

Acts: Birth of the Church
The Rest of the Story Part II
Acts 1:12-26
Notes

¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

¹⁵At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, ¹⁶“Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry.” ¹⁸(Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. ¹⁹And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) ²⁰“For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his homestead be made desolate, And let no one dwell in it’; and, ‘Let another man take his office.’ ²¹Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—²²beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us— one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” ²³So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. ²⁴And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men,

show which one of these two You have chosen²⁵ to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.”²⁶ And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles. (Acts 1:12-26)

I. The Priority of Prayer (vv. 12-14)

The first thing we notice in our passage is the disciples followed Jesus’ instructions and they made prayer a priority.

Luke tells us that Jesus’ ascension to heaven took place in Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives and that was about ½ to ¾ of a mile away from the house they were staying at.

They went up to the upper room, more than likely on the third floor and they gathered together with “one mind.”

They were waiting on Jesus, trusting him to provide, but they really did not know what to do, but notice what they did do.

They were united in their obedience and they “continually devoted themselves to prayer.”

“Continually”- without ceasing

“Devoted”- to persevere and not faint

“To prayer”- in seeking God.

They may not have known what to do, but they did what they had to do-Pray.

The primary characteristic that marked their lives here was prayer.

Prayer was the hallmark of the church in its early days.

In the book of Acts alone, prayer is mentioned 31 times.

We may wonder how God will work, what he will do, but we know this, there is no effective witness for Jesus without the pouring out of the Spirit of God and the pouring of the Spirit is preceded by genuine, continual, devoted prayer.

But many of us, if we are honest do not pray like this.

When we learn to value prayer as spending time with God, we will make it a priority in our lives.

I can tell you this, when you don’t know what to do, begin with prayer.

Prayer is one of the ways God provides for believer.

I want to focus on two areas with this idea:

Corporate/family- if we desire true, life-changing revival in our family, in our community, in our county, and state we must be a church who prioritizes prayer.

Revival only comes after persistent prevailing prayer.

J. Edwin Orr, “no great spiritual awakening has begun anywhere in the world apart from united prayer.”

Matthew Henry, “When God wants to do something special in the world, he first gets his people to praying.”

Individual- if you are looking for a move of God in your life be a person who is prevailing in prayer.

Be a person who is seeking God’s will, who is asking God to reveal hidden sin in your own heart, who is humbling yourself to God and his word.

The prayer that took place in Jerusalem that day preceded the Christian expansion of the world.

What will your persistent prevailing prayers bring to pass?

May we be a church, be a people who persist in prayer.

II. The Precedence of Prophecy (vv. 15-20)

After they finished praying Peter stood up to declare from the Scriptures.

He recounted Judas’ betrayal and subsequent suicide and then used the OT to give instruction for their current situation.

Peter used the precedent of biblical prophecy to interpret his current situation.

Peter viewed Judas’ act of betrayal as a fulfillment of Scripture citing Psalm 69 and he used Psalm 109 to determine the need to replace Judas.

Let’s pause and ask a legitimate question: Why replace Judas?

Peter felt “it was necessary” based on Psalm 69:25 and 109:8.

The apostles primary job, post Jesus’ ascension, was to share in his teaching and be witnesses to his resurrection and ascension.

As such, the role of apostle was limited to the Twelve.

It was a unique irreplaceable office with no apostolic succession.

James was not replaced after his death in Acts 12:2.

It was necessary to replace Judas because he had abandoned his position. His betrayal, not his death, forfeited his place in the circle for the Twelve. Even after James, death he was considered an apostle.

The apostles number corresponded to the twelve tribes of Israel and in a real sense they represent a true restored Israel.

What Peter did was look at their current situation and then he went to the Bible to help him understand his current situation.

In doing so, two things happened. He better understood Judas' betrayal and the second, he learned what to do next.

When making life decisions, consult God's word for his revealed will

It is strange how often we are wondering what to do as a church, as individuals and we never consult God's word.

When making life decisions, use the Bible to interpret circumstances and inform decisions

As believers our first response to any situation or circumstance should be prayer and the second should be the Word of God.

God's word supplies us with all we need in how to love God, honor him, and serve him.

God's word supplies us with all we need in how to love people and serve them.

The Bible shows us God's revealed will for living a redeemed life.

That means we don't have to wonder whether we should be making disciples, praying, living holy lives, bearing fruit, loving people who aren't lovable, being faithful in marriage, or caring for the needy.

As you are searching the Bible for wisdom in making a decision, start with what you do know.

Peter and the others did not know who the next apostle would be to replace Judas, but they did know from Scripture that he needed replacing.

So often we try to find God's concealed will, that which is not explicit in Scripture while at the same time ignoring his revealed will.

EXAMPLES

Who to marry- is the person a practicing believer or not?

Job- will this job make me sacrifice time with my family as a disciple maker to my wife and kids?

Purchases- am I first giving a tithe to the Lord? Will this purchase keep me from helping others should a need arise?

Are you using the Bible to guide your life?

By having regular times of Bible intake in our lives, we grow in wisdom in how to interpret our daily lives.

III. The Provision in the Plan (vv. 21-26)

God provided all that was necessary for the success of his plan.

After Peter's message from the OT the community of believers established the criteria for the replacement: he had to be with them the entire time of Jesus' ministry.

From this criterion two men were chosen, Justus and Matthias.

Then, and watch this, they prayed again.

They followed the biblical criteria then they trusted God.

“God you know our hearts, show us.”

And they cast lots. Casting lots was a practice used for centuries in Israel to determine God’s will between two objects. The need to cast lots ceased at Pentecost with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.

They followed the Bible and then trusted God.

God will always provide you with all you need to complete your part in his kingdom plan.

God will empower you in this life, he will supply you with all you need to live for him and to bring him glory.

Too, often we try to rush the process. We don’t take the time to pray, earnestly pray. We don’t take the time to search the Scriptures.

We don’t take the time to discuss with wise brothers and sisters.

More often than not, we simply jump into a situation with no prayer, no plan, and no Scripture and wonder why it blows up in our face.

As you pray and read the Bible, you will discover both, God’s plan for your life and his provision for your life

When trying to make a decision in life use these steps:

1. Pray
2. Gather the facts
3. Pray some more
4. Read the Bible
5. Pray some more
6. Consult wise believers
7. Trust in God’s sovereignty, make a decision, and go with it.

The Father knows if we truly desire to please him with our decision, and if things don’t work out, that doesn’t change his love for us.