

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 343
Series: The Primal Church - Acts Chapters 1-8
Verses: Acts 1:12-14
Topic: The Core Of The Church
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Please note – the following article and diagrams of the Ascension of Jesus Christ will be a big help as we study Acts 1-8 - <http://aibi.gospelcom.net/aibi/ascension.htm>

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Acts 1:12-14 MKJV Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount Of Olive Grove, which is a sabbath day's journey from Jerusalem. (13) And when they had come in, they went up into an upper room, where Peter and James, and John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James; (14) these all were continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

The core group now consists of the 11 disciples, and the family of Jesus – Mary and the brothers of Jesus. Peter and James and John were the “big three”. Now many of these are related.

Jesus mother Mary had a “sister” also called Mary, who was married to someone known both as Clopas (John 19:25) and Alpheus (above) who is the father of James the Lesser and Matthew. That makes James the Lesser and Matthew both cousins of Jesus. Thomas seems to be a twin of Matthew, which would also make him a son of Alpheus and a cousin of Jesus as Matthew, Thomas and James are often mentioned together that would make sense. James and John were “sons of Zebedee” who was from Capernaum, as also was Peter and later Jesus made this city His home. Judas “the brother of James” is probably better “Judas son of James” – being James (Zebedee’s) son. Andrew and Peter were also brothers (Matthew 4:18, 10:2) and Philip seems to have been Andrew’s good friend as they always seem to be doing things together. Nathanael is led to Christ by Philip.

As this gets very confusing very quickly I have attached a diagram with the relationships between various gospel characters to this email. The apostles were relatives, friends and neighbors of Jesus. Gradually Jesus brothers meshed in with this group and James the brother of Jesus became the head of the Jerusalem Church and the author of the epistle of James. James apparently was quite a strict ascetic and possibly a vegetarian. The angels not the “band of brothers” theme when they call them “men of Galilee” as they were all from the same region.

“The women” are probably their wives and sisters, Mary the mother of Jesus may now have become the gentle matriarch of this band of brothers, cousins and friends of Jesus.

Miracle of miracles – all these relatives, friends and families were “of one accord”. They had been through a great deal and were now united in prayer and supplication.

The upper room may have belonged to John the apostle, some historians have it as the same upper room in which the Passover was eaten, yet others see it as the room of Mary, the mother of John Mark and friend of Peter, where many church meetings were held in Acts. Wherever the room was it was about to have two historic events occur – the selection of an apostle and the arrival of the Holy Ghost in power.

A “Sabbath days walk” was about two thousand cubits or just under a mile. This is the most you are supposed to walk on a day of rest. In ancient times people could easily walk 20 miles in a day – one mile was a very short walk indeed! A twenty minute walk back to the Upper Room, time enough to discuss the goings on. Walking keeps the blood moving and helps the brain to think, much of the great conversations in Scripture are had while walking along with friends. This was also the style of the peripatetic philosophers of the day and I think of Plato.

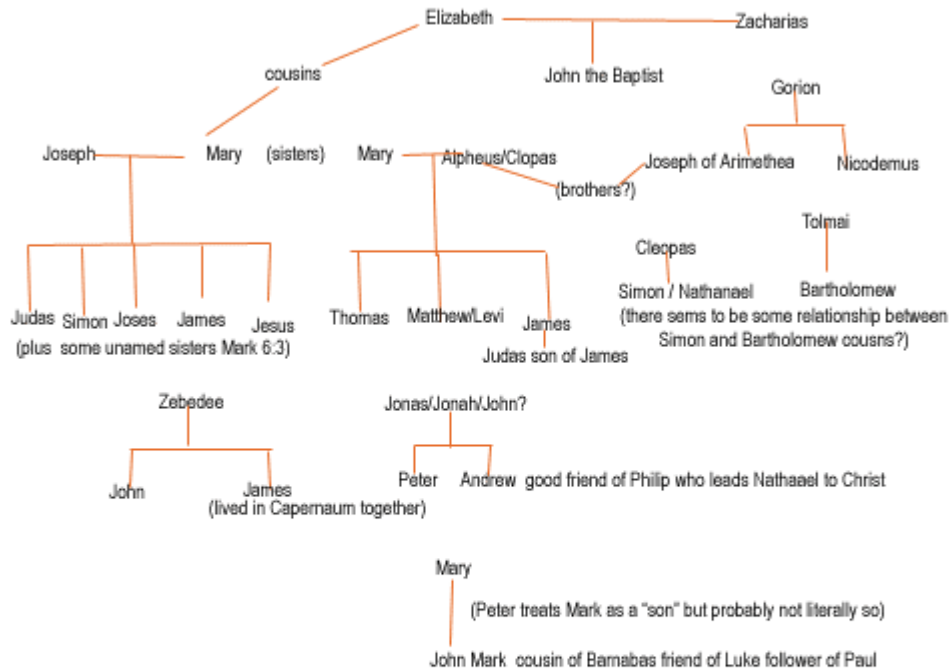
Back to the life of the core group of the early church – “these all were continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication”. The core group of any church or spiritual organization has to be able to demonstrate continual spiritual unity in prayer and supplication. It is as we pray together that we stay together and our meetings should be soaked in prayer. The natural sibling rivalries and squabbles of the disciples were ironed out in intercession. The group is formed, and the philosophy and direction of the new movement is burned into the souls of those involved.

Jesus chose people who could be one. People of like temperament, from the same locality, often related to each other, with strong natural and spiritual ties who had been with Him for three years and suffered together with Him. Unity was the theme of His high priestly prayer in John 17, and unity was behind His choice of who He selected to lead His movement. Today it would look like nepotism to have so many relatives and friends and neighbors leading a movement, indeed it would be illegal to have so many relatives on a non-profit board! But this movement was going to suffer persecution - and they needed to be able to rely on each other from “the get go”. We need to build both spiritual and natural unity into our teams. Teams that are too diverse can crack under pressure. Unity is a key component in spiritual power and we need to consciously plan it into our organizations (without indulging in undue favoritism)

Blessings,

John Edmiston
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Relationships Among Gospel Characters



This chart is not "gospel" and there are areas that are contested, some people have two names (when this is so I use a slash / to separate the names) and quite a few are called James, Judas or Simon after popular Macabbean revolutionaries.

Judas iscariot is related to no-one else among the disciples but may have been a nephew of Annas or Caiaphas the High Priests. James the brother of John is executed, James the brother of Jesus takes over the Jerusalem Church and founds the Ebionites.

Sources: International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Easton's Bible Dictionary, Josephus: Wars of the Jews, Gill Commentary On The Bible

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