

Resources for Finishing Our Lord's Unfinished Work, Part 3

Acts 1:12-26

1702

Take your Bible if you will, please, and turn to Acts, chapter 1, Acts, chapter 1. Now, we've begun our series in the book of Acts, a most important book. Having completed the series of John, which is the life of Christ on earth in His physical body; in the book of Acts we continue the life of Christ as He lives through His church. We come to some tremendous things as we come to this little section in Acts 1:12 through 26. Now, this passage that we're going to be looking at this morning beginning in verse 12 really talks about two kinds of disciples. And there's a great contrast brought to our attention here between the true disciple and the false disciple, a study in stark contrast, a contrast between Judas on the one hand and a man named Matthias about whom we know very little, but nevertheless, a contrast. And there are going to be many lessons for us to learn as we go through what is really kind of a little historical narrative section that is rich with truth that is applicable to our lives.

Now, as the book of Acts unfolds, we have seen in just the first two messages, that Jesus in chapter 1 is equipping His own for what is going to happen in chapter 2. For in chapter 2, the Holy Spirit descends and the church is born and evangelism begins and the work that Jesus began to do is to be continued in them. But before that can happen there are some preparations that have to be taken care of. And so chapter 1 is preparation for the birth of the church. And we have seen how that very carefully Jesus has given to His own all of the proper equipment. We saw that He gave them the proper message and that is that He taught them all they needed to know. He gave them the proper manifestation. He revealed Himself to them in His glorified post-resurrection body in order that they might be confident that He was really alive from the dead. Then He gave them the proper might. He promised them that the Spirit would come and empower them. He then gave them the proper mystery. He said there are some things you don't need to know and one is the time of My return. And so He left it for every man to live in the light of the fact that Jesus could come any moment. He also gave them the proper mission. He told them they were witnesses to go to the world with the gospel. And then He gave them the proper motive and that was that He would be coming back to see if they had been faithful.

Now, that sums up what we have studied in terms of His preparation of them for the job to be done, but there's one thing left and that is the proper men. In addition to all of those other proper ingredients, Jesus wanted to be sure that the proper men were involved in carrying out the job. And so in verses 12 to 26, basically, we see Jesus replacing Judas with the proper man to fill in the ranks of the 12 to do the job. It's a marvelous thing to realize that God works His will through men. God does not stay supernaturally detached, working His will apart from men, but rather works it through men. This is true even in God's operation in providence. For example, when God works in providence, it is God working His will, but His plans may develop through unexpected concurrences of a thousand, million human wills, some of them yielding, some of them rebellious, some of them intelligent, some of them ignorant and all blended together to accomplish God's will. God works

through men. In the Old Testament when Gideon was to defeat the foe, the Bible gave the word of Gideon, or the watchword of Gideon or the slogan of battle as "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon." In other words, it wasn't just the sword of the Lord, it was the sword of the Lord and Gideon because God pours His will through men and operates and functions in the earth through men. He has mediators who are men to carry out His purpose. When it came to dividing the Red Sea to allow the children of Israel to cross, God used a combination of things. Number one, His own will, number two, an east wind, number three, a man named Moses with a stick in his hand. God implements men into the responsibility of carrying out His will. And for this crisis hour in redemptive history, as God is about to give birth to His church, God wants to make sure that the proper men are in the proper place to do the job. Now, we know that the ranks of the disciples have been depleted by one and that one being Judas Iscariot. That means Judas from the town of Kerioth. He has been placed aside by his own will and so he is to be replaced by the will of Jesus Christ.

Now, let me at this point interject something that we must keep in mind in interpreting this passage. Some have interpreted this passage in various ways and I want to give you kind of a basis of how we're going to interpret it. We are assuming that every apostle was chosen by Jesus Christ, that Jesus Himself chose them all with no exceptions including Matthias. There are some who say that this was a mistake on Peter's part here, that he had no business doing that. I don't believe that for a moment because I believe that Jesus Christ chose the first 11 and that He chose the one to make the proper 12 in order that it might be in order for the birth of the church. And that the apostle Paul, who truly was an apostle, was an apostle of a different order, although truly an apostle, said he was an apostle in due season out of context, as it were. He was a very unique apostle and he filled two qualifications out of the three and on the basis of those two, was chosen to be the apostle. Or we should say, on the basis of those two he is declared to be an apostle. And we'll see what the three are later on. So we believe in this passage, then, we have the choice of Matthias to supplant Judas. And we believe it is God, through Christ, doing the choosing. In John 15:16 Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye have not chosen Me, but" ...what?..." I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go forth and bring fruit..." In other words, Jesus did the selecting. Now, this does not minimize the apostle Paul, for the apostle Paul, though in a different season, under a different kind of a pattern, was selected by Jesus Himself, for he was stopped on the road to Damascus and Jesus said to him, It's hard for you to fight against Me, isn't it Paul? And right there and then he had a confrontation with Jesus Christ, met Jesus Christ, later was given back his sight, went three years into Arabia and had a personal, spiritual encounter with Jesus Christ, came out and was truly an apostle. But he was an apostle of a different pattern than these 12 apostles. Jesus does the choosing. In Luke 6:13 it says, "He chose twelve..." It wasn't a free-for-all at the Sea of Galilee when He went down there. How many of you would like to follow Me? He said I'll take you, you, you and you. Drop your nets and follow Me. He does the choosing. This is born out, I think, very carefully in Acts, chapter 10, verse 39. Peter is speaking and he says, "And we are witnesses of all things which He did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they slew and hanged on a tree. Him, God raised up the third day and showed Him openly, not to all the people" ...remember I told you that in His resurrection He was not revealed to all people..." but unto witnesses" ...what witnesses?..." chosen before by God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach unto the people and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be the Judge of living and dead." And so Peter says He appeared to us chosen by God to be His apostles or His preachers. Jesus appointed the 12. Jesus later appointed the 70 as you remember. And then when talking about having future workers, the Bible says "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that He send forth laborers into His harvest." Right? You see, Christian service isn't a matter of recruitment; it's a matter of divine appointment. In the days of Paul we read, "How shall they preach except they be sent." And who does the sending?...God does. In

