

Acts 1:4-26 | The Promise, Christ's Ascension, Judas' Replacement

Context from the Prior Session

Acts 1:1-3

- 1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,
- 2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:
- 3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

Acts 1:4-5 | The Promise of the Holy Spirit

Verse 4 —

And being assembled...with them. Those assembled were the disciples whom he had chosen (vs. 2). Later we will see more than just the eleven gathered (Acts 1:15), but now only the disciples are with Jesus. Jesus **commanded them that they should not depart Jerusalem** (see Luke 24:49) because he was going to send the **promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.**

What was the **promise** and when did they hear of it? The first prophecy of the Spirit being poured out on Israel was in Isaiah 44:3, *"I will pour my spirit upon thy seed."* See also Joel 2:28. Jesus gave this promise of the Spirit, whom He called *"the Comforter"* in John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7.

This will be fulfilled in Acts 2:4. The Spirit would give the apostles power to preach boldly that Jesus is the Messiah. The purpose was for there to be a national repentance of Israel. The national repentance of Israel that is required is a change of mind. The Church and most of society today have attached an incorrect meaning to the word repentance. It is not being sorry for sins, which is a doctrine that is a holdover from the Roman Catholic Church. This isn't that people can't be sorry for their sins. In chapter two, we see that after the Jews at Pentecost hear the message from Peter about the Messiah Jesus; they are sorry that they did not believe. But for Jesus to return, Israel must, as a nation, have a change of mind and turn to Him as their Messiah. Jesus told the religious leaders in Matthew 23:39, *"Ye shall not see me, henceforth, till ye say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."* See also Mark 11:9; and Luke 13:35. Sadly, that will not happen until the end of the seven-year tribulation (Revelation 19).

Israel has still not changed their mind about Messiah. They do not recognize Jesus as their Messiah. Today, Israel is regathered, but in unbelief.

Verse 5 —

John baptized with water. John baptized and preached the baptism of repentance (not penance). His purpose was, according to Isaiah 40:3, to compel the People of Israel to “*Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*” John clarified that when the Messiah came, He would not immerse them with water, but would immerse them with *the Holy Ghost*¹ (Matthew 3:11). Jesus confirmed to the disciples, **But ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.** In just ten days (on the day of Pentecost²), this *baptism with the Holy Ghost* would be fulfilled, Acts 2:4.

Acts 1:6-7 | Restoring the Kingdom, But Which Kingdom?

Verse 6 —

Jesus appeared to the disciples often over a forty-day period (see vs. 3), teaching them *things pertaining to the kingdom*. Now, it is the last time with them before His ascension into Heaven, **when they therefore were come together.** In the gospels, the disciples may not have completely understood Jesus was the Messiah, but by now they understood the Scriptures (See Luke 24:44-47). While He spent forty days with the disciples, *speaking of the kingdom of God*, Jesus had not discussed with them the timing of when he would restore the kingdom. Therefore, since the pouring out of the spirit and the kingdom were linked in Scripture (Joel 2:28-32), it makes sense they would ask him the following question: **wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?**

The apostles correctly understood the coming kingdom as an actual physical kingdom of God on earth. They would think that way because the kingdom of Israel had previously existed. They were not anticipating a spiritual kingdom. The gospel of Luke (among so many other Scriptures) has references to the kingdom being *physical, and future*: Luke 1:32-33; 22:15-16, 30.

Many today teach the kingdom of God is the church. They do not get this from Scripture, rather their theology comes from *various confessions* like the Westminster Confession of Faith³. This is called Kingdom Now theology. This teaching is non-biblical and has negative consequences for the church.

Our world today is in Satan’s domain. When we attempt to build the kingdom here, we are putting our efforts into the wrong kingdom. The church is not to forge alliances with the world and with groups (or governments) that do not share its core biblical convictions. Author Clarence Larkin wrote this powerful statement:

Those involved today in kingdom building are actually not building God’s kingdom at all, but rather the kingdom of the antichrist.

¹ Greek: *pneuma hagios*

² Pentecost is derived from the Greek word meaning “fiftieth.” Celebrated as the 50th day after Passover

³ Chapter 25:11 of the Westminster Confession describes the Church as the kingdom of Christ and the house and family of God.

