

Let's get our Bibles out tonight. We have communion as well, so I want to get right into it. Say hi to somebody later. Chapter 1:12 of the book of Acts.

It's one of my favorite books of the Bible. It certainly is in the sense that, as a pastor, this is a book that gives to us the blueprint of God's plan for the church - how it should work. It also gives to us the evidence of how His power can work through the lives of His people to reach a world that is lost with the good news of His Son. And so it is one of these model kinds of books that you would be wise to study and to seek to emulate because it should keep us on track with what God intends to do with us. Because His methods really don't change in terms of priority.

Luke, who wrote this book, wrote this book like he wrote the gospel of Luke - to his good friend, Theophilus. We talked to you a little bit about him last week, that possibly (and most people believe) he was a high-ranking Roman official who had come to know the Lord, that he bought Luke as a slave; a lot of wealthy people had doctors, personal doctors. And so Luke writes both of these big books - the gospel and this book - to one guy. And we mentioned last week - how far would you go to share what God has done in your life to reach someone else? Because Luke put an inordinate amount of time in to do so. In fact, I think we told you last week that, by volume, Luke writes 25% of the New Testament - just by sheer wording. So that's a lot to put before us.

Last week, in the first eleven verses, we looked at the forty days between the resurrection of Jesus and His ascension into heaven. And Luke fills in, if you will, for us what happens during those forty days as Jesus began to let His disciples know that He was alive, that He gave them the proofs that you couldn't deny. He met with them on Easter evening, breathed on them, gave them the Holy Spirit. He opened their understanding that they could understand the Scriptures. They were born again, these men and women there at Easter evening. But then He said something very remarkable to them. He said, "Don't go out yet until you receive power from on high. It's a good thing for you that I go away. If I go away, then the Holy Spirit can be sent. I promise you I'll send Him from the Father, and He'll come upon your life." And then we read, in these first few verses last week, that

God's intention was to pour His Holy Spirit not only into our hearts to save us but upon our lives so that we could be witnesses for Him. And He wouldn't let them go out to start this work (that the church was given) to reach the world without this infilling, this outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon our lives. And so that's what we read in those first eleven verses, that Jesus reiterates the very same things that He said to them on Easter evening forty days earlier. In fact, His last words to the disciples are found in verses 7 and 8 of last week's study; that He said that the Holy Spirit would come upon them, that the Father hadn't given for them to know when the Lord was coming to set up His kingdom; but what you could know was this, "While you wait, get out there and reach the world, beginning here in Jerusalem and going to the uttermost parts of the earth." And so Acts is really a testimonial to the first thirty years of church history. Here's what the Holy Spirit did through the lives of God's people as a result of Jesus' promise, as these men and women waited for this power to fall upon them. So for forty days Jesus ministered after His resurrection; the "infallible proofs" were given. They learned that, though they didn't see Him, He was with them because that was going to be the relationship that they were going to have with Him. And then Jesus took them out to the Mount of Olives in Bethany (actually on the other side of the Mount of Olives), and He spoke these last words to them (that we mentioned), and then they watched Jesus disappear, and two angels (or men) dressed in glowing robes said, "In the same manner that you've seen the Lord leave, He will come to you again."

Tonight we want to pick up the story (and we're going to the end in verse 26) starting in verse 12, and if the first eleven verses are forty days of history, these next verses are the next ten days thereafter. Forty days till the ascension, after the resurrection; ten more days till Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit will be poured out as the Lord had promised. But for now, Jesus is out of the picture. He's disappeared, He's ascended. Now these men and women are told to wait, and they don't know how long they have to wait. But they are told to wait. They've been saved, their understanding has been opened, they understand the Bible, they're starting to learn what God wants, but they're new at it, if you will.

And so we read in verse 12, "Then they returned" (after watching Jesus just arise, if you will, out of their sight) "to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey." So, in obedience to Jesus' words, they turn around from Bethany, go down the backside of the Mount of Olives, and they head back over to Jerusalem to await this promise which Jesus (Luke 24:49 as well as last week) gave them. Luke tells us that they went home with great joy. In

fact, as they watched Him depart, it says "they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God" (Luke 24:52-53). And they stayed together waiting upon God's plan, and that plan was this outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon their lives. Quite a big change, don't you think, of outlook from, let's say, six weeks earlier - where they were pretty sure, when they watched Jesus die, that their lives were over. Everyone's face was long. Their hopes were dashed. "There's no way we're gettin' out of this. We could be next." Everyone was fearful and broken-hearted. There was absolutely no hope at all. And here they are, hopeful and prayerful and obedient. And it's what happens when you get saved, isn't it, when the Lord moves in. Your life changes! And it certainly had changed for them. They didn't know what came next. They knew what they were to do, but they had to wait to see what God would do in them.

