

Apostles

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[0:00] This subject of the apostles. And if you're sleepy, let me just tell you that the application point, or the main application! point is this, that we can trust our Bibles. That's the main application point. There's other! application points like when we read what happened to the apostles, we should realize that they are special people. And when Paul says, imitate me, or you are having this same sufferings you saw in me, we can realize that he's not just saying that at random, but he as an apostle is the sort of prototype, the original disciple, Christian, and we who follow on after are brought into the same experience that they have. Perhaps the best text to look at is one that we've looked at before in 1 John chapter 1, where the apostle John spells out his role, his role as an apostle, as a first generation disciple, and how that relates to us as subsequent generation disciples. So 1 John chapter 1, that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at, and our hands have touched. This we proclaim concerning the word of life. The life appeared. We have seen it, and testify to it.

And we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy, or possibly your joy, complete.

So let's start there, and say that Christians have an instinct to read the Bible and say, that's me. So if the Bible writer says something, we say, I could say that as well. But I want to say, we need to do that quite carefully, because John, as he writes, differentiates himself from his readers. He says, I'm going to say things about me that are not true about you. So what he says about himself is, we have heard, we have seen with our eyes. Now his readers had not done that. They had not seen Jesus with their own eyes, but John had. And he says, we have looked at, and our hands have touched.

[3:20] So he says, we saw Jesus face to face, while he was here on earth, we touched him. And although we pray, may the Lord put his touch on our lives, and things like that, it is not the same as what he means here.

He physically touched Jesus, which we, in our generation, cannot possibly do. And John says that his role is to speak about what he and his fellow apostles saw, etc.

He says, we proclaim concerning the word of life. The life appeared, we have seen it, we testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

So he's talking about Jesus when he says the eternal life, which appeared. He's talking about Jesus. And he says, we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard. And then this is the bit where it makes the transition. It says, so we have this amazing experience of knowing Jesus Christ, knowing God.

[4:41] And amazingly, through what we say, you can have the same fellowship. You have fellowship with us. You enter into the apostolic experience.

You may have fellowship with us. And he says, and what's that like? Well, we, we apostles have fellowship with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ. And if you believe what we're saying, you

share that with us, which is rather an amazing thing, but worth noticing the way he says it. And you notice also some very John-like thoughts. The thought of complete joy in verse 4. The thought of testimony in verse 2.

So that's the area that I'd like us to look at this evening. Are you with me so far? Yeah. Okay. Let's look at the end chapter of John's Gospel, which we've looked at a number of times before, but it's worth just pointing out what it says.

I don't mean the very end chapter. I mean John chapter 20, verse 28 and onwards. John chapter 20, verse 28 and onwards.

[6:03] So this is Thomas, who said to Jesus, my Lord and my God. And you remember that Thomas had said, unless I see, I won't believe.

Unless I touch him, I won't believe. And Jesus had invited him to see and touch. And then Jesus said, because you have seen me, you have believed.

That's verse 29. And then Jesus then talks about us in later years, later generations, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

And how should anybody come to such faith? Well, verse 30 says, Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

But these are written so that you may believe, so that you, you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in his name.

[7:08] So that's why I've got this picture up on the screen. And just to, as an excuse, the, that's not an excuse, but so you understand, the funny thing about the screen is when I put my pen down on one place, it writes in a different place, which is very, very confusing.

So that's why this will look a bit funny. So what he said is, we heard, we were ear witnesses, if you like. And he says, back in those days, we saw, yes?

And back in those days, we touched, and we touched and saw Jesus and the things that he did and the things that he said. So here's John, and he's doing these things.

He's seeing and hearing and even touching the Lord Jesus Christ. And he and the other apostles come to have fellowship with the Father and the Son.

Now here's us over here. Here's a, we've gone on in time, in this direction. And this is us. I don't know whether you recognize yourself, but you're there.

[8:28] I'm there. We're there. And what we have is the things, the word written down. So there's a Bible. And this Bible, containing John's gospel and everything else, same goes for all the other writings, but John refers to his gospel.

And he says that this testimony is written down so that we, although we can't make that bridge right back to seeing Jesus with our own eyes, we can read what's written here.

And as we read and believe, we come to the same blessing that the apostles did. Okay, that's the general picture of that. And I think I must have said that loads of times, but you get the picture of it.

