

## 2. Taking care of business

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If you are going to write a movie script and want to make that movie be successful, you need to start with a big opening and work your way up to a climax. But the opening of the Book of Acts does not exactly come as a big spectacular kind. Because it talks about a church business meeting . How boring!

I do not like paperwork, nor do I care to be in a long business meeting . I am kinda a bottom line guy. But sometimes it is absolutely necessary to have meetings and do at least one paperwork a month as a pastor of the church. Our very capable church office manager Pam Giese and a couple of volunteers, such as Cindy Simon and Raul Perez take care of all the rest of the paperwork and finance headache for me.

But this church business meeting in Acts chapter 1 obviously was important in the Lord's eyes. Dr. Luke had to build a bridge between his Gospel and the Book of Acts. At the close of his Gospel, he had left the believers in the temple, praising God. Now he had to pick up the story and explain what happened next. Besides, when you start a church, you do need an organization. So it is the only right thing to establish the basic infrastructure of the church from the beginning .

In this chapter 1, we see the believers taking care of "unfinished business" and getting ready for Pentecost in chapter 2.

### A. THE ANGELIC ASSURANCE OF JESUS' RETURN

*Acts 1:9-11* Now when He 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."

Our Lord Jesus' ascension into heaven is very important to us. I am sure that His disciples felt that they were left behind all alone with a horde of bad guys all around who wanted to persecute them in any way they could.

**1) If Jesus didn't return to the Father, He couldn't have sent the promised gift of the Holy Spirit.**

**2) The Savior is our interceding High Priest, giving us the grace that we need for life and service.**

**3) He is also our Advocate before the Father, forgiving us when we confess our sins. The exalted and glorified Head of the church is now working with His people on earth and helping them accomplish His purposes.**

These two men, in my opinion, they are angels, told the disciples to put their attention in the right place – obedience to Jesus' command to return to Jerusalem, not in wondering where and how Jesus went. Jesus told them to go to the ends of the earth, and they stood gazing up into heaven with open mouths.

Please note what these two men said in v11":

*Acts 1:11b* This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

What did they mean? I find three important things to think about:

**1) He left physically and will so come in like manner .**

Whether it is the rapture or the second coming of Christ, He would come down from heaven physically.

**2) He left visibly and will so come in like manner .**

When Christ comes down to get His believers out of this world for the rapture, the believers will be able to see Him. But for the second coming of Christ at the end of the Great Tribulation, all the unbelievers will be able to see Him.

**3) He left from the Mount of Olives and will so come in like manner .**

This only applies to the second coming of Christ. When He returns with His believers, He will come back to the Mount of Olives.

**B. THE UPPER ROOM PRAYER MEETING**

*Acts 1:12-14 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. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

The disciples finally got it. They instantly obeyed by returning to Jerusalem as they were told to do by the Lord in v4. The Mount of Olives is located less than a half mile from Jerusalem, just outside of the Eastern Gate of the Temple Mount.

There were Jesus' disciples, His mama Mary, and His half-brothers. The brothers of Jesus never seemed to be supportive of Jesus' earthly ministry before His death and resurrection. After encountering the resurrected Jesus, they were changed into true followers of Jesus. As a matter of fact, two of His brothers, Jude and James wrote two powerful Books that were included in the Bible.

Please note that there is notable unity among them. Whenever we saw the disciples in all four Gospels, what did they do best? Arguing and bickering about who was the greatest among them. Though they were the same people, but their hearts were changed drastically because of the resurrected Jesus.

Already, we see three important steps in making godly decisions: The disciples were in obedience, they were in fellowship, and they were in prayer .

**C. SELECTING THE REPLACEMENT FOR JUDAS**

*Acts 1:15-20 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." 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.) 20 "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.'*

Without a doubt, Peter was a leader and the spokesman among the apostles in Jerusalem. However, the idea that the authority of Peter was supreme and consider him as the original pope and he handed down his authority in unbroken succession, is unbiblical and wrong.