So on the Mount of Olives.....if you go with us to Israel ever, there is a church at the base of the Mount of Olives called the Church of the Ascension. And if you have the unfortunate task of going with a guide, they will take you into this church and show you the last footprint that Jesus left, as He left. The problem is Luke 24:50 says that Jesus ascended from the backside of the Mount of Olives, not the front of it. So it is always better to read your Bible and not be led astray. It's apparently easy to make a holy site, and they have tried.

But, needless to say, the Lord went, and the disciples went back with great joy. They now knew things that they didn't before they were saved, and the Holy Spirit was living in them. We are told in verse 12 that the measurement of travel was just a Sabbath day's journey from Jerusalem. A Sabbath day's journey is determined by basically two verses in the Old Testament. Exodus 16:29 says (on the Sabbath), "Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day" (you should not travel outside of your city). And then, in Numbers 35:5 it says that you should measure around the city two thousand cubits on every side, and that should become the city in the middle, and that would be your travel distance, if you will. So, between those two verses (if you like), they were determined to be three thousand feet; that's about what two thousand cubits are - about eighteen inches each, whatever the length is from your elbow to your finger, but usually eighteen inches. So you could travel three thousand feet on the Sabbath before it would become sin to you because, again, it was all about resting in the LORD and obeying His Word. So, about a little bit over a half a mile you could travel, which fits the distance just fine with what we are given. They were

told in chapter 1:4, remember, "You shall not depart from Jerusalem until this power falls upon you." So even going to the ascension place on the Mount of Olives was not disobeying what the Lord had said. "Stay in the city." And they were. They were within three thousand, if you will, feet from the center of town.

Verse 13 says, "And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers" (or brethren, really). Now gathered into this group are eleven apostles, some of the faithful women that we've met as we went through the gospels, Jesus' family - His mother and His brethren, other disciples. Verse 15 says that there were about 120 people in all. So we know that there were many more believers in Jesus, even at this time, than 120. In 1 Corinthians 15:6, Paul said that Jesus, during the forty days (verses 1-11) at one time showed Himself to 500 people at once. So there were a lot of believers, if you will, around the area, but these 120 were there on resurrection evening. They had, many of them, come from Galilee. Many of them knew each other. They were the ones that had been breathed upon and received the Holy Spirit. We also know that Jesus' own family did not believe in Him until after the resurrection. So if you go to John 7 (the first six verses or so), they weren't believers at that time, but they're here now with the saints. They have come to believe that Jesus was, indeed, who He claimed to be, who He said that He was.

In fact, one of His half-brothers would have been here - James - and James would later be a pastor of the church in Jerusalem, and we are told in 1 Corinthians 15:7 that Jesus, during these forty days, also appeared to him. So lots of folks got a chance to see Him and believe in Him. I think, if nothing else, it is good sometimes to know the background when the Bible gives it to us because it makes sense to us. For example, those of you that are praying for your families, and it's been a while, here's Jesus' family. And for three and a half years - well, for all of His life, but for at least three and a half years of public ministry - they got to watch Jesus, which means He didn't do anything wrong, He didn't get anybody mad, He didn't act up at all, there was no sin in His life. Everything about Him was perfect! And yet His family still didn't believe in Him. So don't take it too hard when your family uses you as an excuse for not believing in the Lord because Jesus even had trouble with getting to His family, and they were given a perfect example. So just keep

praying for them. Sometimes they come along slowly. I suspect that, in this 120 people - and, by the way, my dad didn't get saved for twelve and a half years. And for four of those years, he wouldn't speak to me because I went to Catholic school, and he paid, and it cost him a lot of money, and he thought I had wasted his money. When I got saved, he was so mad that I got saved, and so he didn't come at Christmas, didn't call on birthdays, didn't show up at all - four years. But eventually, twelve years later, he got saved. So pray for your family. God does good things. But here's an example of a family - Jesus' - that just was dragging their feet. I imagine that Nicodemus was in this group. Maybe Joseph of Arimathea, I suspect. Maybe Zacchaeus, the guy that climbed up the tree, or Bartimaeus, or maybe that fellow that was born blind (in John 9), or the Roman centurion who was in Capernaum who helped them build a synagogue, whose servant was sick that He healed, or maybe that other Centurion that was standing at the cross, and when Jesus died, he exclaimed (to no one in particular), "Truly this was the Son of God!" So I'm sure that Simon of Cyrene was probably here. I think that he was. But we're not told. Lazarus and his sisters - I'm sure they're probably there. So you can probably guess, because of what we have, that probably 10-15% of the folks were gathered in this group.