these days it's strange but there are many people who are running around who haven't been sent who make themselves ministers of God whereas God has not made them such, who take upon themselves a work with no call from God. You see, it's a very solemn thing to do that. You think of Uzziah who tried to do it and wound up being a leper until he died because he tried to usurp a ministry that wasn't his by God's ordaining. Unless God has called you by laying it on your heart, by preparing you, by training you and giving you, beyond all, the desire and the sensitivity to the Spirit of God, then don't enter into it. James said, "Be swift to hear and slow to speak." James said, "Be not many teachers because unto them is the greater condemnation." Be available if God's calling you and be obedient to His call but don't usurp something that God hasn't called you to do. God appoints, through Jesus Christ, His own. And this is clearly indicated to us all throughout the New Testament. You even have it, for example, in Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 11, which tells us that when beginning the church it says and God really appointed...really Christ...appointed "some apostles...prophets...evangelists...and teaching shepherds," and they are appointed by God. Also, I Corinthians 12:28, the first part of the verse says that they are appointed...uses the word *epeita* * [I don't think this is the word he wanted here. The word he says is spelled right, but I don't think it's the word he MEANT to say. The word he says here does not mean set in order...] ...they are set in order by God to serve as teaching pastors, evangelists and teachers. So it is God who chooses those who will lead for Him.

Now, in this passage this is exactly what we have. Again, the Lord is choosing. Some would have us believe that Peter is choosing on his own and that he leads them into an error. I cannot believe for a moment that the Lord would allow His church to be founded on an error without ever stating it to be such. And nothing in here says it is. I can't imagine that the Lord would give them all the proper information, all the proper things clear up to verse 11 and let them blow it by choosing an improper man again. I see it not. Plus, if it is true that the office of Judas was prophesied in the Old Testament to be taken by another, then it must be legitimate. We believe that what happens here is of the Lord and we believe that Peter is inspired by the Holy Spirit as he speaks and as he leads those who are in this little meeting in choosing the one to replace Judas. So it is a case, then, of the Lord choosing His servant. Now, we could make great application from that. Suffice it, at that point, to say that the Lord chooses whom He will for His ministries.

Now, let me add, also, that this is the final act of the old dispensation. The age of the Old Testament, the age of law is coming to an end. Here's the final act. The choosing of this one ends it. In chapter 2, the beginning of the new age, as the Spirit comes and the new dispensation is born.

Now, as we look at the text I want to divide into three parts. They are not necessarily strategically connected but simply hooks to hang your thoughts on. Three features stand out. Number one, the submission of the disciples...and this is a beautiful thought...two, the suicide of a disciple, three, the selection of a disciple.

All right, first of all is the submission of the disciples in verses 12 to 15. Now, Jesus, you remember had told them that they had to stay in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit arrived. Luke 24:49 He said "...tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." Back in verse 4 He said, Don't go anywhere, stay in Jerusalem, wait for the promise of the Father, which was the baptism of the Spirit in verse 5. And verse 8a says and when He gets here, you'll have the power to do the job. He gave them everything, all the equipment except the power and He says stick around until the power arrives. And it was very important for them to wait because the Holy Spirit could not come until Jesus got back to Heaven. John 16:7 says that. If I go away, I will send the Comforter

unto you. And I cannot send the Comforter until I depart, he said. So Jesus had to go back to Heaven, set in order whatever had to be done there, then send the Holy Spirit. So there was a period of time in which they had to wait for the arrival of the Spirit because they couldn't go out to be witnesses to the world, they couldn't go out to do the job unless they had the power to do it and the Spirit was the energy. So they had to wait for the Holy Spirit to arrive. And so they waited and they showed their obedience. It's beautiful. Look at verse 12. "Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet..." That's the Mount of Olives given a little more technical definition for the sake of Theophilus who probably had never been to this area and so Luke describes it for him. Theophilus is the one to whom the book is written. Anyway, "from the Mount of Olives, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey." Now, that gives us the designation of the location where Jesus ascended. He had just ascended into Heaven and they left the Mount of Olives. That tells us that the ascension occurred on the Mount of Olives. And isn't it a wonderful thing that they obeyed. Back in verse 4 He said, "tarry in Jerusalem," don't leave Jerusalem. And they went immediately to Jerusalem. That's submission. That's obedience to the will of the Lord. That's the most important thing in the Christian experience is the one word obedience. That's what it's all about. And they obeyed. Now, the little place called the Mount of Olives is a lovely little spot. It's anything but a mount really in the sense that we in California think about a mountain. It rises about 400 feet above the bottom of the little valley, which isn't much of a valley either...Kidron. And it's just east of Jerusalem. In fact, the east wall of Jerusalem just goes straight down to the bottom of the little Kidron, which only runs in the winter and then back up to the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives is 400 feet high. Jerusalem is 200 feet high. Simple mathematics tell you if you're on the Mount of Olives, you're 200 feet over the top of Jerusalem. It's a fabulous sight at dawn. You get up, you watch the sun come over your back and all of the sudden it lights up the eastern wall and then it hits the temple ground and then, fast, it scatters morning across the whole city of Jerusalem. That's the Mount of Olives. And on that mount, Jesus had ascended. But not just on the Mount, in a particular place. The Mount is like any mount; it goes up and down on both sides. It's on the back side. And if you went down the back side, you'd land in Bethany. And if you kept on going, you'd wind up in the desert in Jericho down by the Dead Sea. So it's on the road to Jericho that the city of Bethany is located on the back side of Olives. And that, in Luke, is very important because Luke gives us a historical note. Luke tells us that Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives toward Bethany, which means that He ascended from the back side of the Mount of Olives. And I guess that gives it a little more private designation, a little more private occasion, being on the back side of Olives according to Luke 24:50.