And it's just important to get the time scale of it and the way that works. So what I'd like us to look at this evening for a little while is how that plays out in John's gospel, chapters 14, 15, 16, and 17.

So let's look at chapter 17 first of all. Would you like to look at what was read, verse 19, for them I sanctify myself so that they too may be truly sanctified.

[10:01] And then verse 20, my prayer is not for them alone, I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message. Who are these two sets of people in verse 19 and then verse 20?

Or is it the same people? Correct, the disciples and us. Yes, so Jesus is differentiating.

In verse 6 to verse 19, he's praying for those first disciples. And only then, in verse 20 onwards, does he pray for us. So Jesus actually very specifically makes this distinction as he prays.

He has it in his mind. Let's take a look at what he says about the disciple group and what he, what he, and how that works out.

Have a look at John 17, verses 6 and onwards. One of the repeated words is gave, or given.

[11:10] If you look in the first, verses 6, 7, 8 for example, what has Jesus done to that apostolic group, those disciples?

Verses 6, 7, 8. Yep, I've, that's verse 6, I have revealed or manifested your name.

Yep, thank you. Anybody else with, anything else that Jesus has done to them? Yeah, God gave them to him.

The Father gave them to the Son. Yes. Anything else? What Jesus has done to them? Yeah, he's given them words.

Verse 8, I gave them the words you gave me. And what did they do with these words? Accepted them. Okay, so one of the things that's happening is there's a transfer of revelation and in particular of words.

[12:24] I think the idea of the name is the same thing. I manifested your name, but let's track it in terms of words.

So Jesus says that he gave words. Let's see if I can, no, that's not going to work. He gave words to the apostles.

And that links in the chapters that we were looking at with the ministry of the Holy Spirit too. So let's find some verses on that.

Let's see if I can. And it also links with what the Father has given to the Son and so on. So let's have a look.

Would you like to look in chapter 14? Would you like to look in chapter 15? And would you like to look in chapter 16? So have a look. Talk to your next door neighbor.

[13:43] Is there anything that is said that is to do with the giving of words to the disciples or the enabling them to understand words or anything like that?

So have a look. You're in 15, 14, 15, 16. John chapter 14, 15, 16. You're allowed to turn around and confer.

Anything that refers to Jesus giving words or anything like that to his disciples. those. Thank you.

Thank you.

[15:19] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you very much. Chapter 14, verse 10. Don't you believe that I'm in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own.

Rather, it is the Father living in me who is doing his works. So, yes. Is that the verse that you had in mind, verse 10? Yeah, so Jesus says that he's been passing on words and wherever the words come from, according to verse 10.

[17:17] Where have the words come from according to 14:10?

From the Father. Yes. So, I'm going to put an arrow there. The words come from the Father and then the Son speaks them. That's great. Thank you very much, Richard. Anything else in chapter 14 of that nature?

15. Thank you. Thank you very much. Okay. So, there's a obeying what I command.

So, this is to do with the reception of his words. And it says, it talks about obedience. It might be keep, actually.

I haven't brought my original language with me. But certainly keep crops up. Yep. Thank you very much. Anything else in chapter 14? Thank you.

[18:27] Thank you very much. Whoever has my commands and obeys them. So, that's a similar sort of thing in verse 21. Thank you. Verse 23.

If anyone loves me, he will keep my words, is what it says. And then verse 24. These words you hear are not my own. They belong to the Father who sent me.

So, the words come from the Father. And then Jesus passes them on to his disciples. And they keep them. Yeah. Thank you very much.

Okay. Let's look at chapter 15. Is there anything in chapter 15 to that effect? Yeah. It's in the name of 9 and 10. 9 and 10. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Now, remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will obey my love. Just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

[19:28] Thank you very much. Yes. So, again, that's the words that he gives. They're kept by these apostles. Let's put an apostle in there.

Thank you.

Verse 7. If you remain in me and my words remain in you. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you. Yes, there's a command there.

What about verse 15? Yeah, what about verse 15? I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business.

But this is different. I have called you friends because everything I heard from my Father I have made known to you. Everything I have heard from the Father I have made known to you.

Yeah. Yes. Now, that's an important verse because it says that there is nothing that the Father had for the purposes of revelation that the Son omitted to transmit.