Verse 7 —

As for the coming kingdom? **It is not for you to know the times or the seasons...** Notice that Jesus didn't correct the disciple's understanding that the kingdom would be physical. Rather, he said **the Father** will be the one who chooses, **in his own power**, when the kingdom will come to earth and be set up. Therefore, it is futile and a waste of time for man to work to usher in the kingdom of God. We are not kingdom builders.

Times is the Greek word *Chronos*. We get our word chronometer (a watch) from *Chronos*. It is not a specific time, but an unlimited duration (unless it is defined as a specific time). The word, **Seasons**, is translated from the Greek word *Kairos*. It refers to a definite portion of the *Chronos*. The disciples were not to know the time or the period that God alone has set.

Acts 1:8 | Power and Witness

Verse 8 —

In the meantime, as for the apostles, Jesus said, **ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.** Jesus promised again the empowerment of the Holy Spirit for the apostles to be his witnesses.

We should not take this for the church today as having the same *Holy Spirit Power* that Jesus gave to the disciples. For one, the body of Christ did not yet exist in its current form (nor did this power pertain to the Gentiles). The power spoken of is the apostolic power for the disciple's mission of pursuing the national repentance of Israel. Repentance (changing of their mind; not penance) regarding who was the Messiah. The nation of Israel needed to recognize and change its mind about Jesus.

Ye shall be my witnesses unto me. This is the context regarding what Jesus had spent 40 days teaching them regarding the promised kingdom of God. They were to be witnesses to that, as well as the rest of what Jesus taught and did during His earthly ministry. The **power** they would receive from the Holy Spirit would be proof of kingdom authority to be realized if Israel would repent (change their mind).

Their witness of the promised kingdom would extend to all in the nation of Israel, throughout **Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.** That includes all the dispersed Jews beyond Israel⁴. Wherever the Jews were dispersed, the apostles would be witnesses. Peter, for example, preached to the Jews in *Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia* (1st Peter 1:1), and Babylon (1 Peter 5:13). According to early Church historians and tradition, the other apostles went to Turkey, India, Spain, Rome, and **uttermost** parts of the earth. Their witness would eventually have also gone to the Gentile nations who, with their gods vanquished, would honor and serve Israel, turning to their God and their king and looking to their holy land

⁴ The LORD prophesied the curse of the diaspora if the nation would not "hearken unto the voice of the LORD." See Deuteronomy 28:15,25. The first significant diaspora began in 586 B.C. with the Babylonian captivity.

(Isaiah 49:22; 52:10; 60:3-5, 11; 61:6, 9-11; 62:2; 66:12, 18-20).⁵ Later, the gospel of justification by belief alone (Acts 13:39) would go to the Gentiles *unto the ends of the earth* (Acts 13:47).

Acts 1:9-11 | The Ascension of Jesus Christ

Verse 9 —

And when he had spoken these things, (the command to remain in Jerusalem, and the power they would receive from the Holy Ghost, to be witnesses). Jesus' work on earth for now was finished. The disciples became apostles (sent ones). They received their marching orders and would be empowered to do "greater works" as Jesus prophesied in John 14:12.

He **was taken up**. This is a different Greek word than we saw in 1:2. This word is **ἐπαίρω** | *epairo*. It is translated often as "lifted up", but it could also be *exalted*. I think this means physically *lifted up from the earth*, but it can also carry the idea that Jesus was gloriously exalted, for **a cloud received him out of their sight**. The word **cloud** is translated as a *rain cloud* in some passages, but it is also representative of the Shekinah⁶ glory of God, as in the *pillar of cloud* that led the Israelites through the wilderness in the book of Exodus. Luke uses this same word to describe the Shekinah glory of God in Luke 9:34,35. Therefore, what we could be reading is that Jesus Christ, while physically ascending (Luke 24:51; *carried up into heaven*), was lifted up (exalted; Acts 2:33) by a heavenly host of *angels* to the right hand of the Father on high where he now sits awaiting his return to earth to set up his Kingdom (He ascended to fulfill all things, Ephesians 4:10, and Psalm 110:1; "until I make thine enemies a footstool").

