth...and is just going to say things...the way they are
- d. Maybe some of the women...are like...oh...Peter that's horrible...why be so graphic
- e. The thing I like about the Bible...is it is real...sure it can be graphic...but it's telling us real events...told by real people who lived it
- f. The only reason I bring this point up...is because...some will say there is a discrepancy here...the gospel of Matthew tells us that Judas hung himself
- g. And now Peter is saying that his guts gushed out...when he got slammed on a rock.
- h. Rest assured...there is not a discrepancy here... they both happened...Judas did hang himself and at some point the rope broke...which caused the fall

- i. The fall caused the impact...which caused the opening of the body cavity and his guts...his intestines were on the rocks. TMI.
- j. Next I want to take time to amplify...a point Peter is making
- k. Peter is showing a fulfillment of 2 prophesies...a prophecy given by Jerimiah...which is a sermon in itself...which I won't explain
- l. And the prophecy of Zechariah...who prophesied this betrayal event of Judas...some 500 years before it happened...with surprising accuracy

15. Zech 11:12-13, 12 Then I said to them, "If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain." So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. 13 And the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter" — that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter. NKJV

- a. Matthew records for us...how this prophecy was fulfilled by Judas and the Sadducees at the temple

16. Matt 27:3-8, 3 Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" 5 Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. 6 But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood." 7 And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. 8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. NKJV

- a. Notice...the common fishermen...these common sinners...are now men of scriptures...and prophecy... keep finger in Matthew
17. Acts 1:20 (Peter is still speaking) "For it is written in the Book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it'; and, **'Let another take his office.'** NKJV
18. Slide...The 6th thing is, they are men of action
- a. Peter is quoting from psalms 69 and psalms 109...as the reason to replace Judas
 - b. When Peter says...let another take his office...he is referring to the **office of the 12 Apostle**
 - c. I believe the reason the Holy Spirit...moves Peter to replace the vacant office of Judas...is because of something Jesus had said back in Matt
19. Matt 19:25-28, 25 When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" 26 But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." 27 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" 28 So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, **you who have followed Me**...will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
- NKJV
- a. There are only 12 thrones...for the 12 apostles...which means there are only 12 office positions...for those who left all...and walked with Jesus

- b. What Peter says next in the book of Acts...is to give us the requirements needed to hold the office of apostle in

20. Acts 1:21-24, 21 "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection." 23 And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen NKJV

- a. Notice...Peter has just laid out four requirements...of the official office of apostle...in order to find a replacement for Judas

21. Slide... The first criteria is...They must have been with Jesus throughout His ministry

22. Slide...The second criteria is...They needed to witness Jesus's Baptism by John the Baptist

23. Slide...The third criteria is...They had to be an eye witness of the resurrection of Jesus

24. Slide...The fourth criteria...Involves the witness of Jesus ascending into heaven

- a. There would have been only two...who meet these qualifications
- b. There are some who say these guys were being presumptuous...and that Paul was God's choice to be the 12 apostle
- c. The question comes about...did Paul meet the requirement laid out by Peter

d. We don't know the answer to that question...but in Acts 2:14 the Holy Spirit recognizes Matthias.

25. Acts 2:14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, (**that makes 12**) raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. NKJV

a. Here...what we see...is the Holy Spirit recognize Matthias...by being counted as one of the 12...because it didn't say the 11...but 12

b. We may be surprised when we get to heaven...to see who is actually sitting on the 12th apostles throne...but I think it is Matthias

c. Don't get hung up on this...the word apostle...means sent one...or sent by God...many people have been sent by God

d. But there are only 12 thrones for the 12 men who hold the office of apostle

e. This brings us to the 7th thing about the apostles

26. Slide...They were men of faith

27. Acts 1:24-26, 24 Then they all prayed, "O Lord, you know every heart. Show us which of these men you have chosen 25 as an apostle to replace Judas in this ministry, for he has deserted us and gone where he belongs." 26 Then they cast lots, and Matthias was selected to become an apostle with the other eleven.

a. They were men of faith because they prayed in faith

28. Pray...Jesus thank you for your word...how we can trust your word...as the inspired word of God...thank you for showing us these wonderful attributes of the early church...how they handled tragedy in community...how they continued to move forward...in one accord as a family...Jesus help this body to continue to be a church of these attributes...a close family of believers...so you can receive the glory...you so richly deserve...Amen