

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtmnc.org Today's Date: April 22, 2012

The Doctrine of the Apostles

by Dan Trygg

"They were continually devoting themselves to the doctrine of the apostles and to open-sharing, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers"

Acts 2:42

"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and doctrine. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound (healthy) doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires..."

II Timothy 4:1-3

"Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on the ones making dissensions and offenses beyond the doctrine which you learned, and turn away from them."

Romans 16:17

"For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, ⁸ but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, ⁹ holding fast the 'according-to-the-doctrine'-faithful-word, so that he will be able both to come-alongside-to-help with the sound (healthy) teaching and to refute those who contradict."

Titus 1:7-9

"Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the doctrine of the Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the doctrine, he has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into a house (church), and do not give him a greeting."

II John 1:9-10

On the day of Pentecost, ...50 days after Jesus' death, and 10 days after His ascension to heaven..., the Holy Spirit was poured out powerfully upon the 120 of Jesus' closest disciples and associates gathered in Jerusalem. They had been waiting and praying for the "promise of the Father". Jesus had told them to remain in the city until the Spirit would come, and they would be "clothed with power from on high" (Lk. 24:49). They could not have known exactly what to expect, but when the Spirit came, they *heard* the sound of a mighty rushing wind (The word for "Spirit" can also mean "wind" or "breath". Here, the "breath" of God.), ...they looked up from their praying and *saw* what appeared to be a flame of fire resting on each person's head (John the Baptist had said that the Messiah would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire – Matt. 3:10-12), ...and they began to speak in other languages (It had been prophesied that when the Spirit would come, the people would prophesy – Joel 2:28; *and*, that God would speak to His people through other, strange tongues – Isa.28:11,12; cf. I Cor. 14:20-22. The phenomenon of tongues was to be a sign to convince people that God was actively working in the speakers.). **As they went outside, a crowd gathered because of the tongues, and at Peter's preaching over 3,000 people believed in Christ and were added to the church.**

This is the context of the first verse listed above. It is a summation of the follow-up regimen that the apostles implemented to help these new believers get established in their faith. Note that *the first ingredient of this regimen was to learn and study the "doctrine of the apostles"*. It is clear that all 3,000 people were not being taught by the apostles. Rather, **they were being educated in the content of what the apostles taught.** There are two basic Greek words used for "teaching" in the NT. One of them, *didaskō*, is a verb, meaning "to teach", whereas the word normally translated as "doctrine" is *didachē*, a noun referring to "what is taught". *Didaskō* refers more to the *activity of teaching*, whereas *didachē* is more about the *content* which is being taught. So, when it says that the new believers were devoting themselves to the *didachē* of the apostles, it meant that **they were studying the theology and beliefs that the apostles were teaching.** There was a belief system being taught to new converts in the early church. ***These new believers were working hard to grasp and master the message, beliefs and supporting arguments being put forth by the apostles.*** They were especially attempting to implement or apply these teachings into their own lives.

It is clear from the passages at the top of this page that **there was a body of instruction that originated with Jesus and the apostles, which was being passed on to those who came to believe in Jesus Christ. It was called "the doctrine of the apostles" in those early days, because it was different than the belief system being taught in the synagogues around the world.** This same differentiation had been apparent to people who had come to hear Jesus teach. Jesus' "doctrine" had *also* been noticeably different from that taught in the synagogues (Mk. 1:22). Frankly, people were astonished at His "doctrine", because of its directness and authority (Mk. 1:27). **Jesus Himself said that the "doctrine" did not originate with Him, either. It came from the Father.** Anyone who was willing to do the Father's will should be able to recognize that (Jn.7:16,17). Apparently, **it was more than just the manner of Jesus' presentation that conveyed authority, it was also the content of what He said. Jesus called people to radically refocus their lives to center on knowing God and doing His will.** He preached forgiveness of sins, freely offered to those who would readjust their mindset to live for God, instead of themselves. God expects His people to truly, genuinely, honestly *live* for Him. **This emphasis on obedience is corroborated by Jesus' focus on "the kingdom of God" in His teaching.** For example, He said that not those who merely call Him "Lord, Lord" will enter

His kingdom, but those who do the will of the Father (Mat.7:21). He spoke of the kingdom of God nearly 80 times in the gospels. **This continued as a major theme of apostolic doctrine, as well** (Acts 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:23,31; Rom. 14:17; I Cor. 4:20; 6:9,10; 15:50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Col. 4:11; I Thess. 2:12; II Thess. 1:5; II Tim. 4:1; Heb. 1:8).

