

The Place and Work of the Apostles
Lesson 5 – Local Churches and the Apostles
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Introduction: Local churches came into existence through the words of the apostles.

- A. Those that were baptized on Pentecost were immediately and regularly taught “the apostles doctrine.” (**Acts 2:41-42**)
 - 1. The book of Acts is a crucial book to show us both the actions and teachings of the apostles in the fulfillment of the great commission. (**Mt 28:18-20**)
 - 2. The book of Acts now turns fully to how Jesus works through the apostles. (**Acts 1:1-2**)
- B. Jesus wanted all Christians to be fully dependent upon the Apostles for all teaching.
 - 1. This was plainly taught in His ministry. (**Mt 16:18-19; 18:18**)
 - 2. Both in the teaching and in the examples of the apostles would be how these “commands” would be delivered.

I. Local churches came into existence through the work of the apostles

- A. The apostles taught and baptized many in Jerusalem. (**Acts 2:47, 6:7**)
 - 1. Acts now speaks of a church in Jerusalem. (**Acts 2:47; 5:11; 8:1, 11:22**)
 - 2. There is no “command” to form a local church. We can know that God requires every Christian to be a part of one. How can we know this?
- B. By additional examples of the apostles we learn that local churches are to exist!
 - 1. There was now a church in Antioch. (**Acts 13:1; 14:26-27**)
 - 2. Everywhere Paul preached and converted men there then came into existence a church in that area. (**Acts 14:23; 20:17**)
 - 3. When Paul wrote his epistles he recognized an identifiable “church” at that location. (**1 Cor 1:1-2; Phil 1:1-2; 1 Thess 1:1**)
 - 4. In his epistles he recognizes other churches. (**Rom 16:1, 5, 23; 1 Cor 16:1**)

II. Local churches were to identify and follow God’s apostles

- A. How did the early church view the epistles giving the words of the apostles?
 - 1. God showed all the importance of the Apostle’s work. (**1 Cor 12:28; 1 Thess 2:6; 1 Pt 3:2**)
 - 2. Satan tried to attack genuine apostles while providing counterfeits of his own making. (**2 Cor 11:5, 13; Rev 2:2**)
 - 3. Satan seeks to destroy or substitute lying words for the apostle’s words.
- B. All of the teachings and practices of the early church came from the apostles.
 - 1. The Apostles simply “handed down” what they had received from Jesus. Pay attention when you see these words: “*tradition, delivered* and *received*” (**1 Cor 11:2, 23; 15:3**)
 - 2. To fail to obey this “tradition” delivered from the apostles is to forsake Jesus Christ Himself. (**2 Thess 3:3-4, 6, 12, 14**)
 - 3. When an epistle was given to one church it could then be given to other churches and thus to other generations with understanding. (**Col 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27; 2 Pt 3:1-2**)
 - 4. Under the guise of “cultural context” many cast aside the apostle’s words.

III. Did the apostles give sufficient instruction for there to be a uniform practice and teaching among the churches?

- A. Paul plainly stated that there was an expected uniform teaching and practice among the churches of God. **(1 Cor 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33-34, 37)**
1. Did God wish that there be uniform teaching and practice in the 1st century? Does He wish that happen today?
 2. How then can we know what to teach and practice? God has made it clear that a perfect revelation was once and for all delivered! **(Jude 3, 17)**
 3. Take *all that was delivered on any given subject* and let's simply *stay within that which was delivered*. Without instruction then we will *say and do nothing!*
- B. How do we observe the Lord's Supper from the apostle's words?
1. Paul delivered *an example* to the church at Corinth. **(1 Cor 11:23-26)**
 2. When we limit ourselves to all the apostles revealed then we consider two kinds of authority -- **General authority** and **Specific authority**.
 3. *General authority* results from a necessary conclusion. When the apostles' words instruct us to do something, then *all things necessary* to fulfilling those words are included *even though not specifically named*.
 4. *Specific authority* is when the words give specific named instructions.
 5. We may have authority for a practice even though it is not specifically named or shown by example. As an example we need *a place, lights* and *containers!*
 6. We can understand the day of observance from considering the significance of the first day of the week. **(Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2 NASV)**
 7. A thing may be authorized but not *expedient or profitable*. **(1 Cor 6:12; 10:23)**
- C. Those that practice things *not delivered by the Apostles* destroy the purpose of God.
1. When the Corinthians went beyond the example to the Lord's Supper to include a common meal *it no longer was the Lord's Supper!* **(1 Cor 11:20-23; 34)**
 2. Paul pointed out the absolute authority that was found in that which was delivered. Even he would be rejected if he varied from it!
(2 Cor 11:1-2; Gal 1:6-10)
 3. To change or ignore any writing from an apostle would be to sever yourself from the blessings from God. **(Rev 22:18-19)**
 4. Consider who God honors in heaven! The work of the apostles is much more than a narrative! **(Rev 18:20; 21:14)**

Questions

1. How can we know that local churches should (must) exist?
2. How did Jesus describe the future work of the apostles?
3. Why do passages that use "*tradition, delivered* and *received*" have meaning for us?
4. What were local churches to do when a teaching and practice was not delivered by the apostles? (Acts 15:24)
5. What impact did local culture and customs have on the words the apostles gave?
6. Does God want local churches to teach and practice the same thing? How is that possible today?
7. Can any example be binding? Show how this is true in the Lord's Supper.