Verse 10 —

While they look steadfastly. Greek, **ἀτενίζω** | *atenizo*. In the Greek word, we can hear the word *attention*. They stayed in one place, remaining loyal to their master, not moving their eyes from the sky. They were likely in awe, or shock, or both! **Two men stood by them in white apparel**. We have seen two men appear before in Scripture. In Luke 24:4, two men stood by the empty tomb of Jesus. Luke says these men had on *shining garments*. In John's gospel (20:12), they are identified as *angels*. There seems to be no reason to take the two men in 1:10 as anyone other than angels.

Verse 11 —

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee. We see here two things. One, angels speak a language the people to whom they are speaking understand, and second, they are speaking specifically to the *men of Galilee*. Although there could have been other Galileans present, it is a good indication that only the apostles were present. **Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?** The apostles were given a command by Jesus. Now they

⁵ Keener, Craig S. Acts: An Exegetical Commentary & 2: Introduction and 1:1–14:28. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012–2013. Print.

⁶ Shekinah – Hebrew: *dwelling, or settling. Caused to dwell, or One who dwells.*

needed to get busy. They must get back over to Jerusalem (verse 12 shows us they were on the mount called Olivet, i.e., the Mount of Olives) and wait for the promise just as Jesus had commanded.

Shall so come in like manner, that is **this same Jesus** not some other Jesus, not an imposter, or the antichrist, but this same Jesus, the one who lived, died, was buried, and rose from the grave. The same Jesus who conquered death and is now **taken up into heaven**. **Shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven**.

What I think is a misunderstanding of the return of Jesus is repeated over and over because of verse 12,

Acts 1:12-14 | Return to Jerusalem and the Upper Room

Verse 12 —

They returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet. Most believe Jesus will return to the same place as he departed (the Mt. of Olives), but notice verse 11 **he shall so come in like manner**. Just as he *ascended*, he will *descend* from heaven. But not necessarily in the same place.

While it is not completely germane to our passage, it is interesting to note several Old Testament prophecies show the location where Jesus may return, or *touch down* so to speak, when he returns (Isaiah 34:1-2-; Isaiah 63:1-6; Habakkuk 3:3; Micah 2:12-13). On the last day, as the armies of the nations are gathered at Armageddon (Revelation 16:13-16; Cf. Revelation 19:11-14), Jesus Christ will return, not to the Mount of Olives, but to Edom⁷, southeast of the Dead Sea. He will march up the Jordan Valley, destroying the forces of the antichrist as he goes, culminating in the final slaughter at the campaign of Armageddon. After, then He will stand on the Mount of Olives again (Zechariah 14:3-5).

This same Jesus...shall come in like manner, but he will come as King of kings and Lord of lords. On that day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Therefore, the angels told the apostles to stop gazing and get busy telling the world.

A sabbath day's journey does not imply it was the Sabbath, but probably ten days before Pentecost (Acts 2:1). Luke, by including this logistical phrase, may be reinforcing to the reader that the apostles kept the Law. The website chabad.org details the intricacies of keeping the law when traveling.

Because driving, biking, blading, skateboarding, or other device-driven means of transportation are prohibited on Shabbat, we walk rather than commute to the synagogue. However, even walking on Shabbat has its limits.

⁷ Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum has a compelling argument for this in his book, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*. See my website to order, www.rogerfeenstra.com

Jewish law sets the maximum walking range from one's city to 2,000 cubits (3,049.5 feet, 0.596 miles (960 meters). [However, this measurement starts 70 2/3 cubits (112.24 ft.) from the city limits.] Practically speaking, this means that you may not walk a straight line more than .598 miles (3161.74 ft.) in any direction in the wilds outside your city limits.

"City limits" are not defined by the map you carry in your glove compartment.

According to Halachah (Jewish Rabbinical Law) unless there is more than 70 2/3 cubits between one house and the next, all contiguous housing is considered to be part of the same city. Therefore, at times it would be permitted to walk even from one city to the next, as long as the whole way is populated. This can be complex, and a rabbi should be consulted before planning a long trek on Shabbat.⁸

In the case of traveling from the Mount of Olives to the city of Jerusalem, there is evidence a causeway existed across the Kidron Valley⁹, making their journey back to the city a shorter distance and in keeping with Jewish law.

