

9. Q. When did the present or Christian Dispensation begin?
10. Q. What is the New Covenant?
11. Q. What was the final step in the unfolding of God's Plan of Redemption for man?
12. Q. For what should we who live in the present Dispensation be especially thankful?

Lesson Forty-One

WHAT GOD DID THROUGH THE APOSTLES

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:1-8, 2 Cor. 5:16-20.

Scriptures to Memorize: "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20).

13. Q. What do we mean by the New Testament?
 - A. By the New Testament, we mean the Last Will and Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

(1) The word covenant is, in the Latin, *testamentum*, rendered in our language, testament. A testament is, in ordinary terms, a will. A will is defined as "a legal document disposing of one's property at death." (2) Hence the New Testament is the formal and authoritative instrument through which Jesus Christ, the Testator, at His death, authorized the continued disposition to men, on the terms specified therein, of the blessings and gifts of Divine grace, throughout the present or Christian Dispensation. (3) The Christian System is spoken of as a covenant, in the sense that it is a solemn proposal from God, through Christ, ad-

dressed to sinful men, inviting them to turn again (conversion) and enter into a spiritual compact with their heavenly Father and their Redeemer; and stating the terms upon which such solemn agreement may be consummated. (4) The Christian System is spoken of as a Testament, in the sense that it is the final and authoritative revelation of the will of God, through Jesus Christ, respecting the means and provisions for man's eternal redemption. This Last Will and Testament is recorded in that portion of the Bible which we know as the New Testament Scriptures.

14. Q. What are the essential elements of a testament or will?

A. They are: (1) the will-maker, or testator; (2) the stipulations; and (3) the executor or executors.

15. Q. When did the Last Will and Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ go into effect?

A. It went into effect at the death of Christ.

A will becomes effective as soon as the will-maker dies. Hence the New Testament went into effect when Christ died on the Cross. Heb. 9:16—"For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it."

16. Q. What was the first necessary step in the execution of the Last Will and Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

A. The first necessary step was the probating of the instrument.

The first necessary step in the execution of any will is the certification of its authenticity in open court. This step is known as the probating of the will.

17. Q. When was the Last Will and Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ probated?

A. It was probated on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, A. D. 30.

On that memorable day, the terms and conditions of the New Testament (i. e., the facts, commands and promises of the Gospel Covenant) were publicly announced for the first time. They were announced by the Apostles as the divinely-appointed executors; and they were properly authenticated by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. (See the entire second chapter of Acts; cf. 1 Pet. 1:12.)

18. Q. Who were the executors of the Last Will and Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

A. The Apostles.

An executor is "a person appointed by a testator in his will to see that the terms of the will are duly carried out." Our Lord appointed the Apostles the executors of His Last Will and Testament. Matt. 18:18—"What things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." John 20:21-23, "Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent me, even so I send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit; whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." John 17:18—"As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world." These scriptures all have reference to the Apostles only. Cf. Acts 1:1-8.

19. Q. Who, then, were the Apostles?

A. The Apostles were men specially called, trained and qualified by Christ Himself, for the work of executing His Last Will and Testament.

(1) They were men whom Jesus Himself called. Matt. 4:18-21, 9:9, 10:2-4; Mark 1:16-19, 3:13-19; Luke 5:10, 6:13-16; John 1:35-51, etc. His personal appearance to Saul of Tarsus was for the purpose of calling the latter to the apostleship. Acts 26:15-18. (2) They were men whom Jesus Himself personally trained and qualified for their work. See Acts 1:21-22; John 17:7-16; 1 Cor. 13:37,

etc. (3) They were men who actually saw the Lord after His resurrection. See Acts 10:40-41; 1 John 1:1-4; Acts 9:1-9, 26:12-18, etc.

20. Q. Name the original Twelve Apostles.

A. They were: (1) Simon Peter; (2) Andrew; (3) James, and (4) John, the sons of Zebedee; (5) Philip; (6) Bartholomew (Nathanael); (7) Matthew (Levi); (8) Thomas; (9) James the son of Alphaeus; (10) Judas (also Thaddeus, or Jude); (11) Simon Zelotes (the Cananean); and (12) Judas Iscariot.

Of this original group Judas Iscariot betrayed Christ and fell from the apostleship. Later, Matthias was selected to take his place. See Acts 1:15-26. That the selection of Matthias was divinely ratified, is evident from a comparison of Acts 1:26 with Acts 6:2. Acts 1:26—"the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." Acts 6:2—"and the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them," etc.

21. Q. Who was specially called, trained and qualified to be the Apostle to the Gentiles?

A. Paul.

Saul was his Hebrew name, but he was also born a Roman citizen and bore the additional name of Paul. See Acts 26:12-19; Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Cor. 9:1; 1 Cor. 14:37, etc.

22. Q. What is the term most commonly applied to the Apostles in the New Testament Scriptures?

A. They are alluded to most frequently as "witnesses."

Acts 1:8—"ye shall be my witnesses." Acts 2:32—"This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we are all witnesses." Acts 10:40-41—"Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who

ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead." Luke 24:48—"Ye are witnesses of these things." Jesus, in commissioning Paul, said: "to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee" (Acts 26:16). Cf. also Acts 1:22, 1 Cor. 9:1, 2 Pet. 1:16-18, 1 John 1:1-4, etc.

