

Lecture 3: Apostolic Succession

(Apostolic Succession, Church Hierarchy, the Papacy)

1. Introduction
 - a. How can I be sure of my Faith?
 - b. How do I know what is morally right from what is morally wrong
 - c. What reassurance do I have that what I believe 2000 years after Christ is still what He really taught?
 - d. Related Question: Why does the Catholic Church have a Pope and Bishops?
2. Who is Jesus? (Matt. 1-9)
 - a. Lord, Liar, or Lunatic
 - b. He is Emmanuel, “God with us” Matt. 1:23
 - c. He is a King
 - i. The Davidic Kingdom was lost
 - a. Assyrian Exile of Israel (722 BC)
 - b. Babylonian Exile of Judah (586 BC)
 - ii. Mt. 4:17 “From that time one, Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”
 - d. Matthew 5-9: Jesus establishes his Identity as the Son of God, and from this **Identity** comes his **Authority**
 - i. In Mt. 5-7, Sermon on the Mount
 - ii. Mt. 8-9: Jesus works miracle after miracle, confirming that he is truly Emmanuel, God with us.
 - iii. Mt. 9:1-8, Jesus claims to forgive the sins of a paralyzed man
 1. Only God has the **authority** and power to forgive sins
 2. The leaders of God’s covenant family, the shepherds of Israel, do not respond positively with faith to this wonder.
 3. Mt. 9:34. “He casts out demons by the prince of demons.”
 - a. With this the leaders of Israel *formally reject Christ*
 4. The Pharisees, the leaders of God’s covenant people, rejected Jesus, they rejected God
 - a. Jesus must appoint new leaders for his people.
3. The Appointment of the Leaders for the New Covenant, Mt. 10
 - a. Jesus turns to the Apostles and says: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest (Mt. 9:37)
 - b. Jesus appoints the laborers, the new leaders of God’s covenant family to take the place of the Pharisees who have rejected Him (Mt. 10:1)
 - c. He sends them forth to do all the things he’s been doing in Chps. 5-9
 - i. Preach the Kingdom
 - ii. Work miracles (heal sick, cast out devils)
 - iii. Even forgiving sin (John 20: 19-23)
 - d. In Mt. 10 Jesus gives **His own divine authority** to the twelve Apostles, to act in **His name**, and with **His power**, for it will be upon them that He will

build his kingdom, and through them that Jesus will lead and teach his people until the end of time.

i. Mt 10:40: He who receives you receives me

e. Significance of 12

i. Israel began with twelve tribes, but at the time of Christ, only two tribes remained

1. Jesus appoints the twelve Apostles to be the heads of the restored kingdom

4. The importance of the Apostles

a. Eph 2:17-21, St. Paul tells us that the household of God is built upon the Apostles with Jesus as the cornerstone

b. Rev. 21:9-14, St. John tells us the kingdom of God is built upon the Apostles with Jesus as the cornerstone

c. Mt. 10:14-15, If they will not listen to you it will go worse for them than it was for Sodom and Gomorrah

5. The Institution of the Papacy

a. Matthew 16

i. Jesus makes the first announcement of his suffering and death

1. What should he do before he leaves?

ii. v. 15-19

1. Jesus, the Davidic King, appoints a *prime minister* to stand in His place, to lead and govern the Kingdom with His authority until He returns

2. This speech refers to Isaiah 22: 15-22, where the Prime Minister *Shebna* is replaced by *Eliakim*

a. Eliakim gets the keys to the house of David

i. Peter gets the keys of the kingdom

b. What Eliakim opens, no one shall shut

i. What Peter binds on earth will be bound in Heaven

c. Eliakim is a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem

i. So, Peter is a Father to the Church

d. The office is “over the household”

i. Technical term that refers to Prime Minister

1. E.g., Gen 40: Joseph is over the house of the Pharaoh

2. Lk.12: 32

e. Eliakim is a “Peg in a secure place”

iii. **Authority** is linked to **Unity**

1. Pope keeps us together

b. Luke 22: 28-32

i. Jesus makes it clear to the Apostles that they are the foundation stones of the kingdom he is establishing, and *Peter is to have a special mission*; to guard the redeeming truth of Christ