Verse 13—

And when they were come in, that is when the apostles came into the city from the mount of olives, **they went up into an upper room**. Tradition suggests this was the home of John Mark's mother (Acts 12:12-13)—it is impossible to know who it belonged to, or its exact location. **Where abode** the disciples. This probably just means this is where they often met. It was large enough for at least 120 people (vs. 15).

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.

This list is the same as in Luke 6:14-16, although in a different order, and here without the inclusion of Judas Iscariot, who also was the traitor. Simon, or Peter is mentioned first in both lists which may indicate his leadership of the group.

Verse 14—

These all continued. The word **continued** is also translated *to wait*, in the sense of serving someone. In verse 4, Jesus commanded them to *wait*, *and* as they **continued** to do so, they were **with one accord in prayer and supplication**, the apostles were all together praying and supplicating (i.e., asking). We don't know what they prayed for or asked for specifically but we can speculate they prayed and asked for Christ's return. **With the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren**. We learn there are more people in this upper room than just the eleven apostles. Many women followed Jesus. Luke names several of them in his gospel;

⁸ www.chabad.org

⁹ *The Quest. Carta Jerusalem. Page 64,112. Jerusalem, Israel. 2006.*

Mary called Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, Mary, the mother of James, and many other women (Luke 8:2,3; Luke 23:49; Luke 24:10, See also: Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:41; John 19:25). **And with his brethren**, in the upper room, Jesus's brothers and sisters were also there (Matthew 13:55,56).

Acts 1:15 | Introduction of Spokesman, Peter

Verse 15 —

And in those days. The days in which Jesus commanded them to wait in Jerusalem (1:4), the period from the Ascension to the receiving of the promise of the Holy Ghost (2:4). **Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples.** The focus of Luke's Acts narrative concentrates on the apostle Peter. We are going to see Peter as the main spokesman for the apostles (Luke 8:45; 9:20, 33; 12:41; 18:28; Acts 1:15; 2:14; for other references focused on Peter, cf. Luke 22:54; 24:12; Mark 1:36; 8:29, 32; 9:5; 10:28; 11:21; 14:29, 31.)¹⁰

Peter seems to have an influential position within the circle of disciples, although there were times he was not seen in a positive light (A familiar example: Luke 22:34; 58-61). Jesus had promised that Peter would take a lead role—Luke 22:31,32: Jesus told him “Strengthen thy brethren.” After his resurrection, Jesus especially appeared to **Peter** (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5). Throughout the Gospels and into Acts, we can see Peter's character develop. He was also called Simon (or Simeon), his original name, Cephas (Aramaic), and Petros (Greek). He was the son of Jonas (or John), and the brother of Andrew. Peter was given the Keys to the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:19). When Christ was on earth, the kingdom was in an imminent state of nearness. But Christ must have to first depart and then return. Peter would use the keys to open the kingdom for Israel on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and later to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius (More on that in Acts 10).

The **Number of names together was about a hundred and twenty.** About 120 gathered in the upper room together with the apostles.

Acts 1:16-22 | Peter's First Speech

Verse 16, 17 —

Men and brethren. Peter addressed the apostles and everyone else. **This scripture...the Holy Ghost by...David spake concerning Judas.** That the Messiah would come was no secret. The Holy Spirit testified about Messiah through the prophets. In this case, Peter references David's Psalm 41. Peter would have had several Scriptures in mind as he addressed those in the upper room (e.g., Psalm 41:9; cf. John 13:18; Psalm 69:25; and Psalm 109:8). **Judas... was guide to them that took Jesus,**

¹⁰ Keener, Craig S. [Acts: An Exegetical Commentary & 2: Introduction and 1:1-14:28](#). Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012-2013. Print.

“Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, Which did eat of my bread, Hath lifted up his heel against me.”
(Psalm 41:9).

See Matt. 26:47; Mark 14:43; Luke 22:47; John 18:3.

He was numbered with us. The word **numbered** in Greek carries the idea of a final fixed number, that is, he was one of us. Judas was one of the 12 and had **obtained part of this ministry**. The disciples were a part of the inner circle of Jesus.