How many of you were raised Catholic? Because I don't want to offend Catholics. I believe the good thing about being a Catholic is you have the right Jesus, He's just buried. Right? He's buried under a lot of church stuff. But it is easier to share with Catholics about Jesus than a Jehovah Witness or a Mormon who has a completely different Jesus than the biblical one. You have a biblical Jesus if you grew up Catholic, like I did. He's the Son of God. He was born of a virgin. He died for my sins. He rose from the dead. That's all gospel truth. But now it's got to be applied to you, and that should be enough. Well, just for you ex-Catholics (or whatever you're calling yourself these days), this is the last mention of Mary in the Bible, and she is standing on equal footing with many other believers, and she is obediently waiting for the promise of God to empower her from on high so that she might be a witness for Jesus in the world. She is gathered with the saints, worshipping. She is gathered with the saints, according to Luke, in the temple, praising and praying and returning to Jerusalem with great joy. There is no special honor given to Mary or recognition by the apostles or by the disciples; she is just one of them. She is not a particularly significant person outside of that, other than the fact that, obviously, God chose her for an amazing role in His plan. But if you go through the Scriptures - you go to Matthew 12:46, for example - and you read there about Mary, or in Luke 11:27 as well, where it talks about, "Blessed are

the breasts that nursed You!" And, "No, no, no. Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" That's what Jesus said (Luke 11:28). So there's a lot to be said for the calling of Mary upon her life. However, from the standpoint of her position in the church early on, the Catholic church's teaching and practices regarding Mary are absolutely unbiblical, and they are, I'm sure, an abomination to the gospel of Jesus. The idea that she was perpetually a virgin, which we were taught, is not true; that she was sinless - doesn't teach that; that she was assumed into heaven, not seeing death - not true; that she has a role as an intercessor between God and man - also not true. There's only one name given among men whereby we can be saved, and His name is Jesus (Acts 4:12). Most of those Maryology doctrines, if you will, arose about the 14<sup>th</sup> century. So if you follow them backwards, they were born at a time in history, but there's no biblical basis to worship Mary. Her final words, by the way, are recorded in the Bible in John 2, of all things, and you will read (there in John 2:5) that these are Mary's words at the wedding feast. She said this to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." Those are her last words, and they're way back in the beginning, if you will, of the Scriptures. So, God obviously bestowed great honor upon Mary. She was blessed among women (Luke 1:42). She admitted that herself. She couldn't believe that God would take a young 14- or 15-year-old girl and choose to use her to bring forth His Son. She was blessed among women. But here she is mentioned for the last time, and you see her - by biblical example - in prayer, waiting with at least 119 other people, praying for God to pour out His Spirit upon them.

Well, soon (within these ten days) they would experience the power of the Holy Spirit in an amazing way. There will be a spiritual explosion in the world because of Jesus' ascension and of the promise of the Spirit. It will rock the world. It will change the course of history. For now they waited, and they did what Jesus told them to do. And I mentioned to you last week, one of the nice things you can do as you read through the book of Acts is just constantly say to yourself - what kind of people does God use? Because you'll find a lot of them. And I say mark it in your margin or something. Well, here're the kinds of people God uses - those who are persistent in prayer.

Notice verse 14. It says, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." The word "continued," to me, means to be preoccupied with something or to be devoted to the same activity. It is a word that is used later on in describing the priorities of the apostles when the church begins to grow, and they had a lot of demands upon their time, and they said, "We will just continue in

the Word, and we'll continue in prayer. We'll let that preoccupy our time." So here's a group of 120 saved individuals - the first group, if you will - who persevere in prayer, praying constantly, devoting themselves to seeking what God wanted; and they wait in one accord. Now, that should tell you that they were saved because this group never got along. They always fought. Right? About who was the greatest and who was the best. In fact, in chapter 2:1, it starts with the words, "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord." The word "*hymothumadon*" is a compound word. But it means to rush along in unison. Pretty good argument. The word "accord" is often used in secular Greek to speak about different notes that are played simultaneously in music that create harmony or pitch or tone - same word - something that's in tune, if you will. It's only used twelve times in the Bible, this word "accord." It's used eleven times of those twelve here in the work that God is doing together with His people. And so the Holy Spirit is bringing together a family. The Lord spoke about it as well. "How lovely it is for the brethren to gather together in unity" (Psalm 133:1), and, indeed, they are one together in the Lord here at this time, waiting upon the Lord. If you see the picture, I think it isn't a stretch, then, for you to understand why the devil would target unity as a place that he could stop the work of God. Because the outgrowth of salvation and the Lord taking the hearts of His people, and then setting promises before them, and gathering together, is unity. You find them as one, in one accord, praying fervently, continuing together, hanging out in the body, standing together, waiting for God's promise. And when the enemy can come in and divide, you can just imagine what would happen.

