



*God Is Government*

*Isaiah 33:22*

*“For the LORD is our judge, the  
LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD  
is our king; he will save us.”*

**TEACHINGS OF YESHUA HAMASHIACH**  
**BIBLICAL AND WORLD HISTORY MASTERCLASS**

**A Study of Acts**  
**Chapter 1:12-26**  
**July 14, 2024**



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**Acts Chapter 1:12-26**



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## **Acts 1:12-26 –Replacing the Traitor**

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. 15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) 16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. 17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. 18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. 20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take. 21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. 23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, 25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. 26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.



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## **Acts 1:12-26 –Replacing the Traitor**

It is a marvelous and reassuring truth that our sovereign, omnipotent God works His will through men. His providential control over events takes into consideration all the acts of human wills – even those opposed to Him, such as Haman, Herod, and Judas. Scripture is filled with examples of God’s using humans to accomplish His purposes. A graphic illustration of this use can be noted in the unique battle cry of Gideon's army. “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!” (Judges 7:20). God involved Gideon actively in effecting His sovereign will. In Exodus, He used a combination of components to part the Red Sea and allow Israel to cross. His own supernatural power, an east wind, and Moses’ striking of the water with a stick.

Even in God’s work of redemption, He has called certain men to significant participation. Men have been used throughout the unfolding drama of the kingdom of God. After His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ chose the apostles to set down His truth and to continue His work of evangelizing the world in John 15:16. He reminded them, ‘You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you’ (Luke 6:13; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11). In Acts 10:39-42, Peter described both God’s sovereign choice of the apostles, and their mission.



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*39 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: 40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; 41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.*

- Acts 10:39-42



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The call to preach is still not a matter of human recruitment but of divine appointment. Paul wrote in Romans 10:14-15, “14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” For too many in our day claim the right to ascend the place of preaching, yet have never been called by Him. They are like the false prophets of Jeremiah’s day, of whom the Lord said, “I did not send these prophets, but they ran. I did not speak to them, but they prophesied” (Jeremiah 23:21; 23:32: 29:31).

As the book of Acts opened, Jesus equipped the apostles with the necessary resources to launch the completion of His unfinished work of gathering the elect for the kingdom. In addition to those resources, He wanted to be sure that the proper men were involved in carrying out that task. Accordingly, a replacement had to be chosen for the dead traitor Judas Iscariot. The passage may be understood by sorting it into three sections, the submission of the disciples, the suicide of a disciple, and the selection of a disciple.



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## **Acts 1:12-26 –Replacing the Traitor The Submission of the Disciples**

*12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. 15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)*

- Acts 1:12-15





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In His final charge to them before His ascension, Jesus had commanded the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for divine enablement that was to be given them in the coming of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). It was necessary for them to wait, because Jesus had made clear that the Spirit could not be given until He returned to the Father (John 16:7). In compliance with their Lord’s command, the apostles **returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem** (the place of His ascension). Luke adds the latter phrase for the benefit of Theophilus, who no doubt was unfamiliar with Palestinian geography. **The mount called Olivet** is the Mount of Olives, which rises to overlook Jerusalem from across the Kidron Valley to the east (Zechariah 14:4). More a hill than a mountain. It rises some 400 feet above the floor of the Kidron Valley. That makes it only about 200 feet higher in elevation than Jerusalem itself. It was from the backside of the Mount, near the little village of Bethany, that the Lord ascended (Luke 24:50). That site was probably chosen for its privacy and nearness to Jerusalem.



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A **Sabbath day’s journey** was the maximum distance one was permitted to travel on the Sabbath under rabbinic law. It was fixed at 2,000 cubits, or about one half to three quarters of a mile (Joshua 3:4). That distance derives, according to tradition, from Israel’s encampments during the forty years of wilderness wanderings. The farthest tents were held to have been 2,000 cubits from the tabernacle, although Scripture nowhere specifies that distance. Since work was prohibited on the Sabbath, the farthest anyone would need to travel was the 2,000 cubits to the tabernacle to worship. Consequently, a **Sabbath day’s journey** became synonymous with 2,000 cubits.

**When the apostles had entered Jerusalem, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying.** Houses commonly had upper rooms, which were used for a variety of purposes. This one must have been part of a large house, since it accommodated 120 people (Acts 1:15). Its exact location is unknown. It was probably where the Last Supper had been celebrated and where Jesus had appeared to them after His resurrection. Some have identified it with the house of John Mark’s mother (Acts 12:12), but that identification is uncertain. IN any case, it could not have been far from the Eastern Gate of the city. A Sabbath day’s journey from he back side of Mount of Olives would have put he apostles just inside the city walls.



