

# *Truth for Today*

## **The Bible Explained**

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## **Getting the Fundamentals right The Apostles' Doctrine**

*[Please note: The New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

### **Introduction**

My main thought in suggesting this series was that we delve down into the importance of the fundamentals of the early Church. To look in a practical way as to why it's so important to continue to do the things that were key to the growth of the early Church. The first two talks in the series were receiving the word and baptism. In the remarkable event of the Church's formation at Pentecost there were over three thousand souls that gladly received the word. The word of God became real to them, they had been convicted of sin, and in repentance they had come to Christ. Because of their new salvation they identified themselves with Jesus Christ and they did this by being baptised, which is an outward sign that they now followed Him.

Over the next few talks in the series, we will look at fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers. Covid-19 brought in many new opportunities for online fellowship, which resulted in much blessing, but let's not forget that fellowship in the early Church was about being together in person. It is good to be together as it is an encouragement to each other. It is also vital that we maintain occasions that we gather to break bread. The Lord does not ask us to do much, but He does ask us specifically to do this.

I Corinthians 11 v. 26 repeats the instruction of the Lord,

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He come.

What a responsibility and privilege we have to do this, and while doing this we give Him the desire of His heart,

This do...in remembrance of Me (1 Corinthians 11 v. 24).

It was something the early Christians did regularly. Prayer! Well, we all know the importance of prayer, and some have described it as the powerhouse of the church. Yet often this is the worst attended meeting. Attendance at some churches is dwindling away, however we give thanks that the work and power of the Holy Spirit is still as active and powerful as it was on the Day of Pentecost.

Acts chapter 2 is a very important passage of the Bible. The Holy Spirit (who was called the Helper or Comforter by Jesus in John 14 v. 26), came down on the Day of Pentecost and dwelt in every individual believer. Each one was given power, direction, and guidance from God through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit then began to form the body of Christ, the Church, which is made up of every true believer in Christ. He continues to do this today. Peter having been filled with the Spirit stood up with the eleven disciples and gave a sermon to the 'Men of Judea' and everyone who lived in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit then began to work in the hearts and consciences of the

hearers convicting the people of sin and judgement to come. There was a great blessing, and about three thousand souls were saved and baptised. Their attitudes and lives were changed as they turned their eyes to see Jesus whilst praising God and they witnessed to others. This was the beginning of the Church as we know it today. Thank God since that amazing day many millions have come to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We also give thanks that there are believers in every generation who continue faithfully in the teachings of the early apostles.

## **Reading**

If you have a Bible handy, I would like to read with you in Acts 2 vv. 41-47.

Then those who gladly received his word were baptised; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

## **Who were the apostles and on what authority did they speak?**

The apostles' doctrine or teaching lies at the foundation of Acts 2 v. 42. An apostle was one who had been with Jesus in the flesh and had been a witness of His death and resurrection. You may argue with me that Paul never met the Lord physically, however on a few occasions Paul is quite clear that he had met the Lord. I don't think you can disagree that Paul met the Lord on the road to Damascus when he was amazingly saved, and his life was completely turned around. Paul, a Jew himself, was the special vessel who was called by the Lord from heaven and was charged to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles (everyone that was not a Jew). The apostles were the men to whom the Lord had said,

When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth  
(John 16 v.13).

Their doctrine was consequently the teaching of the Lord under the Spirit's guidance. The Church was now a reality, and the first thing that marked it was subjection to the Spirit's teaching through the apostles. It is good to be reminded that the Church does not teach, it is taught; and it is subject to the Word as given by the Spirit.

Acts 2 vv. 41-42 tells us that once they had received the word and were baptised everyone continued steadfastly in the Apostles Doctrine, and this is our subject today. Another, maybe more up to date, word for doctrine is teaching. So, we could say 'the teaching of the apostles.' Some over the years have rejected the New Testament teachings of Luke, Paul, Peter, John, and James. However, these men who had known Jesus personally wrote down everything they witnessed and heard under the guidance and authority of the Holy Spirit of God. In John 16 v. 13, the Lord Himself tells us of the work and authority of the Holy Spirit.

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

The Holy Spirit's work is to teach us and in doing so glorify Christ. The Bible is the Word of God; it's the truth of God; and everything in it is for our learning. We must study the Bible in its full con-

text to understand the teaching of Christ which we are taught through the apostles.

### **What are the fundamental teachings of the apostles?**

I suppose we could make a long list. However, I will try to narrow it down to help us understand the key fundamentals. Thinking about the background of the people who were saved on the day of Pentecost, the new Jewish believers, they needed to be taught the basics of the newly formed Church and how it would function. The Jews had been used to laws and observations of certain days as we read in the Old Testament. Israel had been the conduit through which God worked in the world up until this point, but now the Church (every individual believer in Christ) was to be the witness of Christ going forward. Israel had been disobedient, they had cast aside and crucified their Messiah, whom God had sent into the world. Jesus had come as the One Sacrifice for sin; He died, and He rose from the dead. The Lord Jesus Christ had come to declare in person the very nature of God. The person and work of the Lord Jesus were examples of God's love for them; and of how believers should live in the truth of the Bible which make clear the beliefs and practices passed down from the original apostles of Jesus Christ.

There are certain truths about God that we must always consider. God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. It is great to have the peace of knowing that He is in control of everything no matter what the rest of humanity thinks. Remember the Bible tells us that He knows the numbers of grains of sand on the beach, He knows the number of hairs on our head. He is the great, mighty, and awesome God of this world and beyond. The nature of God never changes, and neither does His amazing love, grace, forgiveness, mercy. These, and His judgements, are consistent, no matter how we behave.