23. Q. What is the signification of the term "witness"?

A. It signifies authenticity.

(1) A witness is one who testifies; one who testifies with regard to what he has seen, with his own eyes; and one whose testimony is therefore authentic. (2) The Apostles were not priests; nor were they theologians, philosophers, clergymen, or social reformers. They were primarily and essentially witnesses. They were men who testified with regard to what they had actually seen. Acts 10:41—"to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead." 1 John 1:1—"that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled," etc. We are therefore justified in accepting the testimony of the Apostles as authentic.

24. Q. Where is the apostolic testimony recorded?

A. It is recorded in the New Testament Scriptures.

In and through the New Testament Scriptures, the Apostles have literally become witnesses of Christ unto the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). We, as disciples, evangelists, elders, deacons, teachers, etc., cannot be witnesses of Christ; rather, we are the propagators and preachers of the apostolic witness or testimony. 2 Tim. 2:2—"and the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

25. Q. What other special designation is given to the Apostles in the New Testament Scriptures?

A. They are called "ambassadors" of Christ.

2 Cor. 5:20—"we are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ." Eph. 6:19-20—"the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains."

26. Q. What is the signification of the term "ambassador"?

A. It signifies authority.

(1) An ambassador is a government agent of highest rank. Hence the term "ambassador" is the only one that can be used to appropriately describe the dignity and rank of the apostolic office. (2) An ambassador is always vested with the authority of the government which he is sent out to represent. The Apostles were ambassadors of Christ, therefore, in the sense that they were sent out fully clothed with His divine authority. John 17:18—"As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world." John 20:21, 23—"as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you . . . whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." Mark 16:20—"And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed."

27. Q. How were the Apostles specially qualified for the work they were sent out to do?

A. They were specially qualified by having been given the Holy Spirit to accompany them, to direct them in their work, and to guide them into all the truth.

Note the many promises that were made to the Apostles, and to the Apostles only. Matt. 10:19-20—"It shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." John 14:26—"But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all

that I said unto you." Luke 24:48, 49—"Ye are witnesses of these things . . . but tarry ye in the city until ye be clothed with power from on high." Acts 1:8—"But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses," etc. Cf. John 14:16-17, 15:26-27, 16:7-15, 20:21-23, etc. Acts 2:4—"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." It should be made clear that these promises were to the Apostles only, not to all Christians. To interpret them as having reference to all believers, as is frequently done, is to give them a wholly unscriptural implication.

28. Q. For what purpose were the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon the Apostles in such great measure?

A. For the purpose of making them infallible witnesses.

This guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit was for the purpose of clothing them with infallibility. They were thus safeguarded against error in executing the Last Will and Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. John 16:13—"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth . . . and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come." Cf. 1 Cor. 2:12, 13; 1 Pet. 1:12; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 14:37; Acts 15:28, etc.

29. Q. Did the Apostles have any successors?

A. They did not; for the obvious reason that witnesses cannot have successors.

A witness can testify only with regard to what he himself has seen, with his own eyes; hence a witness cannot have successors. There is not one iota of evidence in the New Testament Scriptures, either by direct statement or by inference, that the Apostles called or qualified, or delegated their authority to, any man or group of men to succeed them. With the establishment of the Church, and the writ-

ing of the New Testament Scriptures, the office and work of the Apostles came to an end. The dogma of "apostolic succession" is a monstrous fabrication of purely human origin, and without any divine warrant whatsoever.

30. Q. **What, firstly, did God do through the Apostles?**

A. **Through the Apostles, He revealed and established the principles, laws and institutions of the New Covenant.**

31. Q. **What, secondly, did God do through the Apostles?**

A. **Through the Apostles, He gave the Great Commission under which the Church functions in evangelizing the world.**

Acts 1:2—"until the day in which he was received up, after that he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom he had chosen." This "commandment" is generally known as the Great Commission—"the marching orders of the King." Matt. 28:19-20, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Mark 16:15, 16—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."

32. Q. **What, thirdly, did God do through the Apostles?**

A. **Through the Apostles, He set up the Church of Christ to preserve and proclaim the Gospel for a testimony unto all the nations (Matt. 24:14).**

33. Q. **What, fourthly, did God do through the Apostles?**

A. **Through the Apostles, He embodied the Christian Revelation in permanent form in the New**

**Testament Scriptures, for the guidance of His
people under the New Covenant.**

The Apostles' teaching, as embodied in the New Testament Scriptures, is for the administration of the Church throughout the Christian Dispensation. We read that the church at Jerusalem "continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42); so should all Christians. The New Testament canon is our all-sufficient guide in religious faith, worship and practice. It is the only Discipline we need. Let us therefore plead with believers everywhere to abandon all divisive and unscriptural creeds and confessions, which have been written by men; and to adhere solely to the teaching of the New Testament Scriptures.

**REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON
FORTY-ONE**

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16. Q. What was the first necessary step in the execution of the Last Will and Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?
17. Q. When was the Last Will and Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ probated?
18. Q. Who were the executors of the Last Will and Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?
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31. Q. What, secondly, did God do through the Apostles?
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33. Q. What, fourthly, did God do through the Apostles?

Lesson Forty-Two

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:13-20; Acts 2:37-47.

Scriptures to Memorize: "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). "They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41).

34. Q. What do we mean by the Christian Institution?
 - A. By the Christian Institution, we mean the Institution divinely established and appointed for the worship and service of God through Jesus Christ, throughout the Christian Dispensation.

Rom. 12:1—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service."