

Whatever Happened To...?

Do you ever stop and wonder what ever happened to that person you knew when? You know, that one you used to work with, went to school with, that was in your wedding, or at your graduation?

Well recently, I've been thinking a good deal about those kinds of people. Not ones that have been in and out of my life, but ones from the pages of Scripture. Here are just two examples – Zechariah and Elizabeth the parents of John the Baptist and the other seven apostles of Christ. Yes, like many of you, I do wonder about the other nine lepers that did not come back to thank Jesus, the hundreds that were healed that never seemed to reappear, etc. But these folks haunt me just a little bit more.

The parents of John the Baptist are said to have been *“righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord”* (Luke 1:6) We know that Zechariah had a bit of difficulty believing in this whole conception thing and had a bout of speechlessness. I'm not certain whether that was going to count against his “blamelessness” or not. But anyway, they worked through the whole pregnancy issue and there's John...he grows up and then has a very successful ministry. It does not end well for him, but the overall impact of what God does through him is impressive. On the other hand, what about his parents? Think about it, there are not too many people in the Bible that have the description of *blameless and righteous before God*. Not even Joseph & Mary? One would think they might factor in again somewhere down the road, but they don't.

The next group is the eight *other* apostles. You know the ones, Andrew, Thomas, Bartholomew, James son of Alpheus, Simon the Zealot, Judas son of James, and the new guy, Matthias. What happened to these men? We read page after page about, or from, Peter, James, John, and Matthew but the remainder of the apostles are strangely silent and almost invisible after Pentecost. Why is that? Not enough work to go around or too much work to go around and therefore they were up to their eyeballs while these other four were out running the circuit or writing their letters?

Did they have other roles...I hesitate to think so, since the early church put together some “elders” or “deacons” to take care of ministering to the congregation in order to free up the apostles so that they might not “neglect the word of God”. What then could be the reason for their strange absence?

The other day when I was reading Acts with regard to something else I was studying, I found a verse that was intriguing. It is in Acts 5, right after the incident with Ananias and Sapphira. “Great fear seized the church and all who heard of these things”, then here's what the text says,

12 Now many signs and wonders were done among the people through the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. ¹³None of the rest dared to join them, but the people held them in high esteem. ¹⁴Yet more than ever believers were added to the Lord, great numbers of both men and women...

When looking at these verses, two words immediately jumped out – “the rest”. Who are “the rest”. If you read the commentaries they are all over the place, some say it's the religious leaders and some say it's the Jewish community.

When you look closely at this section, the verses don't flow well in English or Greek. It's as though the writer is stumbling over his words trying to say what he wants to say without saying what he really needs to say. For example, if “the rest” were the religious leaders, there is nothing at all that would prevent the writer from simply saying “none of the religious leaders dared to join them”. The same would be true if it were referring to the Jewish community, or the Gentile community, or Romans citizens, or the softball league, or whatever. But there seems to be a purposeful avoidance to be specific about who “the rest” are.

Maybe, just maybe....”the rest” are these other eight apostles. What they witnessed with Ananias and Sapphira just set them on edge and they had to back off. It was more than they had ever imagined. Healing the sick is one thing, casting out demons, even raising the dead, but striking them dead is something they had not ever anticipated or witnessed before! Suddenly this ministry was at a level even the most creative mind could not have conjured. They needed to regroup, to catch their breath. Wouldn't you?

Can I support any of this? About as much as those who can support it was the “religious leaders” or the Jewish community. Does it matter? Maybe not to you. However, sometimes, I would like to know whatever happened to....

Those familiar with extra-biblical literature probably have the answer. It just seems unusual that even their contemporaries do not refer to them and they show no evidence of a personal ministry or that of discipling others. Tradition talks of them each having ministries, either separately or in teams, in Persia, Babylon, Egypt, even Britain. In addition, some, if not all, appear to have been martyred for their faith. Nevertheless, they did not set out straight away on their journeys. Moreover, we see no commissioning as we did with Barnabas and Paul. So again, I ask, whatever happened to them during those early days in Acts?