On the other hand, there are things about human beings that will never change. Humanity is in a fallen state. By saying that I mean that soon after God made Man he sinned, and God banished him from His presence in the Garden of Eden. God cannot look on sin as He is a Holy God, so there was a gulf created between sinful man and a holy God. The bridging of the great gulf was a merciful and loving act of God in sending His Son into this world to be our Saviour. The Jews had been carrying out their rituals as instructed in the Old Testament. Like the Passover which they celebrated that night in Egypt when the lamb had to be sacrificed and the blood spread on the door posts and lintels so that the people in the house would be saved from the destroying angel. But things changed when the Lamb came, He was the only One who could be the once and forever sacrifice for sins and bridge the great gulf between God and man because of sin. Salvation was now only found in Christ alone and by faith alone.

The death of Christ and His resurrection are the absolute fundamentals of our faith and without them there would be no hope, and it would be impossible to be brought into salvation and blessing. In his sermon in Acts ch. 2, Peter makes it clear to the people of Jerusalem that it was they who had rejected, crucified, and put to death Jesus of Nazareth, their Messiah, but God had raised Him up. And not only that, but God had exalted Jesus and made Him both Lord and Christ, so now they needed to repent and turn from their sins.

The authority of Scripture is another very important truth. 2 Timothy 3 v. 16,

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

In Luke 24 the Lord instructs the two on the road to Emmaus about everything written in the Old Testament that was pointing to Him. The whole Bible is one book that reveals God and His feelings and thoughts for mankind. The Bible is the God-breathed word of God. The Bible makes it clear where we stand before a Holy God. The Bible makes it clear how we can be saved, not by what we do but by what Christ has done. The Bible makes it clear how believers should live our lives in this world. We should be holy, without blame, so no one can point a finger at us, and be

pleasing to Him. If we live according to the instructions of the Bible, we will live lives that are fulfilled, which make a difference in society, and we will have peace and satisfaction that only comes through knowing Jesus.

We have touched on it already, but just to underline again the work of the Holy Spirit. The Bible speaks about God being a triune God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This is a difficult concept to grasp for our human minds. Each One is co-equal with the Other and carries out different roles. The disciples lived and walked with the Jesus the Son of God. When the Lord comes to take us to heaven, we will be with Him in person. We understand the God the Father because of the reflection of His Son, and we have the Holy Spirit living in our hearts today. The apostles' teaching takes us further into the knowledge and understanding of God's plans for the world. We learn about the second coming of Christ, when He will come and take the Church (every true believer in Christ, dead and alive) to heaven. We learn about the Tribulation that will take place in the world when the believers leave at the Rapture. We learn of the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ with us (His saints) when He will come and defeat all His enemies, then He will rule and reign in righteousness. We learn how every knee will bow to Jesus, and everything will exalt His wonderful Name. We learn of the great future that the believer will have in the world to come and in heaven, a place where there will be no more sin and no more tears.

### **Application and Relevance Today**

Even today, almost two thousand years later the Apostles' Doctrine remains central to Christian living, and it should guide and affect our lives each day. Believers are called to be steadfast in the apostles' teaching (Acts 2 v. 42). This means embracing Scripture as the ultimate authority, abiding in the truth of Christ's atoning work, seeking the ongoing fellowship of the Holy Spirit, whilst eagerly awaiting Christ's return. Many Christian churches in their statement of faith share these core beliefs, including the existence of one God who is the Creator of all things, and the belief that Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, who died and rose again, is the Saviour who reconciles humanity to God. We know that sin separates humans from God, and that salvation is found through faith in Jesus Christ alone, through repentance, to be followed by submission to His will. There have always been, and there will continue to be, debates over the nature of God, doctrines of salvation, and the authority of the texts, yet careful study of records such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, the wealth of New Testament manuscripts, and early church writings all converge on the robust reliability of the Apostles' witness. When examined alongside external historical sources and testimonies, the apostolic message stands firm. It should be noted that while various Christian traditions may assign different emphases or practices, the essence of the Apostles' Doctrine does not change. It upholds that salvation is found in Christ alone, that Scripture is God's inspired word, and that believers are to be filled with the Holy Spirit and united in fellowship.

### **Summing up**

The Day of Pentecost in AD 33 was a defining moment for the Church, and it has continued throughout the years, to you and me today. With courage and conviction Peter stood up with the eleven disciples, and he, as always, the spokesman for the group began in the power of the Holy Spirit to preach about the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and what it meant to those who were listening. He pulled no punches as he told the people it was they who had crucified the Lord, and he called them to repent of their sins. The effect of the power of the word of God that day was amazing, with many receiving the word and being baptised. Their changed lives then became a living example of their salvation and commitment to Christ. The apostles continued to teach the believers the deeper truths of God. This was necessary as like us their fire for the Lord grew cold. We need to be reignited, challenged, and encouraged through reading the Bible. It is good to go back and consider the day when we trusted in the Lord, the relief we felt from having our sins forgiven, and knowing that we were fit and ready for heaven. The sense of peace, and the appreciation of what Christ had done for me was very real and evident that day. We were on fire for the Lord! The word of the Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit is as effective today as it was then. We often find this hard to believe looking around at the world today. But it is! Let us all

be encouraged in our Christian lives and hold on to all that the apostles taught, as we all believe that the Bible is the Word of God. Let me finish by quoting one verse Hebrews 4 v. 12.

For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Amen.

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on Getting the Fundamentals right, 'The Apostles' Doctrine.' Talk number T1424.

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