We must remember that the Lord had opened up the apostles' minds to understand the Scriptures. When Peter referred to Psalms 69:25 and 109:8, he was not doing this on his own, but was being led by the Spirit of God. These people definitely believed in the divine inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures, and they also believed that these Scriptures had a practical application to their situation.

#### **D. MATTHIAS, A NEW APOSTLE?**

*Acts 1:21-26 "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 25 to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." 26 And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*

What Peter said about the replacement for Judas was correct, but I do not believe that it was for their job to select a man for that position. Paul, formerly Saul from Tarsus, became an apostle by God's appointment.

Just because the Lord gives you an idea to do something, it doesn't mean that you are supposed to do it right away unless He specifies it. It might be just a notification what He is going to do, not what you are supposed to do. This is a case in point.

Besides, we find no evidence that the qualifications by Peter were discovered either in the Scriptures or by special leading of the Holy Spirit. He might say that they simply used their sanctified common sense.

#### **E. CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

I understand that the NT does not have a clear definitive statement of God's preference for church government. In Christianity, we find three basic forms of church government. Two of them are in the New Testament, and the other one developed through church history.

##### **1) Ruled by bishop (pastor)**

The first form of church government was the rule by pastor, bishop, or overseer. The Greek word is 'episkopos'. You can find clear qualifications of bishop in Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3:

*1 Timothy 3:2-7 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

If this style of government does not have accountability, the pastor can be a dictator and the people around him will suffer.

## 2) Ruled by a group of elders

There was another form of leadership that utilized a group of gifted men called the 'presbyteros', or elders.

*Acts 14:23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*

The major problem with this style of a church government is that their pastor is nothing more than a hireling. They can hire and fire a pastor if they don't like him or cannot control him in the way they want.

## 3) Ruled by congregation

Over time, a third form of church government has arisen, known as congregational rule. I don't believe that congregational rule is a biblical option because we really never see an example in the Bible where the congregation was right, no offense to you guys.

I know that people have the mindset that we should do the things according to the majority vote. By the majority vote, we have Barack Hussein Obama in the White House, twice. Often the majority is wrong. Besides, I do not see any good Scriptural example, but I do see many bad ones:

*Exodus 16:2 Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.*

*Numbers 14:1-3 So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. 2 And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!"*

In Calvary Chapel and many other non-denominational churches, we adopt the first two styles of governments. We see that Jesus Christ is the Head over the body of the church. It's His church. He's the One in charge. As the pastor of this church, I need to be like Moses, in touch with Jesus and receiving His direction and guidance. As the pastor of this church, I need to be leading the church in such a way that you guys know that the Lord is in control.

As Moses accepted his father-in-law Jethro's advice by having many godly people around him to help and support him, we also have a group of elders in our church. We call it the board of directors.

We have five men including myself in the board of directors – pastor Bill Holdridge, Jerry Hamby, Bob Lehman, and Paul Ostrowski. They are NOT a bunch of "yes" men, but they are men yielded to the Holy Spirit. They are men of prayer and trustworthy godly men.

I do not report to the board of directors of our church, because they are not my boss. But I am accountable to them. Because I acknowledge their call from the Lord and their wisdom.

*Proverbs 11:14 Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.*

According to our church bylaw, I can override what the board of directors decides. But in 13 years of our church history, I've never once ignored their decisions. If anyone disagrees with me, we stop, pray, and seek the Lord for His guidance.

By the way, if you wonder that if I or my wife have a direct access to the church fund, the answer is "No." Though I can sign church checks, I don't even have the church check book. I get reimbursed what I purchase for church supplies once a month. Jerry Hamby who is our church Treasurer approves my monthly purchase order and our church office manager Pam issues me a check. We handle your tithes and offerings with the utmost integrity.

## **F. APPLICATIONS**

- 1) Be ready for Jesus' return in the rapture any time by living holy life.
- 2) Be obedient, be in fellowship, and be in prayer .
- 3) We believe that God's model for the church government is that the pastor is ruled by the Lord and aided by the Elders to discover the mind and will of Jesus Christ for His church.