[20:40] There's another place where it says all that the Father has is mine. But this one is saying that everything that he gave me I have transmitted to you.

And that's very important because it's saying that there's nothing that the Father had that Jesus failed to communicate properly.

No aspect of God's character or his plan or his purposes or the way of salvation or anything at all in which the Father says, Oh, Jesus, you've really messed that up.

You never told them that. And that's important because this is to do with Jesus' competence as a revealer of God. And some religions essentially are insulting Jesus by saying, Ah, we've got something.

For example, well, we've got something in our prophet that Jesus never managed to convey. You can see that in, if I may say, in Islam.

[21:49] You can see that in Mormonism. You can see that in any religion that comes along later and says, Ah, but Jesus didn't manage to tell you this. Now, this bit's important. And it's really insulting to Jesus, isn't it?

So when we had a Muslim, a very nice Muslim young man staying with us and he said, Do you believe in Muhammad? And I had to say, Well, I'm ever sorry, but I don't.

Because to believe Muhammad would be an insult to Isa, to Jesus. Because I believe that he did what everything the father told him, he gave, he said.

He made it known. So there's nothing left out. There's nothing that somebody else has to come along later and fill in. Okay, thank you very much. So we were in chapter 15.

Was there anything else that you came across there? Verse 20. Thank you. Yes, he does. Jesus several times says, Remember the word I spoke to you.

[22:51] So these people really are guardians of the words that Jesus spoke. Yeah, thank you very much indeed. Yeah, thank you very much.

So the idea of this is to go and bear fruit. So what I'm, that's an aspect that I'm, I'm not doing justice to this evening.

Because the whole idea of the apostles having this word and then passing it on is ascending out into the world. And the love that God has for the world because God so loved the world that he sent his only son that whoever believes in him would not perish, would have eternal life.

So there's a worldwide history-long purpose going on here of sending. And the apostles get sent.

And then they, it's our job then to pass on into the whole world what the apostolic gospel is.

Okay, thank you very much. Would anybody like to comment on verses 26 and 27, how that might fit in with this?

[24:10] This is chapter 15, 26 and 27. The Spirit testifies about Jesus. Yep. And is there any other testimony?

Thank you very much. So it's worth bringing that into the, into the equation, isn't it? So here are the apostles and they, let's do it in a different color.

They're going to testify. And a lot, and why are they qualified to testify in a way that we can't?

Because they've been with Jesus from the beginning.

They have the historical record of the things that they've seen and touched and saw. And what, who or what accompanies that testimony? The Holy Spirit.

Yes, thank you very much. So if I do that in red somehow, I'll put an arrow in here somewhere. So the Holy Spirit is also testifying. And I ought to link that right back to here.

[25:17] Holy Spirit. Okay. Okay. So let's, let's go on because these things all fit together actually. Chapter 16.

Anything about Jesus communicating words? Anything like that? Verse 1.

All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. Yeah. Jesus several times repeats that he's telling them up ahead so that they won't get shocked by what happens afterwards.

Thank you very much. Yes. Verse 4. Where are we? I have told you this so that when the time comes, you'll remember that I told you.

I did not tell you this at first because I was with you. Yes. So he's, yes, yes. Thank you very much. Yeah. What about verse 12?

[26:14] Yes. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. Now that verse, it's tempting to take that as applied to all Christians and say the spirit will guide me into all truth.

And there is a sense in which the spirit guides us into truth. But the particular reference is to the apostles. So they're the ones who've seen. They're the ones who've heard.

And the ministry of the spirit is to guide them into this truth, to enlarge on it, to explain it, to make it so that they know their way around the truth of Jesus Christ.

So that's a very important verse about the work of the spirit. Thank you. Anything else? In chapter 16? Can I just ask a question about that?

You said earlier about 15, you know, in chapter 15 about Christ as the day of the 15th from the Father. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

[27:26] Good question. More than you can now bear.

But when he, the spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own. He will speak only what he hears. He will tell you what is coming. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. Okay. Well, I think, I suppose it could be the 40 days after Jesus' resurrection.

Because he taught them more things, didn't he, then? Or he expounded more things. Or he could be saying that the spirit will explain the stuff he's already said.

