

Acts 1:12-26 Answers Judas Fulfills Prophecy

Introduction:

Who wrote the book of Acts? It was written by Luke, a traveling companion of Paul.

Time & Place: Luke ended his chronicle with Paul imprisoned in Rome. Since Luke traveled a lot with Paul it is thought that Luke wrote Acts in Rome sometime in the early A.D. 60s.

To whom did he write it? He wrote it for the mysterious Theophilus, 1:1.

Purpose: Luke's interest is in how the Holy Spirit **1)** replaced Jesus on earth **2)** overcame all obstacles in causing the Gospel to be spread from Jerusalem westward to Rome and **3)** changed the church from being predominantly Jewish to being predominately Gentile.

Outline: Acts 1:8. Let's all read 1:8 aloud in unison!

Involve Class & Review Repeatedly:

30 years: The book of Acts covers about 30 years, from A.D. 33 to A.D. 62.

28 chapters

3 sections: Jerusalem	Judea & Samaria	End of the Earth.
Chapters 1-7	Chapters 8-12	Chapters 13-28
2 years	13 years	14 years

Last week: We studied how Jesus promised the coming baptism of the Holy Spirit and then He ascended into a cloud, Acts 1:6-11.

******What did the apostles devote themselves to after Jesus ascended (1:12-14)?** They devoted themselves to prayer, 1:14.

One characteristic of the early church was a devotion to prayer:

ESV **Acts 2:42** . . . they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Application: E.M. Bounds wrote a book called *Power Through Prayer*. Bounds wrote, "What the Church needs to-day is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use -- men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men -- men of prayer."¹

¹ E.M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer* (1913, repr., New Kensington, PA: Whitaker Distribution, 1983). A Civil War chaplain, bounds lived in Washington, Georgia.

Based on what Jesus had just promised in the previous paragraph (1:6-8), what do you suppose they were praying about (1:14)? They likely were praying for the promised and much anticipated coming of the Holy Spirit and their commission to be witnesses to the end of the earth.

— 1:12 —

******Reread 1:12; where was Jesus when His ascension occurred? Where was His launching pad?** Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives, or Olivet, near Jerusalem. It is the very next ridge east of the ridge where the temple was, just across the Kidron valley.

How far is a Sabbath day's journey (1:12)? See *Exodus 16:29*. Since Moses prohibited travel on the Sabbath, it was not very far! Jewish tradition (not Mosaic Law) set the maximum distance a person could travel on the Sabbath without it being considered work at about three quarters of a mile.²

1. What can we learn about Theophilus from 1:12? That Luke had to tell him Olivet was near Jerusalem means Theophilus did not live in Judea. That Theophilus knew how far a Sabbath's day journey was suggests he might have been a Hellenistic Jew or a devout Gentile convert to Judaism who had attended a synagogue (such as seen Acts 13:43).

— 1:13 —

******Where in Jerusalem did they stay (1:13)?** See *Acts 12:12*. Luke simply called the place they stayed the upper room. This has subsequently become a popular name for devotional literature, ministries, book stores, dining halls, prayer rooms and churches. It was likely a home. It may have been the room where the last supper was held³. Mary, mother of John Mark lived in Jerusalem (*Acts 12:12*), and it has been speculated it was her home.⁴

2. Who is notably missing from the list of apostles (1:13)? The absence of Judas Iscariot is glaring! (Judas the son of James is not the same as Judas Iscariot).

3. Why do you suppose Luke took the effort of naming the surviving apostles (1:13)? Perhaps it was to underscore the fact that there were only eleven of them, not twelve anymore. This would set up the reader for what happened next.

— 1:14 —

******According to 1:14, who else joined the apostles in prayer?** The women, Jesus' mother, and Jesus' brothers joined them in prayer.

Who did Luke mean by "the women" (1:14)? According to Luke's Gospel, a number of women were among Jesus' followers, such as those who discovered the empty tomb on Sunday morning.

