

Back to Jerusalem

by Victor Maxwell

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer, unity, and dependency on God in the early church, as seen in Acts 1:12-26.

Scripture: Luke 24:52, Acts 1:14, Acts 1:24

Topics: "Early Church", "Unified Worship"

Description

Victor Maxwell preaches on the early church's transition from being eyewitnesses of Jesus to becoming faith-worshippers, emphasizing the importance of obedience, unity, and prayer in the assembly. The disciples, after the Ascension, returned to Jerusalem with joy and worship in their hearts, ready to act on the teachings of Christ. The assembly's conduct reflected their commitment to prayer, unity, and forgiveness, setting an example for believers to gather in obedience and oneness.

Transcript

The Church in Action Back to Jerusalem Acts 1:12-26 Change is never easy and at times it is decidedly difficult. Acts 1:12-26 is the record of how the saints gathered at Jerusalem and coped with the transition from sight to faith. For three years they had been intimate and visible witnesses and constant companions of Jesus Christ. They could see, hear, touch and physically be with Him For sometime He had been preparing them for the day He would leave them (John 7:34; 13:1, 31-33; 14:1-6.

For the ten days between the ascent of our Lord Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit they waited in the name of their absent Lord. Think of the disciple's walk back to Jerusalem after the Ascension of our Lord. It was a Sabbath days journey - a journey stipulated in the Misnah and measured in ancient times as the distance from the Tabernacle to the outer perimeter of the camp. It was probably just over a kilometre. In Luke 24:52 we are told they returned with two dominant emotions; there was joy in their hearts and worship toward heaven.

They experienced the transition from being eyewitnesses to the beatitude of being faith-worshippers. Having learned the facts about Christ they now were acting on those facts. 1. The Conduct of the Assembly More than any of the other the other Gospel writers Luke is the one who put the emphasis on prayer. Prayer is mentioned 30 times in Acts. Trace down through Luke's Gospel and you will be impressed by the seven occasions in which he referred to prayer in the life of our Lord.

Trace through the book of Acts and see the emphasis he put on prayer in the life of the Church. Study the ministry of the Apostles Peter and Paul and note the emphasis he put on prayer in the life of the apostles. John Bunyan said, Prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God and a scourge to the devil". It was all these things in the book of Acts. (a) They assembled - their obedience 1:12, 13; The one thing these disciples had learned through all their experience is that it is better to obey the Lord.

We also are reminded not to forsake the assembling of our selves together. Sadly, many treat this as an option but it really is a matter of obedience. (b) The attendance - their openness 12-14; This was not a gathering of super-saints. They had all failed. They all sought forgiveness. There had been differences between these disciples but they were prepared to forget the failures of others and forgive each other. (c) The agreement - their oneness "continued with one accord..". 1:14; Luke is the only writer to use the phrase "one accord".

This word just simply means they were of one heart and mind. Prior to the crucifixion these same disciples had not only been separated from the Lord, they were scattered from each other. Having met with the risen Lord their attention was taken up with Him. It has been said that it is hard to see the faults of others when we keep our eyes on the Lord. The hallmark of the early church was their unity. 2:1 4:24; See also Psalm 133 (d) Their activity - their occupation - they prayed There are several things in this prayer gathering that merit our attention. i The people gathered "These all continued with one accord in prayer" 1:14 This people were integrated: men and women were present.

Luke more than the other writers puts emphasis on the ministry of women in the life of our Lord. The mature and immature believers took part in prayer. Differing political ideologies were laid aside. The well known and the unknown knelt beside each other. The leaders, members, families (20:36) The prayer meeting had influential people there The principal disciples were prominent. They needed to be present. Those who hold office in any work need to come to pray. This prayer meeting had the insignificant.

The lesser-known disciples were present. We don't read much about what they did. We do know they were supportive of the prayer meeting. At a meeting in China a preacher asked the leader of the China Inland Mission, "Do pray that I will be nothing". The leader of the Mission replied. "Brother, take by faith now. You are nothing." The inconspicuous people were there. We learn the names of many of those present but the names of the majority were not mentioned. Some think the wives of the disciples were there.

The women who followed our Lord were there. I think we should mention that not all the believers were there. Remember that the Saviour had appeared to more than 500 at one appearing. There is no criticism of those who are absent. I think the point is obvious. The prayer meeting had the intimate family of our Lord present. Mary and her children were there. It is interesting that the first time we read of Mary in her early days it is Luke who introduces her and she is in prayer.

Undoubtedly she had prayed for her family. It is a good thing to pray the family through to God. This mother was a woman of prayer but not a woman who was prayed to. Those gathered prayed with her but not to her. ii The prayers they offered. "These all continued with one accord in prayer" 1:14 See here frequency of the prayer meeting. The early church was a praying church. See Acts 1: 24; 2:42 A. T. Pierson says "They stuck at praying..". All too often we become unstuck in prayer and our prayer lives.

This is the lesson we need to learn again and again in the life of our church. See here their dependency on the prayer meeting. The word "supplication" is the sense of begging. It is the human side of prayer where

we come because we are needy. Our helplessness is our best prayer before God. See here sufficiency of prayer to the Lord. The word "prayer" is the God-ward side of prayer. It is not focused on our need but on His adequacy. See here the consistency of the prayer meeting.

What they did was what Christ had commanded. They had gathered in His name as he had commanded. They prayed according to His promise. These two elements should encourage us in the prayer meeting. As we gather in His name this same Jesus is with us today. As we pray we plead back the promises of God. Be specific in your prayers. There was an expectancy in the prayer meeting. Luke said "And they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy (Luke 24:52) Their objective in prayer was preparation for Pentecost.

These disciples didn't know what Pentecost would be like. They needed to be ready for what God would send. We do not pray for the coming of the Holy spirit but we do need to pray for His moving amongst us. They prayed unitedly, constantly and fervently. 2. The Consultation of the Assembly The remainder of this chapter is taken up with the assembled seeking for a replacement for Judas. In the crisis that arose it is important to learn the place that was given to the Word of God and the place of prayer.

"Peter stood up..". Peter took the lead like he had been appointed to do. He was always a man of action. (a) Peter's Consultation with the Scriptures. His acquaintance with the Scriptures. Obviously Peter had learned from His Lord the importance of the Scriptures. Did he not hear Jesus Christ say, "Ye have erred in that ye know not the Scriptures". It is important to read the Scriptures. His acknowledgement of authority of the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit had not yet come but they had the Scriptures to hand.

They are the final rule of faith and practice. It is important to obey the Scriptures. His application of the Scriptures to their situation. He did the same again in 2:14. We need to learn to apply the Scriptures to every part of our lives. (b) Peter's Consultation with the Church The Question about Judas the Apostate. The story of Judas is a sad story of the son of perdition. Peter touches on Judas' fame Judas' folly Judas' fall Judas' fate. The Qualification of an Apostle He must be a witness to the revelation of the life of Jesus Christ.

He must be a witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ He must be a witness to the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ (c) The Church's Consultation with the Lord. 1:24-26; The church was wanting to make sure who was the right man to fill the vacancy. They prayed and threw dice in the assembly - hardly the way we do it in our day but the casting of lots was common practice in pre-Pentecostal days! In their day the Holy Spirit had not yet come. They wanted the mind of God.

Today we have the "mind of Christ". by His Holy Spirit. According to this consultation before the Lord we should note: God has a plan God had a man. God's plan and man in God's came in God's time. The early church was guided by the Word of God waited at the Throne of God and were dependent on the Spirit of God to accomplish that which had been commanded by the Lord.

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