Now, I thought about who was in this group. Imagine if things hadn't gone so well, that someone in the group would have said to Jesus' family, "Oh, sure. Now you believe Him, now that He's risen. Hey, we've been here since the very beginning. You guys are a bunch of Johnny-come-latelys. You didn't have to stick out your necks like we did." Or the other people say to Peter, "Hey, how many times did you deny Him, Mr.-I-won't-deny-Him-even-if-others-will? Three, wasn't it? I think it was three!" There could have been a great division between the people. They could have said to John, "You were always His favorite, and now I hear that you're not going to die till He comes back." Because that's what they believed. They could have said to Thomas, "Oh, let's have the doubtful man open in prayer since he doesn't believe half of what he says anyway!" Or, "Hey, Philip, you want another sign or somethin', man?" Never did really join. There's plenty of ammunition for division here, but they were all "with one accord." So no murmuring, no division, no

dissension. The unity of the Spirit left the sins of the old life behind them and the joy of the Lord's work before them. It made a huge difference in the church.

Well, they continued in prayer, and they continued in supplication. "*Proseuche*" is the word for prayer. It just means general prayer - things that you just pray about that are concerning you. The word for supplication, "*deesis*," means specific prayer or, if you will, if you have a prayer list, and you're praying down the list, and you're staying with them. It just speaks about prayer in a very specific term. So, I don't doubt that they were praying, "Lord, pour out Your Holy Spirit. We need to get goin'!"

So here're 120 people on day forty-one through day fifty and waiting. Today you don't have to wait. The Holy Spirit is available. God is ready to use you. But it all began with a small group gathered in an upper room, believing Jesus - that He was going to do what He said.

Verse 15, "And in those days" (these ten days) "Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, 'Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.' " Now Luke draws our attention to one action that took place during these ten days. Other than what we've just read (their spiritual practices), this is the only action that he draws attention to. And it is to a group of disciples that are reading the Bible, obviously studying the Bible, scouring the Scriptures for more information. They are typical new believers, are they not? I mean, guys that are just excited about what they read; they can't get enough. They are hungry for the Scriptures. Like I said, Luke 24:45 tells us their understanding has been opened by the Lord. And so it could very well be (and I would just suggest to you because of Peter's words) that, as Peter was studying and praying for the Lord to pour out His Spirit, he decided that the reason that the Holy Spirit had not been poured out up to this point was they had failed to do a job that had needed to be done. And notice what he says, "Men and brethren, this Scripture has to be fulfilled. I think I know why we're waitin'. I think we've got stuff to do." All right. Maybe I'm reading into the text. Only ten days, though. And here we find Peter speaking up. "We have to replace Judas' seat." True to form, Peter, once he makes up his mind, moves in his boldness.

Now, there is much controversy regarding this action. Was it the will of God or was it not? I'd like to give you at least five or ten minutes of things that you might want to think about, and then I'll let you make up your own mind because it doesn't matter what you think - you're going to heaven, so I'm all right with that. But I'll let you form your own opinions because this is one of those places in the Scriptures where there's a lot of disagreement. In fact, if you were here on the night that Don Stewart was here and somebody asked that question, he said, "Oh, no. They picked the right guy." I said, "You're out of your mind." And so we disagreed. I called him and told him he was out of his mind. But we're good friends. It's not a big deal. He wouldn't mind.

But here Peter shares with others (the 119 others) his concern, his intention, his insight, and he does so by (in the next few verses) quoting several psalms. Some of them are pretty obscure. By that, I mean you probably have to be a pretty good Bible student to come out of a psalm and go, "This is speaking about Judas." You might be able to do that if you spent some time in the Scriptures; but this isn't third-grade Bible study, this is graduate level. And Peter, within forty days of being saved, nails every verse in proper context. So God is speaking to Peter, certainly, and he's learning, and he's learning well. On the positive side, Peter reveals a tremendous confidence in the Word of God. He's changed, hasn't he? He has a wonderful discernment. He's pretty good at biblical application. He's not a scholar. That would be Paul. This is a fisherman, a guy that just had the Holy Spirit move within him six weeks earlier. In verse 16, he references Psalm 41:9. It is "by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus." In verse 20, down here, he spoke in the book of Psalms, " 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it,' and 'Let another take his office.' " He quotes out of Psalm 109 and Psalm 69, out of two different places, applies them directly to Judas, and they are, in that context, absolutely correct; although how a six-week-old baby Christian would come up with that is phenomenal. It is a testimony to how God speaks to the heart of man.