c. John 21: 15-17

i. Concept of the Shepherd

1. The Old Testament frequently referred to the Messiah as the Good Shepherd who must Feed, Rule and Govern God's people who have been abandoned and scattered
2. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the "Chief Shepherd," as Peter calls Him in I Peter 5:4
- ii. Jesus Commissions Peter to continue His role as the shepherd of the flock
 1. To be Jesus' representative upon earth
 2. "feed" is equivalent to Direct, Govern, and Instruct
- d. Vat II on Peter as Shepherd and Guide for whole Church: "Jesus Christ put Peter at the head of the other Apostles, and in him he set up a lasting and visible source and foundation of the unity of both Faith and Communion (LG 18)
 - i. Where Peter is, there is Christ's Church
- e. Matt. 17:24, 27
 - i. Peter becomes the Representative of Christ
 - ii. v. 24: the collectors ask Peter about whether Jesus pays the tax
 - iii. v. 27: Peter pays the tax for both Christ and himself
6. The Power and Permanence of the Apostles
 - a. Matt 18:18, "Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven"
 - i. The Church has always held that *this power to bind and loose* given by Christ to the Apostles indicates the authority to
 1. Absolve sins
 2. Pronounce doctrinal judgments (what we believe)
 3. Make disciplinary decisions in the Church (what we are to do)
 - b. Matt 28:18-20, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. God therefore and make disciples of all nation, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always to the close of the age"
 - i. Mathew concludes his Gospel with Jesus reaffirming the handing over of His own divine authority to the Church through the office of the Apostles and particularly the office of Peter
 - ii. Peter and the Apostles were to have *successors* to carry on their office and role until the end of time
 - iii. How would Christ ensure his teaching would continue?
 1. Many Christians would say, "The Bible"
 - a. But Christ didn't leave us a written text
 - b. He left us the Apostles and their office
 - c. Acts 1:15-26, Replacement of Judas
 - i. Judas, one of the Twelve, is dead, but the other Apostles are convinced that his office must be replaced
 - ii. It was destined that another would take his "office" (Acts 1:20)

1. “office” = Episkopoi = Episcopal = bishop
 2. King James ed.: “His bishopric let another take”
 - iii. The Apostles know full well that Christ had established their role as one that would continue
7. Throughout the early Church, as the Apostles established communities in different parts of the world, they would hand on their office of Bishop to other men to lead and govern the Church
- a. Timothy and Titus
 - i. Timothy was the Bishop of Ephesus. (2 Tim 1:12ff.)
 - ii. Titus was the Bishop of Crete (Titus 1)
 - b. Before the year 107 A.D. we learn from the letters of Clement of Rome, a disciple of Peter and Ignatius of Antioch (who was a disciple of John), that the early Church was absolutely convinced that our Lord continues to guide the Church through the Apostles whose office is carried on by the bishops they established
 - i. Clement of Rome writes around the year 80 A.D.
 - c. St. Irenaeus, a disciple of St. Polycarp (who was a disciple of St. John), tells us clearly how the teaching of Christ is passed down to us, through the official teaching of the Pope and the Bishops in union with him:
8. So the Apostles do continue to teach, govern and guide the Church through their successors, the Pope and the bishops, until Christ returns again.
- a. Testimony of History
 - i. The Pope and Bishops selected the Books of the Bible
 1. Arianism – Nicea 325 – issue settled by the bishops in union with the Pope
 2. Chalcedon 451, “Peter has spoken”
 3. When the Protestants removed themselves from the Pope and the Bishops in union with him, they were unable to maintain their own unity, and now they’re hopelessly fragmented
 - b. In light of this, Jesus’ words to the Apostles, “He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me,” (Lk 10:16) makes sense for us **right now**.
 - i. When we follow the Pope and bishops we are following the Apostles, and so we are following Christ.
 - ii. This answers the questions asked at the beginning of the lecture: how do I know what is true, what is right and wrong: in other words, how do I know that what the Catholic Church teaches is what Christ really taught?
 - iii. Because of the power and authority that He gave to Peter, to the Apostles, and to their successors forever.

Recommended Reading:

Catechism of the Catholic Church, ##857-896

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, ## 18-29