

Acts Chapter 1 Continued

Acts 1:12 "Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey."

“Mount called Olivet”: Located across the Kidron Valley, East of Jerusalem. This large hill rising about 200 foot higher in elevation than the city, was the site from which Jesus ascended into heaven (Luke 24:50-51).

“Sabbath’s day journey”: One-half of a mile (about 2,000 cubits), was the farthest distance a faithful Jew could travel on the Sabbath to accommodate the prohibition of (Exodus 16:29). This measurement was derived from tradition based on Israel’s encampments in the wilderness.

The tents furthest out on the camp’s perimeter were 2,000 cubits from the center tabernacle, the longest distance anyone had to walk to reach the tabernacle on the Sabbath (Jos. 3:4; Num. 35:5). One cubit equals 18 inches, or 1.5 feet.

A Sabbath day's journey was about 3,000 feet. This mount here was the Mount of Olives, and Jesus had told them to go to Jerusalem and wait until they would be empowered of the Holy Spirit. This would happen ten days later, fifty days after Jesus rose from the grave.

Acts 1:13 "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."

“Upper room”: Where the Last Supper may have been celebrated (Mark 14:15), and where Jesus had appeared to the apostles after His resurrection.

“Bartholomew”: This disciple is also call Nathanael (John 1:45-49; 21:2).

“James the son of Alphaeus” (see note on Matt. 10:2). The same person as James the younger, also called “the Less” to distinguish him from James, the brother of John (Mark 15:40).

“Zelotes” (see note on Matt. 10:4).

“Judas the brother of James”: Was also known as the son of James. The preferred rendering is “the brother of.” See note on (Matt. 10:3). He was also known as Thaddaeus (Mark 3:18).

When this speaks of them abiding, it means that they went to the upper room where they had the last supper with Jesus. Whether they slept here or not is uncertain, but surely their waking hours were spent here waiting on the Holy Spirit to come upon them. We will see in the next few verses that they tarried ten days.

The fiftieth day after the resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit will come on them. Fifty means Jubilee and sets the captives free. We will see here that on the fiftieth day these disciples (about 120), men and women will be set free to live and work for the Lord. These disciples, up until this point, had been very weak in their flesh. This will give them power from the Spirit of God to be bold in doing the will of the Lord.

At this point, they will no longer deny the Christ, regardless of the consequence. This Spirit will teach them the will of God, and the ways of God, and set them free to minister with power. Notice in the next verse that, this is not just for the eleven, but for all 120 disciples present. This 120 includes the women as well.

Acts 1:14 "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

“Continued with one accord in prayer”: The pattern of praying in the name of Jesus started at this time (John 14:13-14).

“With the women”: Doubtless they included Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Clopas, the sisters Mary and Martha, and Salome. Some of the apostles’ wives also may have been present (1 Cor. 9:5).

“Mary the mother of Jesus” (see notes on Luke 1:27-28). Mary’s name does not appear again in the New Testament.

“Brethren”: Jesus’ half-brothers named (in Mark 6:3), as James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. James was the leader of the Jerusalem church (12:17; 15:13-22), and author of the epistle that bears his name. Judas (Jude), wrote the epistle of Jude.

At this time, they were new believers in Jesus as God, Savior, and Lord, whereas only 8 months earlier John had mentioned their unbelief (John 7:5).

These brethren who included James, Joses, Simon, and Judas from (Matthew 13:55). It seems that Jesus’ brothers did not join the original disciples (Psalms 69:8), but after the resurrection of Jesus, were very active followers of Jesus.

These were actually half-brothers of Jesus, because they had the same mother, but Jesus’ Father was God. Notice also here that Jesus’ mother, Mary, was praying with all the others. She was not the object of worship, but was worshipping God herself.

Acts 1:15 "And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about a hundred and twenty,)"

“In those days”: Some unspecified time during the believers’ 10 days of prayer and fellowship between the ascension and Pentecost.

“Peter” (see note on Matt. 10:2). The acknowledged leader of the apostle took charge.

Names here, means people. Peter was the leader of the group.

Acts 1:16 "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."

“Brethren”: The 120 believers who were gathered (verse 15).

“This scripture must needs have been fulfilled”: The two Old Testament passages Peter quotes (in verse 20, are Psalms 69:25; 109:8). Then God gives prophecies, they will come to pass (Psalm 115:3; Isa. 46:10; 55:11).

“The Holy Ghost” ... by the mouth of David: Scripture contains no clearer description of divine inspiration. God spoke through David’s mouth, referring to his writing (see note on 2 Peter 1:21).

For the prophetic statement (see John 13:18-19 and then Psalm 41:9).

We know that the Word of God cannot lie. If it is prophesied, it will happen. God foreknew that Judas Iscariot would betray Jesus and then hang himself. This treachery of Judas' is spoken of again here by Peter, because perhaps, some of this 120 had not been told of Judas' betrayal of Jesus.

Acts 1:17 "For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry."

“Obtained part of this ministry”: Judas Iscariot was a member of the 12, but was never truly saved which is why he was called “the son of perdition” (John 17:12; see Matt. 26:24; John 6:64, 70-71; Acts 2:23; Luke 22:22).

Judas Iscariot had been part of the twelve apostles who worked closest with Jesus. Judas in fact, had been the one who carried the money for them.

Acts 1:18 "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."

“This man purchased a field”: Because the field was bought with the money the Jewish leaders paid Judas to betray Jesus, which he returned to them (Matt. 27:3-10). Luke refers to Judas as if he was the buyer (Zech. 11:12-13).

“Reward of iniquity”: The 30 pieces of silver paid to Judas.

