

“Apostolic Mistakes.”
pp. 155 - 157 (158?)

There are two very different classes of people who find it fitting to their conception of truth to speak rather freely concerning “Apostolic mistakes”. The one class do not believe the Scriptures to be inspired, and therefore any teaching or action of the apostles that does not fall into line with their more advanced ideas is put down to ignorance. The other class believe that Scripture is inspired, but they have failed to discern the things that differ. They approach the Book of the Acts fully persuaded that it deals with the “Church”. They find their ideas concerning the church in the Acts of the Apostles continually confronted and challenged by some word or act of the apostles. Hence the convenient term, *Apostolic Mistakes*. It does not seem to have occurred to them that if the apostles could be so grievously mistaken regarding such fundamental things, their claim to inspiration and God-given authority is undermined, and so in this respect are similar to those who deny the Word of God.

One of the so called apostolic mistakes is the question of Acts i. 6. “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?” We are told that this question betrays a sorry failure on the part of the apostles to understand the true significance of things. To suit the accepted ideas of most orthodox teachers, the apostles should have been found enquiring concerning the “Church”.

Before we consider this question, we shall be profited, and possibly humbled, by observing the close parallel existing between the end of Luke xxiv. and the opening verses of Acts i. To make this apparent we set out the verses in parallel columns.

Luke xxiv. 36-53.	Acts i. 1-12.
<p>36-43. “And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them and said Behold My hands and My feet that it is I Myself: handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have and they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them.”</p>	<p>This lengthy and detailed account (verses 1 and 2) Luke summarizes without detail in the Acts by the words of verse 3.</p> <p>“To whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion BY MANY INFALLIBLE PROOFS.”</p> <p>The reader is supposed to be acquainted with the details previously written.</p>

<p>44. “And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, being yet present with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me.”</p>	<p>In verse 3, this testimony is summarized by the words: “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”</p> <p>It will be of service here to note how the continued reading of Luke xxiv. and Acts i. helps us in understanding Acts xxviii. 23, and incidentally marks two corresponding members in the structure. “And when they (the chief of the Jews) had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified <i>the kingdom of God</i> (Acts i. 3) persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of <i>the law of Moses and out of the prophets</i>”. The message of the last chapter of the Acts is the same as the last chapter of Luke.</p>
<p>47-49. “Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”</p>	<p>Luke alludes to this in verses 4-8: “He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of Me ye shall be baptized with holy spirit not many days hence ye shall receive power, after that the (aforementioned) holy spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.”</p>

Luke xxiv. 50-53 further records the leading out to Bethany, the Ascension and the return of the disciples to Jerusalem, each incident being repeated in the opening chapter of the Acts. If once we acknowledge that Luke xxiv. and Acts i. overlap, that they speak of the same period and persons, one great fact emerges which is fatal to the “mistake” theory. Considering the passage in Acts i. alone, we find that the Lord was seen of the apostles for forty days, and that He spoke of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. The idea we are combating is that though the Lord was speaking about the church, the apostles were under the mistaken notion that He was speaking concerning the kingdom of Israel. Attention is drawn to the fact that whereas the Lord says “kingdom of God”, they say “kingdom to Israel”, thereby showing how utterly they had failed to understand the teaching of the Lord during those forty days. It all sounds very plausible, especially as it is practically accepted almost as a truism that “the church began at Pentecost”. The moment we bring Luke xxiv. to bear upon the passage, we see that the “mistakes” are no longer apostolic, but are the mistakes of their self styled critics.

These critics say the apostles *did not* understand the Lord’s meaning. Luke xxiv. says that *they did*. “Then opened He their understanding, *that they might understand* the Scriptures” (45-49). Here is proof positive. To teach that the apostles were ignorant of the Lord’s meaning, or that they misunderstood the Scriptures is in direct contradiction of that which is written. To feel a necessity to refuse the testimony of this passage is of

itself a conviction that some notion held regarding the message of the Acts is fundamentally wrong. So long as the tradition of man is held that the church began at Pentecost, so long will its adherents make void the Word of God in bowing to their traditions. If there is anything certain arising out of this consideration it is that the question concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel was an enlightened one, and one arising out of the fact that they “understood” the “opened Scriptures”. The answer of the Lord also points in the same direction. He does not rebuke them for their ignorance or their bias, He simply deals with one part of their question which had to do with the *time* of Israel’s restoration, telling them that these times and seasons were not the subject of revelation.

Apostolic mistakes.

Did the apostles misunderstand the Scriptures in Acts i. ?

(Reprinted from Volume VI.).