Now, the ascension has taken place on the back side of Olive, now it says they left there and went to Jerusalem, which was a Sabbath day's journey. Now, a Sabbath day's journey is a technical term that measures a certain distance. It means 2000 cubits distance. Two-thousand cubits isn't called 2000 cubits; it's called a Sabbath day's journey. And it came about in a very interesting way. I'm gonna give you a little bit of a historical note. Moses didn't design this particular thing. This came about because when the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, you remember they had a tabernacle. Right? You remember that. And around the tabernacle all the tribes were set in particular locations. They all faced the tabernacle. The furthest location away was 2000 cubits so that on the Sabbath, you were permitted to go to worship and no further. That was the idea. Sabbath was reserved for worship, was it not? No working, no doing anything else. And so they made the maximum, they measured the maximum of the camp and how far away the furthest person would be and that was a Sabbath day's journey. You couldn't go any further than that in order to enable those people to make it to worship. And it was 2000 cubits. And so, consequently, the term "a Sabbath day's journey" became synonymous with a distance of 2000 cubits. This is not to mean that they were walking on the Sabbath day. This is simply a designation of a distance. Now, if they had gone 2000 cubits from the back side of Olive, they would have just barely gotten inside the eastern gate of

Jerusalem. And likely they would have been right where they were when they gathered together for the upper room occasion for that last Passover. And perhaps they were in the very same upper room where Jesus had appeared to them in resurrection. But it couldn't have been very far inside the eastern wall. And as best we can tell, that's the same area where the upper room was in proximity to the temple and all of the rest of the thing. And so they took the journey of about 2000 cubits. That would be 3000 feet for you that are still trying to figure that out, or a little over a half a mile. And they, in verse 13 it says, "And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room..." They came into the city of Jerusalem into a house and into an upper room. Now, the houses were very commonly possessing upper rooms or upper chambers, used four times in the New Testament, that particular designation. They were used for many purposes. Evidently, it was kind of like a living room. You know, it was kind of where you keep the kids out kind of thing for meditation, devotions, prayer. And when somebody died they usually got stuck in the upper room. So it had a multi-purpose both for the living and the dead. The reason I say the dead got put there was because in Acts 11 that's where they put Dorcas when she died. And so houses would have it. It was elevated from the regular pattern of the house, which was below. And so it must have been a big upper room. Must have been a pretty wealthy guy who had an upper room that size because they got a lot of people in that upper room. They all went into that upper room. Now, I want to add at this point that the Word also tells us that they had spent time in the temple daily praising God and rejoicing. So it wasn't as if they locked themselves in an upper room. We get this idea so often that they went and locked themselves in an upper room until the Holy Spirit came and just stayed there. That is not so. They were in the temple praising God and having joy. And so they were in and out of this upper room, but they came there to meet together and then would go out from time to time. Now, you'll notice that in verse 13 it tells us who was really gathered there. And you'll notice that there are only 11 disciples listed with the exclusion of Judas. There is a Judas here and I'll explain that in a moment. All right, it says in there abode there "Peter and James and John"...and you know those three..."Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot"...that's a particular designation of a political nature..."and Judas"...or Thaddaeus is another name..."the son of James"...and that's not to be confused with Judas Iscariot. This is Judas, not Iscariot. This is Judas or Thaddaeus, the son of James. Now, Judas Iscariot is missing. There are only 11 of them there. Now, they are not alone. There are others with them in this upper chamber and that in verse 14 is indicated when it says "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women..." The women...that's almost a proper noun, you know. They've become so much associated together that they're now called "the women"...Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Cleopas, Mary and Martha, Salome and perhaps some other women. But they've been around all the way through, have been around helping to sprinkle the body of Christ with spices. They've been around at the resurrection. They've been around. They're disciples of Christ. And it also says...and this is a lovely thing...it says at the end of verse 14, "and with His brethren." Now, this is a marvelous thing. Now, there are some who would say that Jesus had no earthly brothers. That is not so. It says right there, with his brothers..."his brethren." And it refers back to Jesus. It says, "the mother of Jesus and with His brethren." And the fact that the mother would be a human relationship indicates that so would the brothers be. Jesus did have brothers. They were half-brothers because Jesus was virgin born, but they were half-brothers. We even know their names: James, Joses or Joseph, Simon and Jude. And James and Jude figure very prominently in the New Testament for James wrote the epistle of James and Jude wrote the epistle of Jude and James was the first head of the Jerusalem church. He heads up the Jerusalem council in Acts, chapter 15. So they became believers. But the exciting thing is that they were even here because in John 7:5 it says, "neither did his brethren believe in Him." And they had a little hassle in John 7 about going to the Passover and they didn't believe and they mocked Him a little bit. But by the time you get here, there they are gathered in a prayer meeting with the rest of His disciples. It must have been an exciting thing for the Lord to recognize His brothers in that

