



January 7, 2023
"The New Body"

SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King's Kids Presentation.

News:

Wednesday Classes Resume January 10th

Annual Church Meeting Sunday, January 21st

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Acts 1:1-3, 1The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had given orders by the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen. 3To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of things regarding the kingdom of God.

Acts 1:4&5, 4Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Acts 1:6-8, 6So, when they had come together, they began asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time that You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7But He said to them, "It is not for you to know periods of time or appointed times which the Father has set by His own authority; 8but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and as far as the remotest part of the earth."

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Acts 1:9–11, 9And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were watching, and a cloud took Him up, out of their sight. 10And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, then behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them, 11and they said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

Acts 1:12–14, 12Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mountain called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away. 13When they had entered the city, they went up to the upstairs room where they were staying, that is, Peter, John, James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. 14All these were continually devoting themselves with one mind to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Acts 1:15–26, 15At this time Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters (a group of about 120 people was there together), and said, 16“Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry.” 18(Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. 19And it became known to all the residents of Jerusalem; as a result that field was called Hakeldama in their own language, that is, Field of Blood.) 20“For it is written in the book of Psalms: ‘May his residence be made desolate, And may there be none living in it’; and, ‘May another take his office.’ 21Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—22beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” 23So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. 24And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all people, show which one of these two You have chosen 25to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” 26And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.”

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
 Phone _____ Email _____



Alêtheia

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



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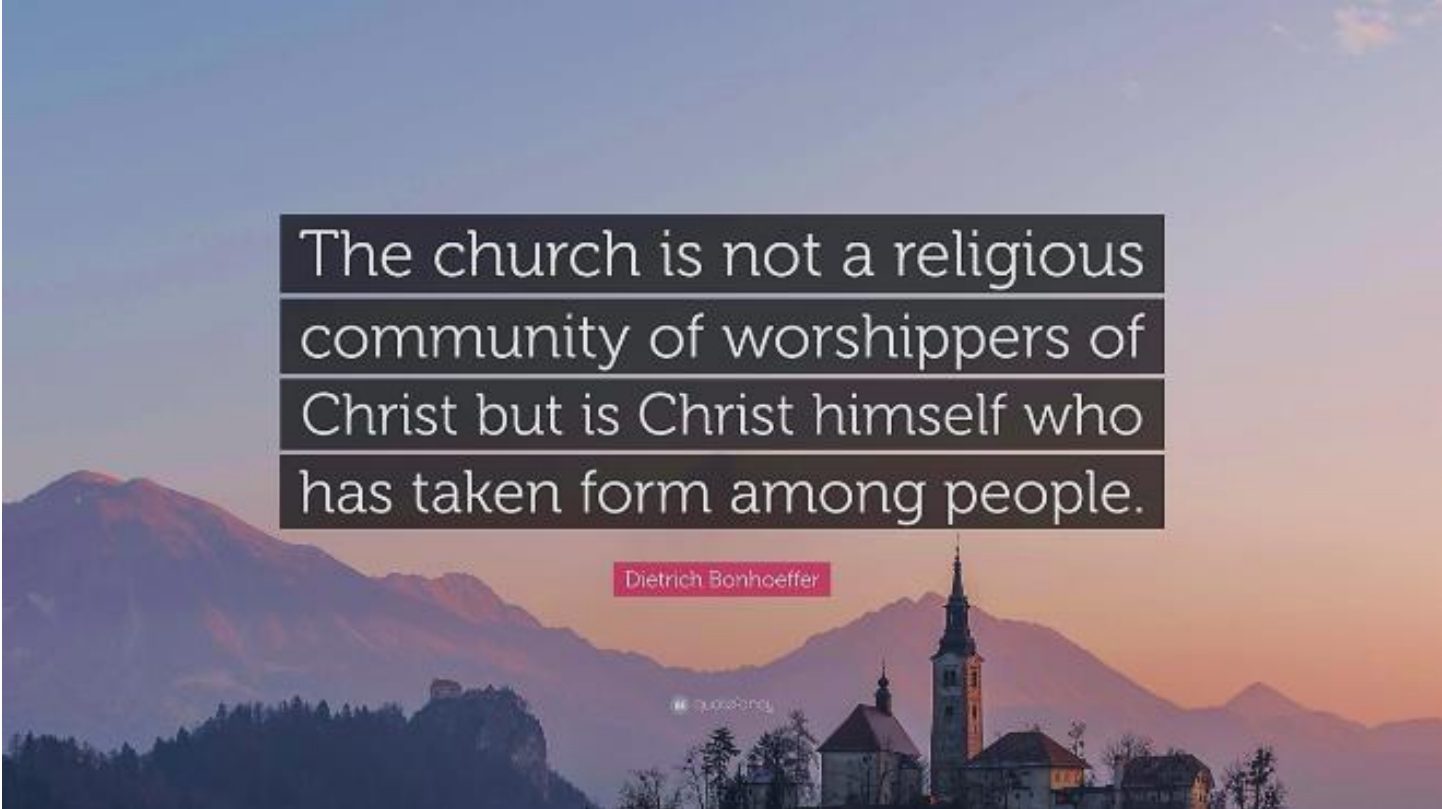
Alêtheia