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By this time, the apostles must have gained a measure of courage from their encounters with the risen Lord. Immediately following the crucifixion, they remained in seclusion behind locked doors (John 20:19). Now, however, they “were continually in the temple, praising God” (Luke 24:53), returning to the upper room for occasional meetings.

The eleven remaining apostles, **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** (also known as Thaddeus; Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18), were joined by others. They included **the women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers. The women** no doubt included Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary and Martha, and Salome, among others. Jesus’ **brothers** were His biological siblings, the natural children of Mary and Joseph. Mark 6:3 gives their names as James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. James and Judas (Jude) figure prominently in the New Testament. James was the first head of the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 15:13) and author of the epistle that Bears his name. Judas wrote the epistle of Jude. They had become believers after their earlier skepticism. In fact, as recently as eight months before this, John 7:5 records that “not even His brothers were believing in Him.” Their conversations are not recorded in Scripture, but we can surmise that James was converted when his “half-brother” appeared to him after the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7). It was perhaps through James’ efforts that the rest of the Lord’s brothers came to faith to Him. However their conversations took place, they became devoted followers of Christ, whom they acknowledged as Lord, God, and Savior.



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Much legend, myth, and faulty dogma have arisen over the centuries in connection with **Mary the mother of Jesus**. In contrast to the inordinate devotion to her in some religious systems, the Bible never exalts her. In fact, this is the last reference to her in Scripture; she does not appear again in Acts, not in any of the epistles. In Mark 3:31-32, she along with Jesus' brothers, tried to assume some special privileges based upon their earthly relationship to Him. Jesus replied, “Who are My mother and My brothers?” And looking about on those who were sitting around Him, He said, “Behold, My mother and MY brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:33-35). IN other words, their earthly, familial relationship to Him gained them no special spiritual recognition or privileges. That truth is applied specifically to Mary in Luke 11:27-28: “And it came about while He said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him, ‘Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed.’ But He said, ON the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it.”



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Mary was a woman of singular virtue, or she would never have been chosen to be the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. For that role she deserves respect and honor (Luke 1:42). But she was a sinner who exalted God her Savior. She referred to herself as a humble bondservant to God, who needed mercy (Luke 1:46-50). To other prayers to her and elevate her to a role as co-redemptrix with Christ is to go beyond the bounds of Scripture and her own confession. The silence of the epistles, which form the doctrinal core of the New Testament, about Mary is especially significant. If she played the important role in salvation assigned her by the Roman Catholic Church, or if she were to receive prayers as an intercessor between believers and Christ, surely the New Testament would have spelled that out. Nor do such Roman Catholic teachings as her virgin birth and bodily assumption into heaven find any biblical support; they are fabrications.

The unbiblical elevation of Mary has its roots in paganism, some of it dating back to the tower of Babel and Nimrod’s wife Semiramis. She, along her son Tammuz, formed the basis for the many counterfeit mother-child cults of antiquity. The Roman syncretism of such pagan beliefs with Christianity led Catholicism to unbiblical teaching about Mary.



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All those gathered in the upper room **with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer. With one mind** expresses the spiritual unity that characterized the early fellowship. **Continually devoting** is a strong expression, denoting persistence in prayer. Contrary to the view of some, they were not praying for the baptism with the Holy Spirit. They had not been told to pray for that but to wait for it, and they knew it was coming soon. The coming of the Spirit did not require or depend on their prayers but on God’s promise. They were praying because they were physically separated from the ascended Jesus, and prayer was their only means of communicating with Him. They may have been asking Hi to return soon and in the meantime to grant them all they would need to be faithful. This was the beginning of the pattern of prayer offered in the name of Jesus (John 14:13-14) and this marks another of the many historical transitions found in the book of Acts.



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At some unspecified time during the ten days of fellowship and prayer between the ascension and Pentecost, **Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren** and began to speak. Luke adds the parenthetical note that the **gathering of** believers in the upper room numbered **about one hundred and twenty persons**. From that small nucleus (plus about one hundred more in Galilee) the Christian church was born. Many pastors would be discouraged with such a small congregation. One such man came to Charles Spurgeon's devastating reply was that perhaps the man had as many people as he cared to give account for in the day of judgment. The 120 gathered in the upper room were small in number but had counted the cost and were willing to take up the cross and follow their Lord. They believed in Him fully. From the modest beginning, Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire in an amazingly short time span. In spite of repeated attempts to stamp out the movement. It eventually prevailed and became the dominate force in Western culture for nearly two thousand years.