group. Sure He _____ there. You say, well, how did it happen? When did they get converted? Well, there's not a lot of revelation on it. I have my own opinion, which I'm certainly happy to share with you (laughter). In I Corinthians, chapter 15 and verse 7...don't look it up, but I Corinthians 15:7...the Bible says that Jesus appeared to James after His resurrection. Now, that sets it in order very simply. Jesus likely appeared to James and at that point James became a believer, right, seeing his own brother resurrected. And then James, very likely, became the catalyst for the rest of them. And so by this time, they've all come into the faith and there they are gathered together and that only leaves one other person designated in 14 and that is Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Now, at this point I want to digress from my message...so this doesn't count on my total time (laughter)...and I want to talk for a moment about Mary, the mother of Jesus because I think it's important. Certainly, on Mother's Day there could be no more fitting individual to talk about for just a brief moment than Mary. Now, it's important for us to understand that Mary is never exalted in the Scripture. Only is she exalted in reference to the child that is born from her, not in herself. In fact, on one occasion in Mark, chapter 3, Jesus was teaching in a house. His brothers and mother came and they sent somebody in to tell Him that they wanted to talk to Him and He replied by saying, "Who is My mother?" "Who are My brethren?" And then He pointed to the audience and He said, "Even are ye My mother and My brethren." And then they couldn't figure that out and He said, "Whosoever doeth the will of God, the same is My brother...sister and mother." You see, He minimized the spiritual significance of Mary and His physical brethren. They had to be redeemed just like anybody else. And I want you to notice that it says, "These all continued with one accord in prayer...with the women" with "Mary..." And you'll notice they didn't pray to Mary; they prayed with Mary. Mary was praying. Mary needed to be redeemed. Now, for many years the Catholic Church has taught that Mary is co-redemptrix with Jesus Christ, that she had a part in obtaining redemption through Christ. That is not in the New Testament. That does not appear anywhere in the New Testament. And I'm not minimizing Mary. Perhaps among all women, she is certainly blessed, but among all women, she may be of the loveliest who ever lived and of the most wonderful kind of wife and mother imaginable. I'm not minimizing her humanness; I am eliminating her deity. Mary was in no way co-redemptrix with Jesus Christ. She has no place of superiority; she's simply there. No candles were being burned to her. She is kneeling with everybody else, praying like everybody else and, in fact, praying to her Son like everybody else. She is never again mentioned in the New Testament. There is no theology about Mary. Paul never mentions Mary in any of his doctrines of redemption. She appears nowhere past this verse at all in God's revelation. And a great disservice is done when people have to go to God and to Christ through Mary, for Mary is in no way related to our prayers. So, you say, do you believe then that Catholic people cannot be Christians? No, I think there are some who are Christians, but they have to circumvent their own theology to get at the truth. And I'm not, certainly, speaking words against Catholic people, but I will speak the truth in concerning doctrine. And I want to give you a little background on this. You say, well, where did Mary worship come from? Where did we get this co-redemptrix queen of Heaven kind of thing if it isn't out of the New Testament? And I want to take a moment because I think it's important enough to show that.

It finds its origin in the Babylon cults as far back as Genesis, chapter 10. Satan had already begun in Genesis 10 to counterfeit what God would do. Now, we learned from the Old Testament...and I want to give you this and I want you to listen carefully...we learned from Genesis, chapter 10 that there was a city founded called Babylon and it was a Godless city and it was the home of the beginnings of idolatry. You see, idolatry began in Babel. They built the first god, which was the Tower of Babel. And the guy that ramrodded the whole thing was a man named Nimrod. Now, Nimrod was a grandson of Ham, which makes him a great grandson of Noah. He was the apostate of the patriarchal age. And he started this whole false worship. He established false worship. It all began in

Genesis 10. That's when it all began. The Tower was the first idol and it became the object of men's worship, the point of their pride. It spawned a complex of weird, strange, mysterious religions that are still going on in our world today. Now, Nimrod had a wife and his wife's name was Semiramis, called Semiramis I. And Semiramis, because Nimrod founded all these weird religions, Semiramis became the high priestess of false cults and they're called the Babylonian Mystery Religions and you can study them in ancient history. They're all over everywhere and they're still with us today all in different forms. But it all spawned out of Babel and Semiramis was the high priestess of the whole menagerie of false systems. Now, that means that Babel, then, became the fountainhead of all false religion. That's why when false religion reaches its heyday again in the end times, the Bible calls it Babylon again in Revelation, chapter 17 and 18. So when Babylon was destroyed, here's what happened. God moved in and scattered everybody, right. Well, when He scattered everybody, everybody took all this false religion with them and it went all over the world at the same time. And it all fell under different names in different countries, but it was all the same thing. It was all this Semiramis worship. And it stayed in Rome until finally when Christianity reached Rome, Christianity became what Catholicism is today, a combination of pagan Babylonian cultism and the New Testament. And it's all mixed together. Now, let me give you some background so you understand what I'm saying. This Semiramis became known in Assyria and Nineveh as Ishtar...and all of this due to different languages. In Phoenicia she was called Ashteroth, in Egypt, Isis, in Greece, Aphrodite and in Rome she was called Venus. It was all the same high priestess of the false Babylonian religions. Now, Semiramis gave birth...according to her own religion, this is what they said...she gave birth to a son. His name was Tammuz and she said that he was born by a sunbeam. In other words she was impregnated by a sunbeam, thus, Tammuz was virgin born and she is a perpetual virgin...Semiramis. Now, when he was grown, he was attacked by a wild boar who killed him. And so Semiramis went into mourning for 40 days. And for 40 days she prayed and wept and denied herself and on the 40th day, he arose from the dead. Now, you know where Lent came from. Lent never has had any connection with the Bible. Lent comes from the pagan practice of 40 days of weeping and self-denial for the resurrection of Tammuz, the son of Semiramis and has absolutely no connection with Jesus Christ or the New Testament whatsoever. That's why we don't believe in Lent. Now, in that false story we have the basis of religions all over the place. In Phoenicia you know what Tammuz's name was?...Baal, in Egypt, Osiris, in Greece, Eros, in Rome, Cupid. It's all the same. It's the mother/child cult that's been going on through the systems of religion since Genesis 10. And, strangely, what happened when God brought the reality in Mary and Jesus, the whole pagan system got tangled up in it and we have what we know as Romanism today. This is Satan's counterfeit. And let me just give you some interesting things and I won't go into a lot of detail but there's a book entitled *The Two Babylons* by Hislop which covers all of this. But in the worship of Semiramis several interesting things were done. For example, she was called the queen of Heaven, she was worshipped by the offering of a wafer, not only that, there were always 40 days of lent, weeping over Tammuz before the feast of celebrating his resurrection, which parallels lent today. These cults also had priests. They had sacramental rites. They had the dedication of virgins to these gods from which the whole idea of a convent comes. They had purgatory, which they taught and believed and adhered to and many other things that are today a part of Roman Catholicism. Now, please understand me. I love those people who are in that and I desire that they know Jesus Christ. And it is only against the error of their theology that I speak. In Jeremiah, chapter 44, verse 15 we are introduced to this whole worship. And if you think the queen of Heaven is Mary, let me just help you to guess again. Listen to these words. Jeremiah 44:15, "Then all the men"...and they're all in idolatry here and Jeremiah's upset..."Then all the men who knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women who stood by, a great multitude, even all the people who dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah saying, 'As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we'll not hearken unto thee'...we're not gonna buy that stuff about the