So in that sense, it's coming to them fresh. But what I don't think he's saying is that there's going to be some random revelation.

[28:32] Yeah. Yeah, thank you. Yes. So looking at those verses, what it's saying, if you put it all together, verse 15, all that belongs to the Father is mine.

So when we said that there's nothing that the Son fails to communicate from the Father, there's nothing that the Father has that he doesn't share with the Son. All that the Father has is mine. And the work of the spirit is to take the things of Jesus. That's what it says. I said the spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

So the spirit takes the things of the Son and brings them to the apostolic group.

So let's just say, is that okay? Is that making sense? Sort of. Let's look at the headings that I've put here.

[29:40] So we're talking about a rather beautiful and mysterious and wonderful process, which goes right into the heart of the Trinity, that the Father shows everything to his Son.

It says the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he does. And the Son communicates everything that he learns from the Father. And the Holy Spirit takes the things of the Son and testifies to them, to the apostolic group.

So we can say something about completeness. We can say that the apostles weren't ignorant of any important thing. Everything that they need to know, Jesus communicated successfully to them. And they themselves, although at the time referred to at that supper, they still had lots of questions, yet Jesus promises that they will come to clear faith themselves.

They will come to see and know and understand in a way that they didn't before.

[31:01] So I've put down 14.9. What's 14.9 say? Yeah, Philip saying, show us the Father. We don't understand that.

And then 14.20 saying, on that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

So he's saying, at the moment you're asking questions, but when I've died on the cross, risen from the dead, sent the Spirit, you will know, and it will be clear.

It's also worth bringing into it verse 14.25. All this I have spoken while still with you, but the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you.

So there's a sort of thing about apostolic memory. One of the criticisms of John's Gospel is that it's the least reliable of the Gospels.

[32:08] People say that it's made up. But that's the complete opposite of what the Gospel claims for itself. This Gospel, I think more than any of the others, is conscious of the fact that the Apostles do need to know, do need to remember, and do need to write it down accurately.

People say, oh, well, the Bible's full of mistakes. How could it be otherwise? Anytime anybody reports on something they've heard, they mistake things and get the wrong end of the stick, and that's what life's like.

But here there's this specific reference that Jesus says the work of the Holy Spirit is that. Lost it. Verse 25. He will teach you all things and remind you of everything that I have said to you. So the Apostles have this complete and reliable understanding of the Gospel, and they're fully equipped to transmit it on to us.

We include in that the testimony of the Spirit, and we could include in that that the Apostles, they're not just sort of theological professors.

[33:37] They embody Christianity, and one of the things about that is their experience of rejection. I was looking at 1 Corinthians chapter 4, which says, 1 Corinthians chapter 4, Paul is writing to the Corinthian church, and they're really going off the rails.

And you could say, what's at the heart of their going off the rails? And one of the things that you could say is that they've got a very puffed-up view of what it is, of who they are.

They think they're arrived people. And they think they're triumphant people. And there's something that they've forgotten. In 1 Corinthians 4 verse 8, Paul says to them, already you have all you want. Already you've become rich. And that without us. How I wish you really had become kings. You've become kings, and that without us.

How I wish you really had become kings, so that we might become kings with you. For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena.

[35:01] We've been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are so strong.

You are honored, and we are dishonored to this very hour. We go about hungry and thirsty. We're in rags. We're brutally treated. We are homeless. We work hard with our own hands.

When we are cursed, we bless. When we are persecuted, we endure it. When we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment, we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.

And he says, this is what it's like to be an apostle. Now, the apostles are sort of prime examples, but he says to these Christians, you've just lost touch with apostolic Christianity.

Not only don't you believe what we say, but you're not prepared to experience what we experience. You've turned Christianity into a sort of consumer religion in which everybody is healthy, wealthy, reigning, rich, and everything else.

[36:05] He says, well, that's not our experience as apostles. If you want to know what the apostolic experience is, we're like the stuff that people sweep up off the pavement.

That's how we're treated. And of course, the Lord Jesus says, don't be ashamed of the apostles. Don't be ashamed of their sort of Christianity because that's real Christianity.

That's real fellowship with the Father and with the Son. And if we are to successfully be sent into the world, we've got to be prepared to sign up really for what they signed up for.

Time's gone. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you. Let's pray.