Instead of launching out on their own, they patiently, submissively waited for the promised Holy Spirit to come and give them the power they needed. Subsequent history testifies to the impact of that patience.



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## **Acts 1:12-26 –Replacing the Traitor The Suicide of a Disciple**

*16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. 17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. 18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. 20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.*

- Acts 1:16-20





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The joy of those gathered together was tempered by one sad reflection, the tragic hypocrisy and suicide of Judas. As the acknowledged leader of the apostles. Peter took charge. Some were no doubt wondering how the detection of Judas fit into God’s plan, or how Jesus’ words in Matthew 19:28 were now to be fulfilled. In that passage, He promised the apostles, “That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, acts to allay those doubts and avoid any possible quibbling over who would occupy the twelfth throne.

The **Scripture** refers to the passages quoted in verse 20, already in Peter’s mind as he leads up to it. Peter was not offering his own opinion but rather affirming a word from God. As is the case with all predictive Scripture, the prophecies he was about to quote **had to be fulfilled**. God’s Word is true, and what He predicts must certainly come to pass. In Psalms 115:3, the psalmist writes, “Our God is in the heavens. He does whatever He pleases.” God Himself adds in Isaiah 46:10, “My purposes will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure” (Joshua 23:14; 1 Kings 8:15, 20, 24). Isaiah added that God’s word never returns empty but always accomplishes its purpose (Isaiah 55:11).



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Peter characterized the Scripture he was about to quote as that **which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David**. No clearer description of inspiration can be found anywhere in Scripture. The Bible was written when “men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:21). Peter reassured his hearers that despite Judas’s treachery in acting as **a guide to those who arrested Jesus**, God’s word was being fulfilled. Judas’s betrayal was, in fact, crucial to the plan of the Sovereign who predicted it in the Old Testament.

Although he **was counted among** the apostles **and received his portion in their ministry**, Judas was obviously never saved. Jesus expressed that fact in John 6, when He told the apostles, “But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.” (John 6:64, 70-71; John 17:12). Judas was placed among the apostles because it was essential for him to betray Jesus. God did not force Judas into that betrayal against the man’s will. Jesus even said of Judas that it would have been better for him if he had never been born, because of the choice he made (Matthew 26:24; Luke 22:22). Instead, He used Judas’s evil intent to accomplish His own predetermined purposes (Acts 2:23).



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Judas represents the greatest example of wasted opportunity in all of history. He had the rare privilege, given to only twelve men, of living and ministering with Jesus Christ. God incarnate, for more than three years. He had the same convincing overwhelming opportunity to come to faith in Him as the eleven did. Yet his motives for following Jesus were never anything but selfish. He no doubt shared the common Jewish hope that Messiah would deliver the nation from the yoke of the hated Romans. When it became obvious that was not Jesus' plan, and he would not get the wealth and power he wanted, Judas decided to cut his losses and get out with whatever he could salvage. Betraying the incarnate Son of God to the authorities for a paltry sum seemed a way to gain some compensation. The greed he evidenced by that act was another indicator of his wicked heart. There had been a preview of this avarice when, after Jesus' anointing with costly perfume by Mary, Judas indignantly exclaimed, “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii, and given to the poor People?” (John 1:5). His real concern was evident from John's cutting editorial comment in verse 6: “Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.” Driven by disappointment and greed, this most tragic of all men squandered inestimable privilege, betrayed the Lord for thirty pieces of silver, and damned his soul to hell.



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Judas’s tragic life reached a damning climax in his suicide. In a parenthetical statement for Theophilus’s benefit and ours. Luke describes the scene: **Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And 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.** Judas did not, of course, purchase the field in question. But because it was purchased with the money paid to him by the Jewish leaders, Luke refers to Judas as the buyer. Feeling unbearable guilt and remorse (but not genuine repentance) for his betrayal of the innocent Lord, he returned the money he had received to the Jewish authorities (Matthew 27:3-8). They hypocritically refused to keep it, because it was blood money. Instead, **with the price of his wickedness**, the legalistic, but spiritually dead, leaders **acquired a field**, which **these living in Jerusalem** named **Hakeldama (Field of Blood)** since it was purchased with blood money. The traditional site for this field is south of Jerusalem in the Valley of Hinnom, near its intersection with the Kidron Valley. Because the soil there is suitable for use in pottery, Matthew refers to it as the Potter’s Field.