Lord..."But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth"...that's really the essence of do your own thing. And what are you gonna do? Listen to what they do. We will "burn incense unto the queen of Heaven..." Did you get that? Verse 18, we will "burn incense to the queen of Heaven..." Verse 19, "when we burned incense to the queen of Heaven..." Do you know where the queen of Heaven came from? It came right out of Egyptian idolatry, Isis and Osiris. It has nothing to do with the New Testament at all. Now, lest you're unconvinced, I show you another passage in Ezekiel, chapter 8. The prophet Ezekiel is taken into the temple, the house of God and he sees that there are idols there and he's very unhappy. And just to see who these idols are he's taken to verse 13. It says, "Turn...again" and see "thou shalt see greater abominations that they do." Listen to this. "Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house..."...this is the temple in Israel..."and behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz." There it is, the worship of the virgin in Jeremiah 44, the worship of her son as they were weeping for his resurrection. That is in Ezekiel 8. Both of them, pagan idolatrous practices and have been carried over into Christianity and, thus, Mary has been given the title that rightfully belongs to a false priestess. Modern Roman Catholicism, beloved, is not Christian; it is an abominable mixture of pagan Babylonianism and the Scripture. And as I say, there are some people in the Catholic Church who have met Jesus Christ and I praise God for that, but they had to do it circumventing their own theology, if they even knew their own theology. And so there is no reason or rhyme in all of the world to assume that Mary deserves any kind of elevation above any other good and Godly woman. She does not. There is no reason or rhyme to ever pray to Mary, for Mary can't answer prayer. She needed to pray herself. That's what she was doing in a prayer meeting in Acts 1:14.

Now, I'm gonna go back to my sermon (laughter). Look at verse 14. It tells us what they were doing and this is a little bit of indication about their submission. It says "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication..." And here they are all gathered together and they're praying. It's a beautiful kind of fellowship. It's a sweet kind of fellowship. Please don't misunderstand this. The coming of the Holy Spirit did not depend on their prayer. In the largest circulating Pentecostal publication in North America, the weekly Pentecostal Evangel, there appears on the inside cover of each edition a creedal statement that introduces this thought and includes prayer as a condition of the baptism of the Spirit. The thing says this, and I quote, "We believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is given to believers who ask for it." That's the creedal statement. That is not the statement of the Word of God. They didn't have to ask for the Spirit to come. The Spirit, if you'll notice very carefully in 1:4, was "the promise of the Father." It was a sovereign dispensing of the Spirit of God apart from their prayers. They were praying because for the first time they were removed from Jesus and the only communication they could have with Him was through prayer and, thus, they were in prayer to Him. And that's the beginning of a new age for heretofore, no one had ever prayed to Jesus. And so you have a classic dispensational distinction in 1:14. You have them praying for the first time to Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father. This is a new thing and they're praying to Him up there. And it doesn't say they were asking for the Spirit. In fact, when the Spirit came in 2:2, they weren't praying at all; they were just sitting around. It says so. And the posture of prayer was to stand or kneel and they were just sitting. Their prayers had nothing to do with whether the Spirit came. That was promised of God, signed, sealed and about to be delivered in God's good time at God's great moment. And it was in no way related to their prayers. The baptism of the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with the prayer of a Christian. It has only to do with the sovereign act of God. Nothing they said, nothing they did could affect the coming of the Spirit one iota. But it's certainly understandable to realize that they came together for fellowship. They came together for prayer. They came together, not all the time, but they also came together and then dispensed of themselves and went out into the temple, rejoicing and praising God. But the thing that we need to see here is the fact of their obedience. They submitted to what the Lord told them to do.