In speaking, Peter confesses that the word of David is, in reality, the Word of the LORD, verse 16, which "the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David." So he's already aware that God used men to write this book, but he recognized that the Holy Spirit was behind it even though the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen upon anyone. In Peter's heart, he had begun to understand the Scriptures. Like I said, verse 20 is a quote out of Psalm 69. It is a very obscure verse. It refers to historical action before it ever refers, prophetically, to Judas' behavior. But it is

absolutely a prophetic psalm that would point to Judas' being unfaithful. It's in a cloudy place, though; it's an amazing insight.

As far as Peter's suggestion that they needed to take care of this, you will not find one word of correction or chastisement from the LORD for this behavior anywhere in the Scriptures. I'm spending a lot of time with this because Luke sees fit to put those ten days and focus on two things - the spiritual well-being of the people and the action of Peter. That's it. Right? So that's what we are given to consider. Even Luke (who would become extremely good friends with Paul - his mentor and I think maybe his best friend, maybe the guy he admired most) has no word of correction. He silently reports the facts, only as we read them. This is Peter standing up during those ten days and saying, "You know, I think the Holy Spirit hasn't been here because these Scriptures have to be fulfilled," and he rattles them off, and everybody goes, "Mmm. That's good. We get it." So I'm leaving out verses 18 and 19 because they're not part of the story; they are part of Luke speaking to his friend to try to explain who this Judas is.

On the negative side of what Peter says, there is no mandate from God to these 120 that they were supposed to be responsible for filling Judas' shoes or his position, or that the length of time of waiting upon the Holy Spirit to be poured out would absolutely be based upon their failure to act. That would be a presumption that Peter makes. It is biblically recorded, so it was true; that's what he said. But there's really no basis for him to say that except that he said, "the Scripture has to be fulfilled," verse 16, which is right. There is also no indication that this became a central concern of their prayers like, "Lord, should we do this? Do You want us to take care of this? Are we holding You up?" And, in many ways, it's like new believers that are propelled forward with an extremely large amount of zeal with limited knowledge, and they tend to do the wrong things based on the wrong conclusion, though they are absolutely sincere, and they only want God's best - which is true of a lot of new believers. We run, but we don't have much to carry yet.

Well, verse 18, and before I tell you what I think, let me read to you verses 18 and 19. So he talked about the fellow that "was numbered with us" and nobody should take his place, and then he says (in parentheses) to his buddy Theophilus - to explain all of this, "(Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own

language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood)." So, two verses that appear to be an aside to his friend to fully explain Judas' treachery. We know from Matthew 27 that Judas returned the money that he was paid for betraying Jesus - thirty pieces of silver. He threw it back to the feet of the priest. He didn't spend a dime of it. This didn't go anywhere with Judas, except he had it in his pocket for a little while. They refused to take the money because they realized it had been money that was spent on betrayal. Understand they paid for it. They were as crooked as they could be, but they were acting holy now. But they said, "What we could do, since we can't use it for the temple, maybe we have enough money there to buy a potter's field." Now, a potter's field, to a farmer, is worthless. Because potters make lots of pots, they break, and they throw them into the dirt, and it becomes very calcified, and it's good for nothin'. So you get really cheap dirt. A farmer can't use it. "So, what we'll do is we'll buy a cheap dirt from a potter, and then we'll just bury the poor there. They don't have any money. We're really not spending any money. It's a great program. We'll use the money for the LORD to support the ....." These guys are just crooks, right? And they have no other burial.