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Meanwhile, Judas, overwhelmed by his accusing conscience, committed suicide. Matthew records that he hanged himself (Matthew 27:5), whereas Luke here records that **falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.** Luke’s account supplements Matthew’s and does not contradict it. Evidently the tree Judas chose overlooked a cliff. Either the rope or the branch broke, or the knot failed to hold under the weight of his body. He then plunged to a gruesome death of the rocks below. The imagined scene is depicted in a relief on a medieval cathedral, in which demons are shown pulling on Judas’s legs to hasten his death.

As already noted, Judas’s tortured life and death did fulfill Old Testament prophecy. As Peter indicates, Judas’s treachery in betrayal, his death, and his replacement were foretold by David in the Psalms. Psalm 55:12-15 clearly predicts the betrayal. Psalm 69:25 is the source of the prediction of his removal from office. **Let his homestead be made desolate and let no man dwell in it.** Psalm 109:8 promises his replacement: **His office let another man take.** All those quotes are in contexts that point to the time of Messiah’s death, and the Holy Spirit clearly affirms that they speak of Judas. Peter is using the most compelling proof, Scripture, to reassure his hearers that Judas’s defection, and their choice of his replacement, were all part of God’s plan.



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## **Acts 1:12-26 –Replacing the Traitor The Selection of a Disciple**

*“21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. 23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, 25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. 26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. ”*

- Acts 1:21-26



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Some have argued that Peter and the apostles were mistaken to choose a replacement for Judas. Paul, they assume, was really the Lord’s choice as the twelfth apostle. Since there are only to be twelve thrones in the kingdom (Matthew 19:28). The twelfth must be for the greatest apostle, Paul. Nothing in this passage, however, indicates that this action is wrong. It is conceivable that the Lord would allow such a crucial error in such a crucial office at the very beginning of His church. Why would He take pains to provide the apostles with all the proper resources, and then allow them to choose the other eleven. And while Paul was in no way inferior to the twelve, he was not on of their number. By his own testimony he was “in no respect ... inferior to the most eminent apostles. Even though I am a nobody” (2 Corinthians 12:11). He was a unique apostle. The mission of the twelve was primarily to the nation of Israel, while he was the apostle sent to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13).

Peter initiates the selection process by listing the requirements for Judas’s successor. He must **have accompanied the apostles all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them – beginning with the baptism of John, until the day that He was taken up.** He would have to have witnessed the Lord’s entire earthly ministry, from the inception at His baptism to its culmination at the ascension. It should be noted that Paul did not meet that qualification.



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## **Acts 1:12-26 –Replacing the Traitor The Selection of a Disciple**

The second requirement was that the one selected be a **witness with** the other eleven of His resurrection. He must have seen the resurrected Christ, since the resurrection was a central theme of apostolic preaching (Acts 2:24, 32; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33, 34, 37). All the apostles were to be personal eyewitnesses of the risen Lord.

Two men met those requirements: **Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias.** Nothing is known of either individual: they appear nowhere else in Scripture. Knowing that the third requirement for an apostle was to be chosen by the Lord, those gathered **prayed, and said, “Thou, Lord who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.”** The last phrase is a shocking statement. Judas, and all others who go to hell, belong there; it is the place of their own choosing. It belongs to them, and they to it!





*God Is Government*

*Isaiah 33:22*

*“For the LORD is our judge, the  
LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD  
is our king; he will save us.”*

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## **Acts 1:12-26 –Replacing the Traitor The Selection of a Disciple**

The fact that they prayed for the Lord to choose Judas’s replacement offers further proof that the choice of Matthias was no mistake. The Lord could have answered their prayers by telling them to wait, then added Paul to the ranks of the twelve, if that had been His plan.

After praying, they drew lots for them – as accepted Old Testament method for determining God’s will. Proverbs 16:33 says, “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord” (Leviticus 16:8; Numbers 26:55; Joshua 7:14; 1 Samuel 10:20; 14:41; Proverbs 18:18). That is the last occurrence in Scripture of this practice, since the coming of the Spirit rendered it unnecessary. The Lord made His choice, the lot fell to Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. The name Matthias means “gift of God,” and so he was to the apostles and the church.

With Matthias’s selection to replace the traitor Judas, the final preparation for the church was completed; the final resource provided. All was now ready for the birth of the church on the Day of Pentecost.



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## Study Assignment

- Always pray first before asking to open your minds to God’s reveal for you
- Have a relationship with the Author of everything – Jesus Christ
- Set aside your personal presuppositions
- Take good notes
- Start and Continue to update your personal private journal
- Read the book of Acts each week
- Read Chapter 2:1-13 “The Baptism of the Holy Spirit” and understand its details.
- Update your personal assessment of your issues and good works.