Then in verse 15 it says, "And in those days"...some time during this 10-day period..."Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples and said..." And Peter begins to preach. And as I said, I believe Peter is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit here. I believe his commission in John 21 indicates that he was following Jesus. To say that Peter blundered here, I think, is a great mistake. And there's no indication in the Word of God at all that he did. The only indication is that he stood up and what he says seems to come right out of the mouth of the Holy Spirit as he quotes Scripture, as he recites Old Testament passages which he, himself would never be able to interpret apart from divine inspiration. "Peter stood up..." Now, notice it says in verse 15 that the number of names was 120. That's astounding. Now, there were 500 more believers probably up in Galilee, but in this part of Israel, only 120 believers. Can you imagine starting a whole worldwide movement with 120? And they weren't super-human. They were just like we are. You know, if a pastor only had 120 in his church, he'd die of discouragement. A young man came to Spurgeon one time and said, I have a complaint to make. My congregation is too small. And Spurgeon looked him in the eye and said, Perhaps they're as large as you'd like to give account for in the day of judgment. That's a shocking statement. It's a sobering statement for my own heart. One-hundred and twenty...that means they had one for every 30,000 Jews in the land of Israel. That's pretty big odds. They were small in quantity, but they were large in power. And in 30 years they were already in Rome and the gospel had spread everywhere. In fact, in some cases Paul would write to a church and he'd say already, I've been gone three weeks and your faith has spread abroad unto all people. They moved. They were witnesses energized by the Holy Spirit. They had a small beginning, but they had a great result because they let the Spirit do the work. All right, so that's all there were but they were submitting. They were waiting for God to come on them in power and do the job. Boy, obedience and submission is the key. Unless you're willing to just be what God wants you to be and to obey God at the very point of your beginning your ministry, you're never gonna see what God can do. They submitted to His will and were obedient.

All right, then we see secondly the suicide of a disciple and this we'll see in verses 15 and following. And this is the story of, really, what happened to Judas. And it's a tragic story. We've covered it several times in John's gospel as we met Judas, so we'll not do it at length here. But "Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples..." And he, of course, has been commissioned to lead and now he's taking that responsibility and he's going to lead. And as I say, I believe this is legitimate and I believe it's the way God wanted it. He wouldn't have come this far and then started His church with the wrong people. I believe the choice of Matthias was of the Lord. And so Peter stands up because he knows there's a problem. They don't understand, for example, what happened to Judas. And there's this fearful thing in the back of their mind that maybe God can't always hold onto everybody. I mean, He lost Judas. Maybe God's plan went haywire. Plus, when they remember in Matthew 19:38 that Jesus had said to the disciples you'll sit on 12 thrones and they recognize there's gonna be 12 thrones but there's only 11 guys, who gets the 12thone. And there was always the latent possibility that there would become a big hassle over who got to be number 12. And so in order to pull it all together and make sure God had just as many as He needed and just the right ones that He wanted before the church was born, Peter acts under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to bring it to pass. And he stands up in verse 16 and says this, "Men and brethren, this Scripture..." Notice, he's not talking out of his own mouth. This is not just Peter shooting off his mouth again. He's got a Biblical context. "...this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spoke..." And there you have a definition of inspiration. It is the Holy Spirit using the mouth of the writer or the pen of the writer to speak or to write. So it says, "Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spoke before concerning Judas who was guide to them that took Jesus." You say, what does this mean? It means that Peter wants them to

know that what Judas did was all prophesied by the Scripture by David way back in the Old Testament. You say, why does he want them to know that? So that they don't think that God lost control, that God's plan got fouled up. Peter says, men, the absence of Judas was all in the Scriptures way back as far as David. That's a part of the plan, friends. God's plan didn't get messed up. God isn't in the business of losing those that He takes. Jesus said in John, chapter 17 that I have lost none of them that Thou gavest Me "except the son of perdition in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled," you see. Because somebody would have said, Oh, you haven't lost any of them? What about Judas? So he added to that, "except him" because that fulfills the Scripture. Did you know that the betrayal of Judas was planned into the plan of salvation? God didn't make Judas betray Jesus, but God planned what Judas would do into the redemptive plan. Just like God uses Godless men throughout the Old Testament to accomplish His purpose, so He used a Godless Judas to bring about a Godly end. That's how God works. He works through men. Whether those men are regenerate or unregenerate doesn't really matter. He'll use those men to accomplish His purpose either way. And we've seen this in the past. Remember Caiaphas, how He spoke prophecy through the mouth of Caiaphas who had no idea what he was saying and was about as abominable an individual as ever was? And so Peter says, men, this is something that God said would happen through the mouth of David. That means it's in the Psalms. And he says, "this Scripture." What Scripture? Well, it's in verse 20 and we'll get to it in a minute. He just announces the Scripture in verse 16 and he quotes it in verse 20. He wants them to know that this isn't just old Peter shooting off his mouth again but this is right out of the Word. He wants them to know that he's speaking under the inspiration of God and so he says from the Scripture of the Old Testament, it was designated by the Holy Spirit through David that Judas would come to this end. Verse 17, "For he was numbered with us and had obtained part in this ministry." Judas had received by divine appointment an important office. He had been called to be a disciple. You say, was he saved? No, he was never saved. That's so clear from John 6. It says this. Verse 64, Jesus talks to His disciples and He says, "But there are some of you that believe not." Now that's designating clearly. Then He says this: "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not and who should betray Him." And who did betray Him?...Judas. So He said of Judas, you believe not. Judas never believed. In 70 he says, I have chosen you twelve and one of you is"...what?..."a devil." He knew he'd never believed, never been converted, never believed at all. He was in it for the money from beginning to end. He got into the treasury. It's obvious why. That's where his interest was. He was stealing from the bag all the way along and he got all bent out of shape when they decided to spend some money on Jesus in Bethany and said, hey, let's sell that and get the money and give to the poor. And John said, he didn't want to give it to the poor; he said that 'cause he kept the bag. Money was his whole thing. And finally he sold Jesus for about \$20. He was money hungry from start to finish and figured he was gonna get in on a political kingdom. Now, Peter says that he was numbered with the disciples and obtained part in this ministry but he never was real. He never was a believer. But, you know, the tragedy of Judas is that he could have been. He could have been. At any moment he could have turned to Jesus Christ. Jesus warned him gently all along through his life. He warned him and warned him and he never turned. He never turned. When I graduated from seminary I wrote my thesis on Judas, a character analysis of Judas Iscariot and all of the passages that involved Judas. And I became more and more saddened as I studied that for an entire year over the tragedy of such a beginning and such a life lived in the sunlight of the presence of Jesus Christ that ends in such abject horror and tragedy. But Judas stands out for all time as the classic apostate. A Judas could never surface in any other light than the light of Christianity, which is so brilliant that he would be made into what he is. The greatest tragedy of lost opportunity that ever lived was Judas Iscariot. He was numbered with us. He was part of what we did but he was never for real. And when he went out, it was no accident and God's plan didn't get messed up. It was in God's plan that this is exactly what would happen because God knew it had to be this way to bring about the death of Christ. You say,