“Falling headlong”: Apparently, the tree on which Judas chose to hang himself (Matt. 27:5), overlooked a cliff. Likely, the rope or branch broke (or the knot slipped), and his body was shattered on the rocks below.

This verse needs to be correlated with (Matthew 27:3-10). The simplest explanation may be found in the principal that, whereas in Acts, Luke records all events (such as the acts of Judas). Matthew distinguishes between what Judas did and what the priests did.

Just as the priests were the ones who purchased Potter's Field with Judas's money after his death, so Judas may have fallen only in that he was thrown down upon the rocks of that field.

The man Peter is speaking of here is Judas Iscariot. When Judas Iscariot realized the terrible thing that he had done, he threw the thirty pieces of silver (the betrayal money), down, and went and hanged himself. This gruesome description that Peter gives here, is just more detailed about what happened to Judas.

Acts 1:19 "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."

"Aceldama (or the Aramaic name is Hakeldama) ... Field of Blood.": This is the field bought by the Jewish leaders. Traditionally, the field is located south of Jerusalem in the Valley of Hinnom, where that valley crossed the Kidron Valley. The soil there was good for making pottery, thus Matthew identifies it as "the Potter's Field" (Matt. 27:7, 10; see notes on verse 18).

The money was used to buy a burial place for the poor. The priests could not use it for anything else, because it was blood money.

Acts 1:20 "For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take."

"It is written" (see note on verse 16). Peter used the most compelling proof, Scripture, to reassure the believers that Judas' defection and the choice of his replacement were both in God's purpose (Psalm 55:12-15).

You can find this (in Psalms 69:25 and 109:8). Peter is explaining to this group that the select apostles are now just eleven, and in Psalms it tells them to elect another to make up the twelve. He is to be chosen of the 120.

The number twelve is a representative number, and we will see it repeatedly throughout the Bible, and especially in Revelation. The twelve apostles are mentioned several times. The twelve would include the original eleven and the one chosen to take Judas Iscariot's place.

Acts 1:21 "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,"

"Went in and out among us": The first requirement for Judas' successor was that he had participated in Jesus' earthly ministry.

Acts 1:22 "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."

“Baptism of John”: Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23).

“A witness with us of his resurrection”: A second requirement for Judas’ successor was that he had to have seen the resurrected Christ. The resurrection was central to apostolic preaching (2:24, 32; 3:15; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30-37).

We see from this, that the person chosen to take the bishopric of Judas Iscariot must be chosen from one of the disciples who had been in the group since the day John the Baptist baptized Jesus. He must also, be one who stayed steadfast with the followers of Jesus until the day Jesus was caught up into heaven.

In other words, he must be able (when he is witnessing), to give first-hand information. He had to be an eye witness.

Acts 1:23 "And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias."

“Barsabas ... Justus”: Barsabas means “son of the Sabbath.” Justus (“the righteous”) was Joseph’s Latin name. Many Jews in the Roman Empire had equivalent Gentile names.

“Matthias”: The name means “gift of God.” The ancient historian Eusebius claims Matthias was among the 70 of (Luke 10:1).

From the above qualifications, Peter and the other ten decided that these two men fit those qualifications.

Acts 1:24 "And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all [men], shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,"

“Thou hast chosen”: Judas’ successor was sovereignly determined (see notes on verse 20).

The final decision would be the Lord's. Many times, we humans tend to judge a person by their outward appearance, but the Lord always looks on the heart. Peter is aware of this and prays that the Lord will make the final decision.

Acts 1:25 "That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."

“To his own place”: Judas chose his own fate of hell by rejecting Christ. It is not unfair to say that Judas and all others who go to hell belong there (John 6:70).

Judas Iscariot was of his father the devil. His place would be in hell with his father. We all have a will of our own, and Judas was no different. Notice, he fell. Judas Iscariot could have been in heaven with all the rest of the apostles, but he fell because of his lust for money.

His place with the apostles will be filled by a more noble man.

Acts 1:26 "And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

“Gave forth their lots”: A common Old Testament method of determining God’s will (Lev. 16:8-10; Jos. 7:14; Prov. 18:18; see note on Prov. 16:33). This is the last biblical mention of lots, the coming of the Spirit made them unnecessary.

Prior to Pentecost the casting of “lots” was a divinely approved method of discerning God’s will (Joshua 18:8). Proverbs 16:33), states: “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” Nowhere else in Acts is there any record of a New Testament church using lots. The Holy Spirit now provides that direction (16:6-7; Rom. 8:14, 26-27; Gal. 5:18).

Many decisions of this nature in the church were decided by casting lots. Their belief was that God would cause the lot to fall to the more worthy one. Now with Matthias added to the eleven, the twelve apostles were complete again.

Acts Chapter 1 Continued Questions

1. How far is the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem?
2. How far is a Sabbath day's journey?
3. When would the Holy Spirit come upon them?
4. Where did these disciples go to wait?
5. Who went?
6. What does abiding mean?
7. How long did they wait?
8. Why do they need the Holy Spirit?
9. What does verse 14 tell us they did while they waited?
10. Who are explicitly mentioned in verse 11, besides the eleven apostles?
11. Name Jesus' four half-brothers.
12. What must we note about Mary in verse 14?
13. Who was the eleven's leader?

14. How many disciples were actually there?
15. Who had prophesied in the Old Testament about Judas Iscariot?
16. What happened to Judas Iscariot after the betrayal?
17. What was the proper name of the potter's field?
18. What did it mean?
19. How much was the betrayal money?
20. What Book in the Old Testament tells of this?
21. What must the qualifications be of the man to replace Judas Iscariot?
22. Who were the two appointed?
23. When they cast lots, who won the office?
24. Who made the final decision?
25. Who was Judas Iscariot's father?
26. Did Judas have a choice?
27. What caused Judas to fall?