² *ESV Study Bible*, 2081.

³ Johnson, 34.

⁴ Marshall, 67.

Male Leadership: As regards male leadership in the church, it is noteworthy that Jesus only chose men to be apostles, even though clearly there were quite a few devoted women believers. This was not due social convention, for Jesus had no qualms about breaking man made tradition. Rather, it was based on God's divine design for men to be the leaders in the home and in the church. This set a precedent.

ESV **1 Timothy 3:2** . . . an overseer must be . . . the husband of one wife . . .

ESV **1 Timothy 2:12-13** I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man . . . For Adam was formed first, then Eve . . .

In what sense were they in one accord (1:14)? They were united in the need for prayer and its purpose.

4. Why was it noteworthy that Jesus' brothers were present also (1:14)? *Compare John 7:5.* Your family knows you better than anyone else. If Jesus were a fake, they would have known it. Their presence is also significant because at first they did not believe.

ESV **John 7:5** . . . not even his brothers believed in him.

******What did Peter think they ought to do next (1:15-26)?** Peter thought Judas ought to be replaced.

What reasons did Peter give for replacing Judas (1:15-22)? *See Psalm 109:8.* Peter decided on the need to replace Judas based on Old Testament prophecy (1:20, Psalm 109:8) and in order to have a unified witness with the eleven of Jesus' resurrection (1:22).

— 1:15 —

******Look back at 1:15; how big was the church at this point in history?** After three years of ministry by Jesus, it was composed of about 120 people — so small!⁵

5. Why do you suppose Luke wanted Theophilus to know there were 120 believers (1:15)? *See Acts 2:41, Matthew 13:31-32.* In light of the tremendous church growth that soon followed, it shows the remarkable power of the Holy Spirit.

ESV **Matthew 13:31-32** The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants . . .

Church growth is God's responsibility, but He has chosen to use us in the growth process. Part of the reason Jesus sent the Holy Spirit is to empower us to be His witnesses!

⁵ It is not explicitly stated that they met in the upper room (1:13); this meeting may have been held in another location.

— 1:16-17 —

6. What can we learn about the inspiration of Scripture from 1:16-17? See also Psalm 41:9, Matthew 5:18.

a) One thing we can learn is that Scripture “had to be fulfilled”!

ESV **Matthew 5:18** . . . not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

An iota is the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet; it looks like a lower case letter “i” but without the dot. The smallest letter in the Hebrew was the *yod*, which looks like a comma “,”. A dot probably referred to a tiny part of a letter than distinguishes between two similar letters, such as between the *daleth* and the *resh* (see over Psalm 119:25 & 153); the difference is about the size of the dot over a lower case letter “i”.

Application: What iron clad promises of Scripture do you need to claim?

ESV **James 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

ESV **Matthew 6:33** . . . seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

b) The inspiration of Scripture has to do with the Holy Spirit speaking through the mouths or writings of various people.

ESV **2 Timothy 3:16** All Scripture is breathed out by God . . .

In this case, the Holy Spirit moved King David to speak words that ultimately concerned things Judas would do some 1,000 years in David’s future.

ESV **Psalm 41:9** Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.

— 1:18-19 —

******Based on 1:18-19, what became of Judas after he betrayed Jesus? Compare Matthew 27:3-10.** Harmonizing the various accounts, it appears that Judas was paid 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus. He later felt guilty about it and brought the money back to the chief priests and elders. They saw it as blood money and used it to buy a field to bury strangers (Mt 27:3-10). Overcome with shame for what he’d done, Judas committed suicide by hanging himself. It appears that his body hung in some obscure place until it was swollen up and decaying. Eventually it fell down, or perhaps was cut down, with the result that his stomach cavity burst open when it hit the ground.

Application: This shows what happens to those who dance with the devil. There will be a pay day some day. He will get his due. You reap what you sow, more than you sow, later than you sowed it.