well, what happened to Judas? I mean, what happened to him now? Where did he go? What did he do after he betrayed Jesus? Matthew 27 tells us in tragic words what happened. Verse 3, "Then Judas, who had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented"...and I'll tell you what kind of repentance it was; it wasn't Godly..."and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders saying, 'I have sinned in that I have betrayed" the Son of God?...no..."I have betrayed innocent blood." Judas' repentance was only on the basis that Jesus wasn't a criminal, not that Jesus the Son of God, you see. Judas' was not a converting repentance; it was only that he had betrayed somebody who was no criminal. At least he had enough moral fortitude to be convinced of that. And, of course, "They said unto him, 'What is that to us? See thou to it.'" What do we care whether He's innocent or not? We got what we wanted. "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, 'It is not lawful to put them in the treasury because it is the price of blood.'" Oh, sanctimonious. That kind of hypocrisy is nauseous. So "they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in. Wherefore, the field was called, the field of blood unto this day"...Aceldama, field of blood. It's called the field of blood because it was purchased with blood money. You've heard of blood money, haven't you? This is where it all comes from...blood money, Judas money.

Now, look at verse 18. "Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity..." Now, of course, he didn't do it himself. He had since already been dead, but it was with his money and so in that sense, his purchase. "...and falling headlong"...this is what tells us that he had an aborted attempt to hang himself. He evidently tried to hang himself but it didn't work and he "falling headlong...burst asunder in the midst and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem, insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldema"...which is Aramaic and it is "to say the field of blood." Evidently, Judas tried to hang himself on one of the rocky parapets that surround that field which is somewhere between the flux of the Valley of Hinnom and the Valley of Kidron. And in that particular field, elevated, there are very rocky areas. And, evidently, he had tried to suspend himself, maybe with a branch over the edge or something and hang himself. But somehow the rope had snapped and he had fallen on the rocks below and burst asunder. What a tragedy. What an unbelievable tragedy. Judas' life snapped out. The classic apostate who, as the writer of Hebrews says to us, had departed from the living God with "an evil heart of unbelief." He knew everything there was to know about Jesus Christ, walked away and there was nothing but damnation written on that man. Jesus said of him, "It would have been better for him if"...what?..."if he'd never been born"...much, much better. It's so vivid to see the description here even of Peter. And the early church hated Judas so much that after the New Testament was completed, I read many of the writings that were not Biblical writings, but were written about Judas, and some of them were ridiculous as people tried to paint Judas so horrible because of the hatred that grew about Judas. Papias said that Judas got some kind of disease in him and began to swell up so that he couldn't get through the gates that the wagons went through. Other writers said that Judas was infested with maggots until he exploded all over the city and all kinds of horrible things which are ridiculous but point up the tremendous [hatred] for Judas. Well, I don't think that's necessarily the right attitude toward Judas. I think the attitude toward Judas is a tremendous sense of sorrow, a tremendous sense of awareness that any man who lives in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ and walks away from that light brings upon himself damnation upon damnation. To know the truth and walk away from it, to sin willfully means there's no sacrifice for sin. And of how much sorer punishment...shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and...counted the blood of the covenant...an unholy thing...?" Judas...tragedy upon tragedy.

The Scripture, verse 20, Judas fulfilled it. It's no accident that Judas dropped out "For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate and let no man dwell therein..." In other words,

Peter is saying it is prophesied by David...that's Psalms 69:25...that the habitation of Judas would be desolate, that he would be removed, that Judas would be wiped out. And then in a purer sense, he would really never be replaced. And then it says, "his bishopric"...or his oversight, his overseeing, his episkopos which means overseer..."let another take." And that's Psalms 109:8. He quotes two Psalms. And this simply means that he would be replaced. Judas' place removed, somebody else placed in, not to take the place of Judas...nobody could ever do that...that was a place completely just taken away...but a 12th brought in. So you see that Judas leaving, Matthias coming was a fulfillment of prophecy. Do you see what Peter's saying to them? Trust God. God didn't blow the plan. Things didn't go wrong. This is the way God planned it from the very beginning. It's all in the Old Testament.

And that only leaves Peter to carry out the selection of the next disciple and this is just a simple little narrative here. He gives the requirements for one who is to fill the bill. Verse 21...We've got to fill up Judas' place; here is the selection of the disciple. "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us beginning from the baptism of John unto the same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection." There you have two first qualifications for an apostle. Number one, he had to be with Jesus from the baptism of John to the ascension. He had to be one who was around for the whole period of time. Number two, he had to be a witness of the glorified, resurrected Christ...at the end of verse 22, "a witness with us of the resurrection." So whoever was going to take over this oversight that Judas had forsaken, and rightly so, was to be one who had been around from the baptism of Jesus Christ until the ascension. Some say the apostle Paul was the right one here and that Matthias was wrong and Peter was out of order and it should have been Paul. Paul doesn't fit those qualifications. Paul was an apostle, but he was an apostle of a different order. He fits two of the qualifications. Number one, he did see Christ in post-resurrection glory on the road to Damascus. And number three, the third qualification, number two for Paul, he was chosen by God. The first two qualifications, the life of Christ and seeing His resurrection, the third qualification is in verse...well, from 23, on. He has to be chosen by God. That's the third one and Paul fits two of those. So he was an apostle of a unique sense who did see the resurrected Christ in glory on the road to Damascus and who was chosen by God to be an apostle. And because there might be some doubt as to his legitimacy as an apostle he starts out every letter he writes with that same claim. I am an apostle. I'm a real one. God called me. Jesus chose me or some form like that. But he is an apostle of a different era in a different season.