Now, both the betrayal and the usage of the money in the purchase of the field are prophetically set before us in Zechariah 11. We are told of both - the amount of the betrayal and what will be done with the money. If you go to the book of Matthew (27:9), and you read Matthew quoting that, he quotes that Scripture, but he attributes it to Jeremiah. It's very confusing if you're studying the Bible for the first time. Because what he quotes is exactly written in Zechariah, and yet he says, "This was written by Jeremiah." Now, if that's true, and certainly he could have written it (we don't have any copies of that portion of Jeremiah's statement), what most Bible scholars will do is they will say to you, "It was a scribal error. He meant to say Zechariah, but he said Jeremiah." The reason I don't accept that is if you start saying there're mistakes in the Bible, you don't know where to stop. Either it's all true, or none of it's true. You can't pick and choose what you like. I'm much more comfortable saying there was a book that we don't have. That happens in the Bible quite often. There're plenty of books quoted in the Scriptures that we don't have. And, whatever Jeremiah said lines up perfectly with what we do have and what Zechariah said, so it doesn't put me off either way. But, needless to say, when Matthew makes that quote about this, he says, "as was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah." It's in Matthew 27:9-10. So you can look that up, if you will, for yourself.

Luke gives us, because he's a doctor, maybe more information than we need. We are told in Matthew 27:5 that Judas hung himself. Doctor Luke gives us the

natural consequences of someone hanging - either for a long period of time or the fact that there was a big jolt. But to say the least, after a bit of time, his body splattered to the rocks below, and we go, "Gross! Don't tell me." But he's a doctor, and he's telling his buddy exactly what happened. And they called the name of the place Akel Dama, in Aramaic (local language), "Field of Blood." But it is an interesting picture. Because here you have the blood money that was used to betray Jesus by a potter's field (which is useless), in which are found broken pieces of pots - thrown there by the potter - that now are redeemed by His blood. Great picture of you and me - broken pots. And here we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus. We are cracked pots. Right? And the world is broken. So Jesus comes to redeem. It's a great picture. But, needless to say, verses 18 and 19 are just explanation to his reader (Theophilus, verse 1 of chapter 1) to just tell us a little bit more about Judas.

Okay, so back to verse 21. "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection." Now back to Peter. Based on his studies, he now makes recommendation to 120 people with him and says this, "Look, we gotta pick a guy to replace Judas." And he might very well have added, because of verse 16, "If we want this anointing to come, we gotta get this done." Right? So he wants to pick a guy, and he lists (for these 119 others) what he believes should be the requirements for an apostle. Once the shocking news of the fact that Judas was a betrayer got by them, they would now get busy to try to replace him.

Verse 23, "And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, 'You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.' And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles." Now notice, in verse 25, they call what they are replacing a fellow into an "apostleship." The word itself, "apostle," means someone who is sent, in every place, and it is used specifically of twelve guys that Jesus chose. There weren't forty-three, there were twelve. And He chose them after a night of prayer. However, there are plenty of other apostles named in the Bible that weren't part of that group that Jesus chose but that were men that were just sent out to do the work of planting churches, carrying the gospel. They were apostolic in their ministry. There's an office of an apostle - there're twelve.

I say there're twelve because the Bible will clearly define those twelve in lots of places. And then there's a ministry of an apostle, and so guys like Barnabas and Silas and Timothy and many others are called (I think Andronicus and Junia and others) apostles because of their ministry, but not of the position. What they hoped to do was replace Judas - one of the officers, the twelve - that Jesus had chosen. And Peter saw this individual as having to be someone who'd been with them since they started. "He should have been here when Jesus was baptized by John. He should still be with us when He died on the cross. He should have still been with us yesterday or last week when He ascended into heaven." He's got to be part of the 'original gang,' the OG's - the original God's people. (Laughing) I don't know. You gotta be one of those. Right? And he makes it clear, in verse 25, that there were other people who were qualified to be apostles by that definition - those who were around Jesus in His public ministry.

Now let's think about apostles. When Jesus chose the twelve (Luke 6:12), we read that He chose them after a night of prayer. Right? In fact, He said to the disciples later on, when Judas was there (John 6:70), "Haven't I chosen you twelve and yet one of you is a devil?" These twelve were chosen by God after a whole night of prayer. Jesus chose all of them. He spent a whole night praying. "Father, which ones are going to be the apostles?" And they are given specific promises regarding their works and their futures (for example, Acts 2:42). They become, in the church, the vanguards of teaching doctrine. They became the source of biblical doctrine for the church. If you want to know where the doctrines began, they started with the apostles in Acts 2. They were to administer, according to Acts 4, church finance - at least early on. They were responsible for how the money was spent and what it went to and why it went there. They were responsible to the Lord for that. They are the writers of, for the most part, the canon of the Bible. If you read chapter 2:20 of Ephesians, it says that the church was "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone." In chapter 3:5 of Ephesians, we read this, "which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets." So there's this office, these twelve men, that God had specific work for in mind.

We are told, in Matthew 19:28, that Jesus said, "When the regeneration comes and the Son of Man comes in His glory, you will sit with Me," He says to the disciples, "on the twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel." And He sets them apart from all of the other apostle works - these officers, the office of apostle.