There are two very different classes of people who find it fitting to their conception of truth to speak rather freely concerning "Apostolic mistakes." The one class do not believe the Scriptures to be inspired, and therefore any teaching or action of the apostles that does not fall into line with their more advanced ideas is put down to ignorance. The other class believe that Scripture is inspired, but they have failed to discern the things that differ. They approach the Book of the Acts fully persuaded that it deals with the "Church." They find their ideas concerning the church in the Acts of the Apostles continually confronted and challenged by some word or act of the apostles. Hence the convenient term, *Apostolic Mistakes*. It does not seem to have occurred to them that if the apostles could be so grievously mistaken regarding such fundamental things, their claim to inspiration and God-given authority is undermined, and so in this respect are similar to those who deny the Word of God.

One of the so called apostolic mistakes is the question of Acts i. 6. "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" We are told that this question betrays a sorry failure on the part of the apostles to understand the true significance of things. To suit the accepted ideas of most orthodox teachers, the apostles should have been found enquiring concerning the "Church."

Before we consider this question, we shall be profited, and possibly humbled, by observing the close parallel existing between the end of Luke xxiv. and the opening verses of Acts i. To make this apparent we set out the verses in parallel columns.

Luke xxiv. 36—53.

36—43, "And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them.....and said.....Behold My hands and My feet that it is I Myself : handle Me and see ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have.....and they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them."

Acts i. 1—12.

This lengthy and detailed account (vv. 1 and 2) Luke summarizes without detail in the Acts by the words of verse 3.

"To whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion BY MANY INFAL-LIBLE PROOFS."

The reader is supposed to be acquainted with the details previously written.

+4. "And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, being yet present with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me."

47—49, "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I bend the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."

In verse 3, this testimony is summarised by the words: "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

It will be of service here to note how the continued reading of Luke xxiv. and Acts i. helps us in understanding Acts xxviii. 23, and incidentally marks two corresponding members in the structure, "And when they (the chief of the Jews) had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified *the kingdom of God* (Acts i, 3) persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of *the law of Moses and out of the prophets.*" The message of the last chapter of the Acts is the same as the last chapter of Luke.

Luke alludes to this in verses 4—8 : "He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of Me..... ye shall be baptised with holy spirit not many days hence ye shall receive power, after that the (aforementioned) holy spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Luke xxiv. 50—53 further records the leading out to Bethany, the Ascension and the return of the disciples to Jerusalem, each incident being repeated in the opening chapter of the Acts. If once we acknowledge that Luke xxiv. and Acts i. overlap, that they speak of the same period and persons, one great fact emerges which is fatal to the "mistake" theory. Considering the passage in Acts i. alone, we find that the Lord was seen of the apostles for forty days, and that He spoke of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. The idea we are combating is that though the Lord was speaking about the church, the apostles were under the mistaken notion that He was speaking concerning the kingdom of Israel. Attention is drawn to the fact that whereas the Lord says "kingdom of God," they say "kingdom to Israel," thereby showing how utterly they had failed to understand the teaching of the Lord during those forty days. It all sounds very plausible, especially as it is practically accepted almost as a truism that "the church began at Pentecost." The moment we bring Luke xxiv. to bear upon the passage, we see that the "mistakes" are no longer apostolic, but are the mistakes of their self styled critics.

These critics say the apostles *did not* understand the Lord's meaning. Luke xxiv. says that *they did*. "Then opened He their understanding, *that they might understand* the Scriptures" (45—49). Here is proof positive. To teach that the apostles were ignorant of the Lord's meaning, or that they misunderstood the Scriptures is in direct contradiction of that which is written. To feel a necessity to refuse the testimony of this passage is of itself a conviction that some notion held regarding the message of the Acts is fundamentally wrong. So long as the tradition of man is held that the church began at Pentecost, so long will its adherents make void the Word of God in bowing to their traditions. If there is anything certain arising out of this consideration it is that the question concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel was an enlightened one, and one arising out of the fact that they "understood" the "opened Scriptures." The answer of the Lord also points in the same direction. He does not rebuke them for their ignorance or their bias, He simply deals with one part of their question which had to do with the *time* of Israel's restoration, telling them that these times and seasons were not the subject of revelation.

“Apostolic Mistakes.” **pp. 73-77**

The second of the so-called “Apostolic mistakes” recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, is the appointment of Matthias to the place forfeited by Judas. Traditional teaching says in effect that the vacancy was reserved for the Apostle Paul, who was chosen and appointed in God’s own time, and that Matthias was appointed because of the over anxiety of the Apostles to make up the number.

Let us remember that the Lord had occupied the better part of forty days in giving the Apostles instruction concerning the kingdom of God. This would be based upon “Moses and the prophets” (Acts xxviii. 23). We are told that upon one occasion, during the ten days that intervened between the Lord’s ascension and the day of Pentecost, Peter stood up and drew attention to the gap in the apostolic number. The Lord had already linked the number of the Apostles with the number of the tribes (Matt. xix. 28), and the day was drawing near when, endued with power from on high, the Apostles were to herald once again the gospel of repentance and restoration.

Peter’s procedure is to draw attention to the testimony of Scripture to the betrayal of the Lord by Judas.

“Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus” (Acts i. 16).

