

Communal Clarity

Acts 1:15-26

What now? What are we supposed to do?

The only thing we have is to hold onto the words of Jesus.

vs. 4, Wait for the Father's promise.

vs. 15, Peter - signifying leadership role among the group.

120 people -> 10x the number of believers as Apostles.

vs. 16, The events surrounding Judas are tragic.

Other narrative describing Judas' death is found in **Matthew 27:3-10**.

Luke gives us the details that he wants us to remember.

- He became a guide to those who arrested Jesus (betrayal).
- He was one of us.
- He shared in this ministry.
- A field was purchased. (Well known field of blood).
- Judas died a shameful death.

Warning: There is a big difference between faithful followers and those who go through the motions.

vs. 17, the Greek word translated shared (κλήρον - kléros)

Luke is uncovering the foundation of ministry service.

Levites - their portion was not land but service.

Numbers 18:21-26 "Look, I have given the Levites every tenth in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work they do, the work of the tent of meeting. **23** The Levites will not receive an inheritance among the Israelites; this is a permanent statute throughout your generations. **24** For I have given them the tenth that the Israelites present to the Lord as a contribution for their inheritance. That is why I told them that they would not receive an inheritance among the Israelites."

- The lot (portion) that was given to the Levites was to serve God in the sanctuary rather than being given land (lot / portion).
- Judas chose land (lot) over faithful service (lot) and as a result his land (portion) became desolate.
- Desolation is the result of Judas' wickedness.

vs. 18-20, Divine Necessity (God is accomplishing his plan of restoration).

Necessary that the Scripture be fulfilled.

Psalm 69:25 Make their fortification desolate; may no one live in their tents.

Psalm 109:8 Let his days be few; let another take over his position.

Each of these psalms speak of wicked men who are not genuine in their friendship and have become enemies of God's servant.

- Jesus was the Servant of the Lord and the Righteous Sufferer.
- Jesus himself quotes **Psalm 69:4** Those who hate me without cause are more numerous than the hairs of my head;
- In **John 15:25** But this happened so that the statement written in their law might be fulfilled: **They hated me for no reason.**

The point is that the early church had a strong resolve to understand that *God is at work*.

- Judas has showed himself to be a false companion, wicked, and an enemy of God.
- The unrighteous or the enemies of God are ultimately judged.
- Judas' heart remains hard and cold despite the richness of God's love (Jesus) right in front of him.

Luke's point is not Judas' death, but the need to replace him.

vs. 21, Judas needed to be replaced. It was necessary to have twelve apostles.

Why? Simple answer Twelve tribes of Israel.

They were to be the representatives for the righteous remnant of the eschatological people of God.

In Luke's view, "the apostles become the true leaders for Israel, who should have been followed by the Jewish people."

~ Craig Keener

Luke anticipates the twelve having a role, not in relationship to the church or its later mission to Gentiles, but rather in relationship to Israel, in particular Jews who live in the Holy Land (pointing east). ~ Ben Witherington III

The Twelve are to judge Israel.

There is something else happening with the continuing mission / witness to the Gentiles.

We will see this practically play out as the Twelve have very little "screen time" in the rest of Acts.

The Twelve (Apostles) field of mission was to Jews (especially those in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee).

Acts 6-8 is a huge transition -> the focus becomes more and more Gentile (to the ends of the earth).

This is no longer simply a Jewish sect, this is a movement of Jesus people with a growing majority of Gentiles.

Luke's interest is on the growth of the Gentile church. The central character becomes Paul an apostle.

vs. 21-22, What does apostle mean?

They must have seen the risen Lord (*from John's baptism).

They must bear witness about the risen Lord.

Acts 14:4 But the people of the city were divided, some siding with the Jews and others with the apostles (speaking of Paul and Barnabas).

Romans 16:7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews and fellow prisoners. They are noteworthy among the apostles, and they were also in Christ before me.

The Twelve, Paul, and others.

- The kingdom of heaven is here.

Sometimes we don't make distinctions and sometimes we make unnecessary distinctions.

Spiritual gift of apostleship -> **Ephesians 4:11-12** And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ,

Acts will focus on the early **Christian witness** including the Apostles, not just in the witness of those deemed Apostles (the Twelve).

vs. 23-26, Justus or Matthias

Through unity, prayer, and scripture they cast lots. (What is God's portion?)

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

God chooses Matthias.

Side Note: This isn't the manual moving forward for making decisions in the church.

2 other times selection takes place in Acts the method of casting lots is not used (Acts 6 - choosing of the seven, Acts 13 - setting aside Saul and Barnabas). The choosing is simply covered in prayer!

Obedience -> Patience -> Witness

Think Deeply:

Will you allow the story of Judas' life to be a warning concerning faithfulness? What helps you move toward Jesus in faithfulness? Who helps you?

Are you able to process the plans of God with openness and mystery?

The story of Israel.

The story of Gentiles.

Are you continuing to trust that God is at work?

What does it mean for you and your community to find collective clarity? Is obedience, patience, and witness a normal part of your life? How? And If not, why not?