There were twelve that, in the days to come, the Lord is going to use in a special place to judge Israel. They are, for that matter, Jews, are they not? Then you get to Revelation 21, and you get to hear about the New Jerusalem, and it says the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on each of those twelve foundations is the name of an apostle. So there are only twelve. You can't get forty-three apostles because there aren't forty-three foundational stones or forty-three judgment seats. There is an office of an apostle, and I should say to you, in that regard, there are no apostles today. Not in an office. There're plenty of people doing the work of an apostleship, being sent out. Sometimes you'll see (in churches) people, rather than the pastor, they call them apostles. I don't know why they did it, but there it is. But that doesn't jive, at least in terms of an office. So there's a place and then there's a function. The word "apostle" is used about seventy-five times in the Bible. Most of them are not to refer to the twelve. But you should know that Peter, looking at these eleven, said, "We gotta get one more guy." They weren't using the term "apostle" yet to send people out; they were using it in terms of an office. That was all that they knew, the twelve of them and all. So, here're Peter's requirements he decided were necessary - that made them unique, that gave them the privilege of their calling. And so he presents these arguments, along with the Scriptures, to the 120, and they agree with him, "Yeah, this must be right. Let's do it so we can get this thing movin'." Right?

So, verse 23, they look around, and they pick two guys. Right? Out of the 120, a fellow named Joseph, who's also called Barsabas, who's also called Justus. Maybe that's why they didn't pick him; he's got too many names. (Laughing) But Barsabas is Hebrew, Justus is Latin. And then the other fellow just has one name, Matthias. They both fit the criteria that Peter sets forth in his presentation to the people. They are two men that you and I, up until this point, have not heard of before. But they'd obviously been around for three and a half years plus. Through all of your gospel reading, you didn't see their names once, but they were there because everyone agreed that these were guys that were qualified, if you will. And that is how, by the way, most of the church functions. We know Billy Graham's name, but there're a hundred more Billy Grahams out there; we have no idea that that's their name, but God uses them, and they're in Africa, and they're in Asia, and they're preachin'. Nobody knows their names. You can read church history, and you'll never hear their names. But God uses them. So these guys, they were faithful - obviously, they were there. Everyone knew them, and the 120 admired them and voted for them.

Significantly to this one reference, we will neither see them nor hear from them again, following these few verses. Here they are, and there they go. Pretty much. Now that's not necessarily significant in and of itself. There're a lot of the apostles that we don't know anything about biblically. Don't know anything about Andrew, don't really know anything Bartholomew. Don't really know much about Thomas or Judas (not Iscariot). We don't know anything about Andronicus, who was called an apostle, though not the office. We don't know anything about a guy named Junia (in Romans 16), also called an apostle. But at least the original apostles, we have some pretty good historical evidences for their ministries. The Bible, though, is silent about them after we leave, pretty much, the gospels.

Here's one observation I'd like you to consider, since I'm putting this in front of you. Do you really think there were only two people out of the 120 left that would meet these criteria? And I would think that there were probably more because it was a small group of followers, and, man, they bound together quickly because it was dangerous. I don't see people signing up the last six months, when everybody was out to kill everybody. You know? You had to be in early to, I think, run with them for very long. In any event, here's one of my concerns. The group felt that, of all the possible candidates to be the next apostle to fill Judas' job, these two guys were the best. Right? From verse 24, it was only these two men that they offer, then, in prayer to the Lord. They say to the Lord this, "All right. Which guy do You like? Door #1 - lots of names. Door #2 - short name. If we get #1, we get a big door because he's got a big name." They offer, to the Lord, two. And I think that there's, sometimes, a mistake made by us when we go to the Lord, and we say, "Here're Your options: A or B," and you don't recognize that God might have "C" in mind. But you understand that the offer, here, is one of two. "You got this guy or You got this guy. That's all that we're going to give You." God may have had (and I think He had) different options in mind. If you go back and read Numbers 11, do you remember when Moses was leading the people through the wilderness, that they began to cry out for food? And especially for meat. And they said, "We haven't had any meat in I don't know how long. We need more meat." And the LORD got mad, and He said to Moses, "They want meat? I'll give 'em meat. Not just for a day or two days or five days or ten days or twenty days. I'm gonna give 'em meat for a whole month until it's comin' out their nostrils! They'll have meat all right. They're gonna hate meat! They shouldn't be weeping, 'Give us meat.' " And Moses said this, "LORD, I've got six hundred thousand men on foot, and You're telling me to give them meat so they can eat for a whole month? All right. What

am I supposed to do, kill every animal that we have with us or go fishing in all of the seas to provide enough for them? Tell me which one of those two I'm supposed to do." And the LORD said, "I've got a better idea. Let Me just bring the meat to you." But Moses, in his limiting of God, said, "I've only got two possible solutions. We kill every cow we have, every sheep we have, every goat, or we can just start fishin', man, because I'll never come up with enough food to feed all these guys." And the LORD had a completely different idea. But because it challenged his understanding, he was stuck.