Verse 18, 19, 20 —

The next three verses are parenthetical:

Now this man (Judas) purchased a field with the reward of iniquity. This appears to contradict Matthew 27:3-7, where it says the chief priests *took counsel, and bought with them the potter’s field...* Did Judas purchase the field? Or did the chief priests? The solution could be 1) These were two different purchases of two properties. Judas was a thief (John 12:6). Could he have stolen money, bought a field, and later *hanged himself*? And the chief priests bought a different field for a different purpose? Or, 2) Luke is merely using a figure of speech. In that, Judas threw down the money at the chief priest’s feet. They took *his* money and bought the field that he would die in. While Judas himself didn’t buy the field, *he bought it* via the chief priests. There are ways to rectify the discrepancy, but the bottom line is found in Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death.”

Known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem. The word of the death of Judas traveled quickly, as shocking news does. The **field of blood** may mean the people were saying *he got what was coming to him* or *you reap what you sow*. We have the saying even today, *his blood is on his own hands*.

Peter quotes two verses from the Psalms, 69:25; and 109:8. Both Psalms deal with deliverance from enemies and praying for the wicked to lose what they have owned. Judas made an exchange; his office, **bishop-rick**, for the land he would never possess alive. His office as one of the 12 became vacant. The word **bishop-rick** is translated from the Greek word *episcopo* is the same word used in 1 Timothy 3:1, “If a man desires the *office of a bishop*.”

[Acts 1:21-26 | The Selection of a New Apostle](#)

Verse 21, 22 —

Of these men, i.e., the others who followed Jesus besides His inner circle of 12. Of this group of men, a replacement for Judas would be found. Luke stated the qualifications for his replacement. **Men which have**

companied with us all the time; from the baptism of John, unto the same day he was taken up (the Ascension), and witness with us of his resurrection.

Ordained. This word ordained, in the sense it was used in 1611 when the KJV was translated, meant to put in order, or maybe to put someone in the order of the eleven disciples. The translators could have translated the Greek word *ginomai*, as “*become*”. **One of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection. That** would be a clearer meaning.

Why were 12 apostles necessary? It was a future necessity. In the Kingdom, the twelve apostles will judge the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus made that prophecy in Luke 22:30. With Judas disqualified, a replacement had to be found.

Verse 23—

Two men qualified to be appointed. **Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.** Only one was needed.

Verses 24,25—

And they prayed. They began their deliberation with prayer. **Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men.** Notice how they affirm one of the great attributes of God, his omniscience. The eleven apostles were of one mind to find a replacement. **That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship.**

Verse 26—

And they gave forth their lots. The word **lots** is from the Greek word, *kleros*, which comes from the root word, break. So, the idea is to break pieces of wood (or draw straws or toothpicks). The casting of **lots** was not a vote. Israel used the casting of **lots** to receive a “yes” or “no” answer from God.

The Jewish people believed **lots** would give them divine direction. Israel divided some of the land by **lots** and it is seen often in the book of Joshua among other places (Joshua 14:2; 18:6, 8, 19; Ezekiel 45:1). Other decisions and duties, for example, of the priestly duties, choosing of cities for the Levites, etc., were determined by the **lot** (1 Chronicles 24:5,31; 25:8; 26:13-14; Luke 1:9; 1 Chronicles 6:61-65; Nehemiah 11:1).

I don't know of any church today that decides by casting lots (Maybe there are some out there, but they shouldn't). It was, however, very much an Old Testament practice. The apostles lived in a different dispensation (A dispensation is a period in which God works in specific ways with specific people). The apostles and those in the early first century did not have the New Testament to guide them as we do today. In the dispensation of grace, we are guided by God's word. In particular, the epistles of Paul give us instructions for Christian living. In our dispensation of grace, God does not elect politicians. The free will of the people is how men and women

are elected. Even in churches where a pastor is chosen, it is done by a vote of the people of the congregation. Nor does God make every decision for us. With God's word, if we would only read it, we have enough information to guide us in making all decisions, including personal and political.

This chapter is not a model for the church to follow today.

The new apostle is chosen, **Matthias**. And now they are ready to receive the promise Jesus told them to wait for (1:4).