7. Why was it called the Field of Blood (1:9)? It was probably not because Judas died there, but rather because it was bought by the priests with blood money (money paid to betray Jesus).

Why is Acts 1:18-19 in parenthesis? This not something Peter said but was added by Luke to add clarity for Theophilus.

— 1:20 —

Review: What two prophetic events concerning Judas did Peter point out in 1:20? See *Psalm 69:25, 109:8*. Peter made reference to one about Judas' land being desolate and to one about a replacement being found for Judas.

8. What happened to the land that no one dwelled in it (1:20)? See *Matthew 27:3-10*. The land purchased with Judas' blood money was bought by the priests to be used as a cemetery, so of course no one wanted to live there.

9. What role did Psalm 109:8 play in motivating Peter to speak to the 120 gathered saints (1:20)? This text moved Peter to declare the need to find a replacement for Judas.

10. After James the apostle died in Acts 12 no attempt was made to find a replacement. In fact no need was felt to find successors for any of the other apostles as they died. Why was this? See *Ephesians 2:19-21, Jude 1:3, 2 Peter 1:13-19*. No need was felt to find successors for any of the other apostles as they died (such as James in Acts 12). This situation with Judas was unique not because Judas died but because his apostasy and replacement were explicitly predicted in Scripture.⁶ There was no need for apostles like Peter or Paul after they originals died.

Catholic Warning: There is not to be any such thing as apostolic succession, as claimed by the Roman Catholic Church. The Pope is seen to be Peter's replacement.

a) ESV Ephesians 2:19-21 . . . household of God [is] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

The work of the apostles was foundational. Once the foundation of a building had been laid the structure is then built on it. A foundational ministry is once for all.

b) ESV Jude 1:3 . . . contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

Jude declared that the faith was "once of all" delivered to the church. No new truth will be forth coming. There is no need for any more apostles.

c) ESV 2 Peter 1:13-19 I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things . . . you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts . . .

⁶ Bruce, 52.

Peter knew he would soon die. He did not tell them to look for his replacement. Instead, he purposed to help them recall what he had taught and urged them to pay attention to it!

Mormon Warning: Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) claimed to be a modern day apostle like Peter. Smith claimed that Jesus appeared to him and appointed him to be an apostle, equal to any of the Twelve. This was the basis for his supposed authority to write/translate “another” testament of Jesus Christ (the *Book of Mormon*) and to preach what he called a “restored” gospel obtained from an angel named Moroni (who was actually a demon sent to deceive Smith).

ESV **Galatians 1:7-8** . . . there are some who . . . want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if . . . an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

— 1:21-22 —

******11. In 1:21-22, what qualifications did Peter have for Judas’ replacement?** The replacement had to have been following Jesus since the days of John the Baptist and continuing on right up to Jesus’ resurrection and ascension.

What job description for the new man did Peter give in 1:22? He was to become with the eleven a witness to Jesus’ resurrection.

******How did the church pick a replacement for Judas (1:23-26)?** They (the 120, 1:15) took Peter’s advice to pick someone who had been following Jesus from the beginning and were able to narrow it down to two well qualified candidates. Then they cast lots to decide between the two.

— 1:24 —

Based on 1:24, to whom did the church ultimately look to for guidance in the final selection? In prayer they asked the Lord to make the final choice and then cast lots between to equally qualified men.

ESV **Proverbs 16:33** The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

12. Why did they want the Lord to decide rather than deciding themselves (1:24)? It was not due to indecision. It was because Jesus personally chose the first eleven apostles and evidently the church wanted Jesus to choose the new twelfth one also.⁷

13. Do you think this would be a good way to decide things today (1:26)? See *James 1:5*. No, because in this unique decision it was up to Jesus to make the final choice on a replacement for Judas. This choosing process was a onetime supernatural occurrence. God has promised the rest of us wisdom in making decisions.

⁷ Marshall, 71.

