

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

OUR FELLOWSHIP

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. I John 1:3

The apostles of CHRIST occupy a particular and singular station in the purpose of GOD. HE chose thirteen men to occupy that office. One of them, Judas, was a deceiver from the beginning and he was created and chosen by the LORD to fulfill the role of betrayer in order that the LORD might bring to pass HIS own arrest and ultimate condemnation by men. (see Acts 1:16-20) Judas gladly fulfilled that purpose for which he was created; and, ultimately, according to his nature and conduct reaped the rewards of his own wickedness, not the least of which was natural remorse for his own error for which he found no remedy, taking his own life and experiencing the destruction of his body and soul in hell.

Peter and the other apostles thought to replace Judas by the drawing of lots, as they named Matthias to take his office. I am sure that Matthias was a good and faithful man but this office could not be filled by one selected and installed by men, however well meaning and desirous of doing good, they were. Those who would be the apostles of the LORD must of necessity be personally chosen and given the gift and calling of an apostle by the LORD alone. Thus we read of Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus with just such an appointment.

Those who were the apostles of the LORD were not only particularly chosen by HIM but they were directly taught by HIM as well. The original twelve (including Judas) companied with the LORD during HIS earthly ministry (about three years) and were daily instructed by HIM both by word and in deed. Paul was carried away to the wilderness shortly after his calling and conversion, where he was instructed by the LORD without the aid of men. *"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus."* (Gal 1:15-17) Then "after three years" he went up to Jerusalem.

The other matter which was common to the apostles was that they were eyewitnesses of the risen CHRIST and saw HIM as HE ascended up into glory. *"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: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."* (1Cor15:4-8)

Paul was not present on those days when CHRIST arose from the tomb and ascended into the heavens, yet HE tells us that he was *"caught up to the third heaven"* (II Cor.12:2) where he did indeed behold HIM who sits upon the throne. There, he was given the privilege to see things which were completely outside of the realm of human understanding. He uses this as a means whereby to prove his apostleship to the Corinthians. *"Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?"* (1Cor 9:1)

So, we read the testimony of John as he begins his first epistle and sets forth the very basis of the Gospel, which is predicated on that which the apostles saw and felt. *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was*

manifested unto us;) “ (1John 1:1-2) This is the outworking of that which Paul writes, “*And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;*” (Eph 2:20)

Those things which were given to the apostles form the very bedrock of the gospel which was at the first taught by the Old Testament prophets who understood that the things which they prophesied were for a time in the distant future and for a people who were yet to be born. “*Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*” (1Pet 1:12) While these prophets of old could only see GOD’s purpose very dimly, the apostles were given a front row seat to the unfolding of that purpose in full display as they beheld CHRIST JESUS the LORD, not simply as another teacher sent from GOD but rather the very LIGHT of the world who dwelt among men in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin.

These apostles preached the gospel of the glory of the blessed GOD not simply as one would teach men some doctrinal facts, but they declared it with a passion which can only be bestowed by the HOLY GHOST sent down from heaven. Even as John says they were given the revelation that this MAN, JESUS of Nazareth was not simply a gifted prophet, nor even one sent to establish an earthly kingdom and deliver them from carnal oppression. Rather they were given to know that HE is the Incarnate GOD, who thought it not robbery to be equal with GOD, even declaring to them that the man who has seen HIM has seen the FATHER. HE is the only manifestation of GOD that men can be given even a glimpse of. John testified; “*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*” (John 1:14)

While Moses was only allowed to see HIS backside, HE is pleased, now to reveal HIMSELF fully through the foundational ministry of the apostles who declared that HE is the ONE MEDIATOR between GOD and man. “*For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*” (2Cor 4:5-7)

Thus, it is in HIM alone that the sons of GOD have fellowship with GOD and with one another. It is here in the testimony of the apostles concerning the PERSON and work of CHRIST that we, as those to whom they were sent, find a basis upon which the common faith (see Titus 1:4) of the household of GOD rests. Truly our “fellowship” with one another has no other foundation nor is there any other place of camaraderie for the children of GOD, except in JESUS CHRIST and HIM crucified. “*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*” (1Cor 3:11) “*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*” (2Cor 6:14)

As fulfilling and vital as the fellowship of the saints, with one another in CHRIST, is; it pales in comparison to that fellowship which we have with the FATHER through CHRIST who is the express IMAGE of HIS PERSON. “*And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*” (Gal 4:6-7)

Thus, we are bound together in one family; brothers and sisters with one LORD, one FAITH, and one BAPTISM. Even as John the Immerser testified, “*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.*” (Mat 3:11) Did not Peter testify of the same as he described the work of the apostles, “*which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.*” (1Pet 1:12)

Our FELLOWSHIP with one another as well as that which we have with the FATHER is CHRIST. HE is our COMFORT, our FAITH, our RIGHTEOUSNESS, our SANCTIFICATION, our REDEMPTION, our JUSTIFICATION, and our HOPE of glory, both in this world and in that which is to come. “*And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*” (1John 1:4-5)

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