

The Church of the Holy Apostles;
A Bible Study on the Book of Acts
Based upon the Homilies of St John Chrysostom (SJC)
Study Guide – October 1, 2014

Chapter 1 v. 12 – Willingness to trust and hope because they had received a new promise.

TERM: Sabbath's Day Journey was the distance allowed to travel without being in violation of the Sabbath.

Chapter 1 v. 13 – Returned “home” as a group without Judas. This was not a foreign place but “where they were staying”

Chapter 1 v. 14 – One accord IN prayer and supplication. They were not merely hanging out. It would have been too tempting (living as they were, co-ed) if they had not been in prayer continuously. Their fear of the Jews must have been stronger than the temptation of living together.

Chapter 1 v. 15-16 – Peter as their leader “put in front” by Christ, leads the conversation. (see also Acts 15.6 where he acts in the same role as leader) Peter does everything with common consent, and nothing “imperiously”

“Men and brethren” INCLUDED THE WOMEN! “Would that the Churches were such now!”ⁱ

COMFORT: Peter comforts them by bringing their minds to Holy Scripture. “Scripture had to be fulfilled” This was common also for Christ in His preaching.

Peter factually tells the story of Judas without embellishments. The people already knew what happened. His retelling without editorializing brought comfort TO PREPARE them for deeper knowledge. (Condescend to bring higher)

Peter involved everyone publicly in choosing Judas' successor, rather than his own choosing. The HS already outlined it. “Let another take his office.” (see Psalm 68.26/69.25 and Psalm 108.8/109.8ⁱⁱ)

DOCTRINE – “Which the Holy Spirit spoke” The OT is to be read as the HS guiding us toward the story of Christ.

Chapter 1 v. 21-22 – Historical Teaching on Apostolic Succession –

Apostolic succession wasn't about maintaining inner circle of power, but maintaining truth. Peter COULD have chosen Judas' successor himself, or at least within the eleven remaining Apostles IF it was about power.

It was a public effort to eliminate competition and temptation. SJC “Why does he make it their business too? That the matter might not become an object of strife, and they might not fall into temptation about it. For if the Apostles themselves once did this, much more might those.” (Homily p19)

“Who have accompanied us...” to maintain pure witness and truth.ⁱⁱⁱ

Chapter 1 v. 23-26 – Two possible reasons for double names: 1) Distinguish between those with the same name, or 2) To express a “new life” in Christ.^{iv}

“You have chosen” – Casting lots is not gambling, but allowing God's hand to choose. Today we call bishops “God-chosen” which reflects this understanding.

Joseph called Barsabas – surnamed Justas – Believed to be one of “The Seventy”

Matthias – One of “The Seventy” (Luke 10.1-16) according to Tradition preached the Gospel in Ethiopia until he was martyred there.

Notice how Justas was not indignant to the election of Matthias. Such would not have been hidden from us since in other cases we saw their indignation. (See Matthew 20.24 & 26.8)

Teaching on Humility – SJC “Let us then also imitate them.” (read Homily p.22-23) SJC was speaking to those SEEKING the episcopate as if it were something for dignity sake. But there is no dignity in the episcopate. “He has many to hate him, many to envy him....I do not think that there are many among Bishops that will be saved, but many more that perish: and the reason is this, it is an affair that requires a great mind.”

Life Application – “Moreover one man is adapted for one thing, another for another.” True Christian humility isn’t beating yourself up, but accepting that everyone has their own talents and therefore role to perform in the Church. What are YOU adapted for in the Church?

ⁱ Even in 403 CE there must have been equality issues between men and women for Chrysostom to mention it here. (Homily p18)

ⁱⁱ Psalm numbers are different in Septuagint and MT/Hebrew Bible. All OT reference are given LXX/MT

ⁱⁱⁱ Even today, candidates for ordination are vetted personally and theologically prior to ordination

^{iv} Many Bishops take a new name upon becoming a Bishop today to reflect the new life they have accepted.