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## **APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION UNSCRIPTURAL**

– *MARK 3:7-19; MATTHEW 5:13-16. – APRIL 21. –*

**Text: – "Ye did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit." – John 15:16 (R.V.).**

TODAY'S LESSON shows the particularity with which the twelve Apostles were chosen. Many were the Redeemer's followers at times, both men and women, but only The Twelve were specially deputed as His mouthpieces and representatives among men. Some of the things said to and respecting them are equally appropriate to every one of Jesus' followers, but other things said to The Twelve and respecting them apply to none others of their day or since – for instance, the Savior said to The Twelve, and to none others, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." – Matt. 16:19; 18:18.

The import of these words clearly is that the persons indicated were assured that they would be so specially guided of Divine providence in all their efforts that they would set forth as the Divine will amongst men nothing to which Heaven would not assent. And, on the other hand, they would declare not binding upon the followers of Jesus only such things as in God's sight would not be binding. In those twelve men, therefore, we recognize a plenary inspiration, or special guidance not accorded in this particular degree to others of the "brethren."

We do not forget that Judas was one of the original Twelve and that, proving traitorous, "He went to his own place." We remember also that he was specifically referred to by the Prophet David, through whom the Divine message came, that another would take the Apostleship which Judas forfeited. What we do claim is this: that the announcement was prophetically made of a successor to Judas, so as to

teach us that the appointment of his successor was exceptional and not the rule; that aside from this one case there would be no successors.

Surely there is no intimation in the New Testament that as one after another of the Apostles died other men were recognized as succeeding them. On the contrary, the Scriptures repeatedly refer to the "Twelve Apostles of the Lamb." Moreover, as the Jewish Dispensation began at the death of Jacob, in the recognition of his twelve sons, so the Christian Dispensation began at the death of Jesus, in the recognition of His twelve Apostles. And as one of the tribes of Israel was cut off, and is not mentioned in the enumeration in the Apocalypse, but the tribe of Manasseh substituted, so amongst Jesus' Apostles Judas is dropped and a successor is appointed.

### **ST. PAUL TO SUCCEED JUDAS**

In the past we may have read too carelessly the account of how the eleven faithful Apostles exceeded their authority in the selection of Matthias to take the place of Judas. It was proper enough that they should scan the prophecies, and that they should note, as they did, God's declaration of the unfaithfulness of Judas, and that another was to take his special place in the Church; but they should have remembered that they had not as yet qualified as Apostles themselves. They should have remembered that whatever Apostolic or special power they exercised during Jesus' ministry came to them from Him and not from the Heavenly Father – that Jesus endued them as His representatives. They should have remembered that the Master specifically told them to do nothing until after receiving the Heavenly benediction, saying, "Tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high."

Accrediting them with the very best of heart intentions, it was, nevertheless, effrontery on their part to select two names and to determine that one or the other must be the successor of Judas. They had no authority for so doing. As for the one upon whom the lot fell, Matthias, we hear nothing further of him. On the contrary, in God's due

time, He Himself brought forth Saul of Tarsus, an Israelite indeed, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, who, however perverse in his conduct, was thoroughly conscientious, and verily thought he did God service.

St. Paul himself tells us that he was not one whit behind the very chiefest of the Apostles, and that in respect to visions and revelations he had more than they all. He [R5002 : page 113] goes back to the time when Christ appeared to him on the way to Damascus and when He declared to Ananias, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name unto the Gentiles and to kings, and to the people of Israel." St. Paul tells us that he found evidences that God had chosen him for a special service, from his mother's womb. And such special preparation and supervision we doubt not was applicable to all of The Twelve, even as also with John the Baptist in his work. – Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:15.

### **"A CROWN OF TWELVE STARS"**

The Lord's specialization of the twelve Apostles is variously referred to. He said: "Have not I chosen you twelve?" and again, "Ye shall sit on twelve thrones." In the symbolical book of Revelation He pictures the Church as a *woman*, clothed with sunlight, standing over or near to the moon, which symbolizes the Jewish Law Covenant; and upon her head was a crown of twelve stars, representing the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.

Again, later on in the same book, we find pictured the Church in glory beyond the veil, the Bride – the New Jerusalem. Of this City we read that it had twelve foundations, all precious stones; and in the twelve foundations were the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. We believe that we need no better evidence on the subject.

The recognition of successors to the Apostles was one of the first errors after their death. Every bishop was recognized as one of the successors and hence as possessing Apostolic authority. It was not long until the words of the original Twelve were neglected. The living bishops were acknowledged as speaking with the same Divine

authority – up-to-date. Later great Church Councils were called, in which these bishops, as claimed successors to the Apostles, decided what should and what [R5003 : page 113] should not be allowed by the Church, what was and what was not orthodox.

It can be readily seen that this exaltation of false apostles (Rev. 2:2), contrary to the Divine arrangement, opened a flood-gate of error, however well intentioned all concerned may have been. It is surprising that so many still hold to the creeds thus formulated by pseudo-apostles. The need of the hour is a recognition of these facts and an abandonment of all those creeds and a return to the words of Jesus and the Apostles and the Prophets. Only thus can we hope to regain the position lost. Only thus can we extricate ourselves from the multiplied errors represented in the six hundred divisions of the church of Christ, and of their six hundred variations of the original Gospel Message. Only thus can we return to the "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism," one Father, one Savior, and one "Church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven." – Eph. 4:4-6; Heb. 12:23.

### **GOOD OMEN FROM ROME**

If it is surprising to find the head of the Church of Rome leading the way back from this error, it should all the more be a cause for rejoicing, and this is just what is taking place. The Pope, realizing that the public no longer have reverential confidence in the bishops as inspired men, the successors of the Apostles, realizes also the need of some great publicly acknowledged standard of Divine truth. Undoubtedly it is this which led "the holy father" to send a circular letter to all the cardinals and bishops urging upon the Catholic public to study the Holy Scriptures – the words of Jesus and the Apostles, and their explanation of the Law and the Prophets.

Alas, that Protestants should be laggards at this moment! that many of the great and learned of them are today inclined to make sport of the entire subject of Divine inspiration! Alas! Protestants are being told by the Higher Critics that Jesus and the Apostles were undoubtedly

deceived when they made quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures and accredited them to Moses, Isaiah, etc., for the Higher Critics are wiser (?) than Jesus and the Apostles.

The latter portion of our study, from St. Matthew's Gospel, does not refer particularly to the Apostles, but chiefly to all who become followers of Christ, and believe on Him through their word.

