

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Witnesses to the Resurrection St. Bartholomew, Apostle Wednesday, August 24, 2016
8:15 AM Rev 21:9b-14; Jn 1:45-51 (To this day the Church rests on the foundation of the apostles; their ministry continues through us because it's their eyewitness that we proclaim when we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.)

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree?’”

It is astonishing what people believe. And much of what people believe, including those who call themselves Christians, is not necessarily what God reveals or desires us to believe.

What God desires us to believe is clearly expressed in the New Testament, all four Gospels in different ways; and the role of the apostles is clearly indicated in today's gospel reading. “Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” This is a reference to the resurrection of Christ and that was the **primary role of the apostate. It was to witness to the resurrection** because this is the opening of heaven. **This is the entrance into our human experience of something undeniably transcendent and transcending, going beyond what we could ever know.**

Now we know that the mystery of God is all locked into Jesus even as a child, even as an infant in his mother's womb, but that didn't affect human experience, quite. Even in Jesus' life, although there were these flashes of light now and then: healings and teachings and signs and wonders, none of that really revealed the plan of God or the kingdom of God, if you will, or eternal life, if you will. It's all more or less the same thing. **But the resurrection of Jesus: that is the gate, that is the way, that is the truth, that is eternal life. And the apostles were chosen to witness that.**

It is quite remarkable that **we don't know anything about the apostles after the New Testament is finished.** There are legends. St. Thomas, for example, supposedly went all the way

to India. Some say Andrew made it up to Byzantium. Some say Mark went to Alexandria. **We know Peter got to Rome.** That's all we know for sure actually. Peter got to Rome. But we see the result of their work, so to speak, is that the Church, **the gospel of Jesus Christ spread**, not necessarily around the whole world all at once, but spread and took root. And it's rather clear that **none of them set up little kingdoms for themselves.** And the tradition is they all were martyred except for the beloved disciple who apparently ended up in Ephesus. Again, apparently, we are not sure.

So the apostles served this very important role to witness to the resurrection and to get something going. **To this day the Church rests on the foundation of the apostles.** In a way **their ministry continues through us because it's their eyewitness that we proclaim when we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.** Don't forget, they didn't write the Bible, the New Testament, the gospels. That came later because of their witness. **Everything came later because of their witness:** the growth of the Church, the formation of the New Testament, the founding of many communities, all this based on the witness of the apostles, whom we don't know, who became, as it were, invisible forces in the world, not caring about themselves, **only caring about this commission to witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.** And this they carried out. And in this they are really a true template for Christian vocation. We are not on this earth to establish kingdoms for ourselves. Names, reputations, roles **everything is for service to God that people will know the great plan, the great purpose God has in mind** to bring all things into one in him.