It is my personal opinion that God had already chosen a replacement for Judas, and his name was Paul. And like all of the other apostles that were chosen, Jesus chose Paul; not Peter. And He, not the apostles, would choose a replacement. And Paul humbly said, in 1 Corinthians 15:9, "I am the least of the apostles." "I'm behind every man." He didn't see himself in a place of honor, yet I believe that's where God wanted him. In fact, nine of the epistles in your Bible - Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus - all of them start with these words, "Paul, an apostle by the will of God," and then he writes his letter. "Paul, an apostle by the will of God."

So, I think Peter and the others were sincere in their efforts. God did not chastise them. I believe that they believed that this was going to move things along. I think they might have gotten ahead of the Lord and took more upon themselves than God ever intended. I think they limited God in His choices by just picking two and then failing, not really, to pray with zeal. They make plans, they make decisions, they make choices, and then they go, "Which one of these do You want to bless, Lord?" But that's limited, right? God might actually do something beyond what you've come up with.

Finally, verse 26 (before we have communion), they employ the Old-Testament method of determining the will of God to pick this guy; the method that, in the Old Testament, God promoted. Proverbs 16:33 says, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD." So, God had a method or a way by which the people could determine the will of God. You go to the priest. They had these two stones, the Urim and the Thummim, and they would reach in, and they would pull out one or the other; and by it, God would bless and direct. You'll find David going to the priest and saying, "Seek the LORD. What are we supposed to do?" Or Saul being offered to, "Hear the priest. Let's seek the LORD." "No, I don't need the priest. I've got it all figured out already." So, it was the Old Testament method

by which you cast stones or lots or dice. Whatever you understand that to be, they did so, and God used it to make Himself known. But here's the problem. Now Jesus has died, and He has risen, and they were born again, and the Holy Spirit has come to dwell within them. And He would lead them into all truth. He would be the guide, not the casting of the dice. Now, if you cast dice between two guys, you're going to pick one of them. But that doesn't mean that God is now employing the method which has been set aside in the Old Testament. In fact, you will not see that anywhere in the New Testament or in the history of the church that, from this day forward, there's anybody casting any kind of dice whatsoever.

Well, in this case, the lot falls upon Matthias who immediately disappears from the scene. But Paul will soon arise as the central figure in God's work in the early church over the next thirty years. He will be the most impactful man, far more than any, really, of the apostles - except for, maybe, Peter; and maybe we can put them together since God used Peter to speak to Jews and Gentiles first. And Paul - you know what he did. But needless to say, this is the only thing we have a record of what happened between the ascension and ten days later, when Pentecost came. The men and women were together in prayer. They were getting along. They were understanding the Scriptures. They were dividing it well. They seemed to be reading it right. God was teaching them much. And then we have Peter running ahead, it seems. And I'll let you decide what you believe. It's the best case I can make for you. I think it's a biblical place to stand. It doesn't matter when it comes to heaven, certainly. But within a few days (for us, between now and next Wednesday), the ten days will pass, the Holy Spirit will be poured out, and lives will be changed; 120 will become three thousand in five minutes. Wouldn't that be glorious, if God did that with us? Right? There's far more than 120 of you here. Just imagine what God could do. I mean, Whittier could be saved, everybody here in two weeks. Move, Lord! Move, Father! So, eventually the sanctuary wasn't able to hold them. They would not even have a building for the next 300 years. They would meet everywhere but in their own place.

So next week, we're going to do the first thirteen verses of chapter 2, and we're going to look at the birth of the church on the Day of Pentecost. But now you have forty days and what happened. You have ten days and what took place. You have a challenge for Bible thinking to decide what you believe happened here. I hope I've given you enough to think about. And then next week we will watch the Holy Spirit being poured out and then probably the week after that we'll just look at Peter's sermon, and then maybe the week after that, we'll just look at the response of the

people. Because there's a lot to learn. You're not in any hurry are you? If you're not in any hurry, we'll just go slowly. Just let's go slowly.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
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