All right, so out of this group he's gotta get somebody who fits the two qualifications of being around the whole time and seeing Him in resurrection. Verse 23, "They appointed two"...and here are two..."Joseph, called Barsabbas...surnamed Justus"...got a lot of names, Joseph, Barsabbas, Justus...and just plain old simple one-name Matthias. Now, here are the two that they have to choose from. And we don't know anything about either one of them 'cause they're never mentioned. And that's kind of a beautiful thought. You know, it's not always the shining lights, it's not always the stars on the horizon that the Lord chooses to do the things He wants done, is it? Sometimes it's the people you don't even know that are really moving and doing the job for God. And here are two guys that nobody knows from anybody else. We have no idea who they are. They don't appear before or after this.

Now, the third qualification, they had to be chosen by God, so verse 24 says "they prayed"...everybody prayed, 120 of them..."and said, 'Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which of these two Thou hast chosen"...I mean, Jesus chose the first 11; He's gonna chose the

12th. Who's it gonna be? Verse 25, "That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell"...and then this shocking statement..."that he might go to his own place." Boy, that's shocking statement. Hell is the place where people belong who go there. Did you know that? They go there because it's their own place. Did you know that death doesn't change anything; it only crystallizes into permanency what you are in life. And by your own choice death becomes the securing of your own place. When Judas went to Hell it wasn't out of the ordinary. That's where he belonged for that's where he chose to go. He went to his own place...a fearful statement. Every man has a place in eternity that is his own by what he does with Jesus Christ.

Well, it says in verse 26 "they gave forth their lots and the lot fell on Matthias and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." You know what I like about this? I've often thought, well, what about poor old Joseph, Barsabbas, Justus? Did you ever think about that? It doesn't say, And he demanded a recount (laughter) and went out in a huff and joined another group (laughter). No, he didn't do that. I like him. I want to talk to him in Heaven and see how he felt about that. But I imagine he hung in there and did a job. But Matthias was chosen. I don't know why. I know who chose him and that's enough for me. Right? It's so important that we be careful lest we speak against God's ministers. Do you know that? We're never to bring an accusation against an elder unless in the face of other ones. We're never to degrade or speak low of any of God's ministers even though we disagree with them. We are walking on very tenuous ground to do such, to be critical of God's ministers, no matter whether you agree or disagree with them. There are points of evaluation in theology. There is no place of criticism of another man who has been called of God to a ministry even though perhaps it's not all you think it should be. "Speak not evil against God's anointed"...very dangerous. So Matthias was chosen and he was accepted, I'm sure. One of God's chosen men, chosen by Jesus Himself. You say, well, what was the method of choosing? Well, they drew lots. You say, oh, no, gambling. No, it's not gambling. There wasn't any money involved. But, God, in the Old Testament had built this kind of thing of His will being exercised through very physical manifestations. Sometimes God would talk right out of Heaven. Right? Sometimes God would talk through the mouth of a prophet. There were different ways. But one of the ways that God had of expressing His will was through the drawing of lots, whether you call it drawing straws or rolling a little _____ in a basket and pulling out one or the other and it would determine the answer. Whatever way, there were many ways of doing it. And God chose lots and it's a beautiful thing because watch this one. This was the last act of the Old Testament era. Did you get that? One more verse, Acts 2:1, is the New Testament age, the age of the Spirit. The last dispensational act was an act consistent with the old dispensation, drawing of lots. You'll never hear it again the rest of the New Testament because in this age we don't need that kind of direction from God. Where do we get our direction?...from the indwelling Holy Spirit who "shall lead us into all"...what?..."truth." But in that age, without the indwelling Spirit, God moved in very physical ways to reveal His will and so they drew lots. And God could handle that problem. You say, well, how do you know they didn't make a mistake?...'cause God was handling the problem. They prayed and God chose through the selection of lots. In fact, I think of a verse in Proverbs 16 that perhaps will define that for you...16:33. "The lot is cast into the lap but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." You see? The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord. The Lord is controlling the situation. Oh, the Lord can control the littlest details, can't He?...just little, tiny details. Just the other day our littlest boy, Mark, who is an accident going somewhere to happen (laughter) hooked his eyelid on a cup hook and just every time he moved he just tore the inside of his eyelid. And just to think that that little tiny eye and that very pointed sharp hook and how that the Lord protected that eye from losing its sight and he had to be released from that after he was caught there. And I've thought to myself time and time again and the Lord strengthened my faith even this week to see how the Lord can superintend the most minute little detail for His own glory. And don't you think we haven't been giving glory to the Lord for preserving that little brown eye. But

God can take care of the smallest little detail. The lots...no problem.

So what do we have here? Oh, we have many lessons, but most of all we have the marvelous thrilling lesson that God chooses His own to do His service and then we have the fearful lesson that every man dies and goes to his own place. Matthias found his place among the beloved. Judas went to his own place in Hell. For you who are Christians I say this. I trust you've learned the beauty of the simple submission of these to the will of God. Have you learned that? To you that are not Christians, I say to you, I hope you understand that when you die and leave this world, you go to your own place, be it a place prepared for you by Jesus in the Father's house or be it Hell, it's the place that you've chosen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2017 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).