ESV **James 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Second Guessing: Some feel the church was in error choosing Matthias since **1)** he was never heard from again **2)** the Holy Spirit had not yet come and **3)** Paul should have been the twelfth. The problem with this criticism is that most of the apostles were never heard from again, not just Matthias. Luke's interest in writing was not to give us biographies of the apostles. Also, there is no hint of rebuke here for the church's actions. Finally, Paul could not have been one of the twelve since he had not been with Jesus from the time of John the Baptist up through the ascension. Paul was a genuine apostle, but was not one of the Twelve.

So What?

14. How can even Judas' evil actions build our faith? Everything Judas did was in fulfillment of Scripture. Jesus' betrayal by Judas was just one of the "many proofs" referred to back in Acts 1:3.

ESV **Acts 2:23** [Jesus was] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God

15. Though it was not Luke's intent to teach on church government, what process of early church government is reflected in 1:15-26? See *1 Corinthians 5:4, Matthew 18:17, Hebrews 13:17*. Even though Luke's intent was not to teach on church polity, the example given here is helpful. Peter, as a leader, taught the church what the Scripture said about the need to replace Judas. A church leader's job is to identify problems and offer the church a Scriptural solution. Notice however that neither Peter himself, nor any of the other apostles, chose Judas' successor. Instead, they involved the whole church in the decision making process.

This is the same process found in 1 Corinthians 5 concerning church discipline. Paul, a church leader, identified a problem (a brother living in sin). Paul offered the church a Scriptural solution (disassociate from the brother). However, Paul himself did not put the man out of the church. Instead, he got the whole church involved:

ESV **1 Corinthians 5:4** When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

This is also seen in Jesus' words of Matthew 18:

ESV **Matthew 18:17** . . . tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

There is a delicate balance in authority between church leaders and the congregation.

a) First, the word church (*ekklesia*) itself originally was a governmental word. It was used primarily with reference to meetings of the Greek city-states. These meetings were for the purpose of making decisions. It was a legislative body.

b) Next, we must factor in the main text on the authority of church leaders:

ESV **Hebrews 13:17** Obey your leaders and submit to them . . .

Obey in Hebrews 13:17 is from *peitho* and fundamentally means to persuade. In fact, “Peitho” was the name of the goddess of persuasion, seduction and charming speech. She was a close companion of the goddess Aphrodite.

Found here in the middle/passion form, it carries the idea of letting yourselves be persuaded by your church leaders. Church leader have to be good at persuading people with the truth. Their leadership is to come by persuasion, not simply command.

Dwight Eisenhower: “I would rather try to persuade a man to go along, because once I have persuaded him he will stick. If I scare him, he will stay just as long as he is scared, and then he is gone.”

Harry Truman: “My definition of a leader . . . is a man who can persuade people to do what they don’t want to do, or do what they’re too lazy to do, and like it”

Submit in Hebrews 13:17 is from *hupеiko* and although it really does mean submit, it refers to submission after a battle or contest. It is a word that carries with the picture of a process of contesting before a yielding takes place.

What we are dealing with in the final analysis is a delicate balancing act. The church is to be open to being “persuaded” by its leaders. There is to be discussion and teaching, argument and persuasion. The picture is not that of mindless, unquestioning obedience. Yet after a battle (wrangling over ideas), the church should ultimately “submit” (yield) to its leaders. This is especially true in matters of doctrine. The elders should offer substantial evidence as to why a certain teaching should or should not be believed (such as the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the Gospel message, the reality of hell or gender roles in the home and church). Yet the elders are the final line of defense against error and if push comes to shove, the those disagreeing with the elders are called up to yield to the elders’ judgment.

Church government is generally to be by the consensus of all the brothers, with elders given special consideration in the consensus process. The elders’ arguments are to be given extra weight. At the end of the day, if an impasse arises, the church (or more likely, a few holdouts*) is to yield to its elders (Hebrews 13:17).

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.
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