There is no apparent difference between Peter’s manner and delivery here, before Pentecost, and that recorded in Acts ii. 25-36. David is cited as prophesying that which had taken place, and legitimate inferences were drawn. Peter goes on in verses 17-19 to recount the history of Judas, how he was numbered with the Apostles, took part of the ministry, and finally died an awful death in “Aceldama, the field of blood”. This leads up to the second reference to Scripture in verse 20:--

“It is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein”.

This was fulfilled by calling the field *Aceldama*, a place that would pass under a ban and be considered accursed. “And his bishoprick let another take”, continues the quotation. The Psalm quoted here reads in the A.V., “And let another take his office” (margin *charge*), and the A.V. margin of Acts i. 20 reads “office or charge”. The Apostle evidently quoted from the LXX version. Peter’s action so far runs parallel to what is written. He now puts the legitimate deduction into practice.

“Wherefore of these men which have companied with us *all the time* that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, *beginning* from the baptism of John, *unto* that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection” (verse 22).

There must have been some clear reason in Peter’s mind for so particularly defining the qualifications that were essential to become one of the twelve. First, it was not

sufficient that the person thus chosen should have known the Lord for a part of His ministry, he must have “come together” (same word as in i. 6) with them from the beginning. This we shall find is confirmed by the Lord’s words in Luke xxii. 28-30:--

“Ye are they which have continued *right through* (without a break, see force of *diamenō* in II Pet. iii. 4) with Me in my temptations. . . . ye may. . . . sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

From Matt. xix. 28 we learn there will be twelve thrones, and consequently there must be twelve apostles. Of all the company gathered on this occasion (and Acts i. 15 tells us there were one hundred and twenty), two only fulfilled this condition. We do not read anything of “Joseph called Barsabas who was surnamed Justus”, or of “Matthias” in the Gospel narrative. So far, all has been in perfect harmony with the scriptural requirements in view of the complete witness to be given on the fast approaching day of Pentecost. At this point, however, Peter and the rest turn to the Lord.

“And they prayed, and said, Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two Thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias: and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

The use of the lot is in entire conformity with Scripture teaching. Already in this chapter the word has occurred twice, translated “part”, viz., in verse 17, and also in verse 25. The casting of lots as a means to discover the Lord’s mind figures early in Scripture. Aaron cast lots upon the two goats on the day of atonement, the land of promise was divided by lot. No believer would venture to suggest that it was all a matter of chance as to which portion of the holy land became that the Lord had already planned the inheritance and the casting of the lot was His method of communicating His will just as surely as by the Urim and Thummim, or the pillar of cloud. Proverbs xvi. 33 says very definitely:--

“The lot is cast into the lap, *but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.*”

This we take to be true in Acts i. We do not believe that Matthias was appointed by the Lord on that occasion, but that the Lord’s appointment was at that time *made known*.

In I Cor. xv. the Apostle Paul very definitely teaches two things, (1) The “twelve” were in existence and could see the risen Lord some time before His ascension (verse 5); and (2) that Paul himself was not of the twelve (verse 8). The arrangement of the witnesses to the resurrection in verse 5-8 is suggestive:--

- A | Seen of Cephas (one Apostle).
- B | Then the twelve (all the Apostles).
- C | After that 500 brethren (not of the twelve).
- A | Seen of James (one Apostle).
- B | Then all the apostles (the twelve).
- C | Last of all of Paul (not of the twelve).

Ephesians iv. tells us of an order of Apostles which was instituted not before the Lord ascended, but “when He ascended up on high and gave gifts unto men. . . and He gave some Apostles”. As far back as Matt. x. we have the names of the twelve Apostles given to us.

The tradition that Paul was the twelfth Apostle is the cause of the attempt to explain this passage as another “Apostolic Mistake”, whereas the fact is the mistake of mixing up Church and Kingdom is the cause of this well meaning higher criticism.

The ordinary reading of the words of Acts i. 25 is that Judas fell from his apostleship “that he might go to his own place”. The verse has been included in the number that provide a solemn warning concerning judgment to come. It is possible that another meaning attaches to the words altogether. The assembly prayed to the Lord to select one (to take the place of Judas, from which he fell), that he (that is, the selected one, Matthias) might go to his own place (that is, among the twelve Apostles), and they gave the lot, and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven. This we believe to be the true interpretation of the passage, and believing this we see divine warrant for the inclusion of Matthias as the appointed by the Lord.

Immediately following this appointment comes the record of the day of Pentecost, a clear attestation that all was ready. Peter stands up “with the eleven” (ii. 14). In chapter iii. Peter could urge repentance in view of the coming of the Lord and the restitution of all things, which would necessitate the setting up of the twelve thrones for the twelve apostles, and Paul was not converted until two years after. So far we find perfect accord in all parts of Scripture, and more and more do we feel that the “mistakes” are those of the would be correctors and adjusters of Scripture.