It was important to acknowledge that the doctrine being taught originated with the apostles, because they had been specifically chosen and trained by Jesus to represent Him (Mk. 3:14-19; Lk. 6:12-16). As time went on, this became even more important, because other teachers and “doctrines” began to arise, some of which were questionable or even deceptive (Matt. 16:12; Rev. 2:14,15). **For someone to hold to the “apostolic doctrine” meant that they went back to the most ancient and reliable sources**, to those who had been eyewitnesses of the events of Jesus’ life and ministry, those who had been directly taught and trained by Him, and those whose lives demonstrated the accreditation of the Holy Spirit, evidenced through the miracles He worked through them (Gal 1:11,12; II Cor. 12:12).

What was in this “doctrine of the apostles”? What did it consist of? We can distill the apostolic doctrine by studying the NT record and teaching. Following are a sketch of two fundamental areas of the “apostolic doctrine”:

Doctrine of Christ – In Peter’s Pentecostal sermon this is clearly expressed, “God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36). To this, Paul adds, “Christ died for our sins, ...He was buried, ...and He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures” (I Cor. 15:3,4). John emphasized that He had come in the flesh, i.e., He was not an apparition, but a real human being (I Jn. 4:2). In fact, it was necessary for Him to be like us in every way, except without sin (Heb. 2:17). To not be born in sin, He had to be miraculously born of a virgin (Lk. 1:26-35; Matt. 1:18-25). Before His birth, He had existed in eternity as the Word. He was somehow *with* God, but also *was* God. All things were created through Him (Jn. 1:1-3,14). Although He was in the form of God, He was willing to empty Himself to come as a human, and face death on a cross for our salvation (Phil. 2:5-8; I Thess. 5:9,10). He became the redemption price to set us free from slavery to sin, and the satisfactory sacrifice to assuage the just wrath of God, by dying in our stead (Rom. 3:24,25). More than just paying for our sins, however, He actually took us into Himself so that in Him we died to our sins and our old self, we were buried with Him, and we were raised to a new life, a new creation, in Him (Rom. 6:5-11; Col. 2:12). He ascended to heaven, and will return to judge humankind (Acts 1:9-11; 10:42; 17:31; II Tim. 4:1).

Doctrine of Salvation – Again, Peter’s Pentecostal sermon is a good place to start. In answer to the crowd’s question, “Brethren, what shall we do?”, Peter responded, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself” (Acts 2:38-39). Unfortunately, most of us do not clearly understand what the context of most of this is all about. We have misunderstood, cheapened and misappropriated parts of what originally would have been a clear message. “*Repent*” means to *change your perception*. They had been pursuing God according to their own understanding, and the religious traditions they grew up with, but now God has made available a radically new way of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus. To repent meant that they would see that their own plan to “save themselves” was not adequate. They needed the provision God has made available to them in Jesus. They were to *get baptized, which was a word picture of total surrender, death to self, and complete identification with Jesus*. Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ meant to identify completely with Him as your King. If that is your heart, He will forgive your sins and give you His Spirit to transform and empower you for life. Salvation is graciously offered to anyone who will accept the offer by faith. But, *understand what the offer is. The offer is to be set free to follow and serve Jesus as your King*. The offer is not simply to get forgiven. Forgiveness is granted to open a relationship of intimacy with God and empowerment in the Holy Spirit so that we can live to do God’s will. Paul put it this way, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Christ to all who believe” (Rom. 3:21,22). This perfect righteousness of Christ not only covers your sin, but it also is available to be experienced and expressed through your life by the activity of the Holy Spirit, as you learn to abide in Him. If you have trusted in Christ, *you have everything you need to walk completely in victory* over sin. It is an experiential learning process, ...learning to put off the old self, ...learning to think and perceive differently, ...and learning how to put on the new Spirit-empowered life from God. *If we are truly saved, there should be change and fruit in our lives* (I Jn. 2:3-11). If there is not, then there is something wrong. We are either not really born from above (Jn.3:3), or we are continuing to operate in the old ways of living. We have to pursue growth and change by investing in our spiritual development and by choosing to follow Christ in our day-to-day lives. We must discipline ourselves toward godliness (I Tim. 4:8). If we do not choose to do that, we will see little change, or fruit in our lives.

Obviously, what I have written in the last two paragraphs only scratches the surface of these areas of doctrine. There is much, much more. That is why the early Christians were *devoting themselves* to the apostles’ doctrine. You cannot master Christian doctrine in a short time. Yet, **our ability to live power-filled, effective lives in the Spirit is dependent upon our understanding and implementation of what God has made available to us in Christ.**