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Last week we opened the Book of Acts as a framework to go through most of the Epistles in the Bible as they occur chronologically.

We saw in those first few verses that Jesus, after His death and resurrection appeared to over 500 different people over a forty-day period of time. He provided “many convincing proofs” that He was indeed Resurrected and then after giving His disciples their marching orders, He Ascended into Heaven, where He remains at the Right Hand of the Father, to return again.

He’s Coming for His Bride soon and very soon and His reward is with Him. He will formally and finally establish the Kingdom of God and His friends will reign with Him forever.



The church is not a religious
community of worshippers of
Christ but is Christ himself who
has taken form among people.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Jesus then did something quite astonishing. He established an age that would exist on earth between His Ascension and His Return. An age where His disciples, generation after generation, would be His physical presence in the world.

These disciples would be filled with the Holy Spirit and through His power and their active submission, Jesus would build the Kingdom of God on earth, which is the church. The Kingdom being built – the Kingdom that Jesus will one day firmly establish once and for all – is the church – the community of God.

Since then, and until now, this is the “church age.” We are living in what is, without question, the last phase of the church age.

I want to remind you that whether or not you believe that Jesus is going to suddenly and without warning Rapture you out of this mess, you must constantly be ready to meet Jesus face-to-face. Just as the wisest man on earth wrote, “no one knows when their hour will come” (Ecclesiastes 9:12). Likewise, regardless of your opinions about the Great Tribulation the absolute Truth is that as the poet said, “A little rain must fall” (Longfellow). Everyone suffers and so we must also be prepared to persevere through our own tribulations.

Our friend and brother Tom suffered mightily and then faced Jesus. You will too. If I might humbly suggest, in the meantime, make sure that you do what you can, while you can, where it matters.



The Gifts of the Holy Spirit for the empowerment of ministry to others had not yet been bestowed. It is rightly a Baptism of the Holy Spirit whereby a human being can be used by God to reach other human beings personally. All Christians are Baptized in the Holy Spirit at the very instant of genuine Salvation.

There is no additional outpouring upon a Christian. The amount of Holy Spirit deposit (to use Paul's terminology) is sufficient to move the universe. You don't need any more power – you've already got far more than necessary. What you can get is greater access to the Spirit within as you surrender to His purposes.

The idea that there is a “second blessing” of the Holy Spirit after a person is a Christian is a misnomer, bad teaching, erroneous doctrine, poor theology, shoddy exegesis, muddled hermeneutics – it is a sad and harmful misunderstanding of the Bible.

The Holy Spirit points to Jesus as we saw last week. In so doing He is called the “Spirit of Truth.” He confirms and propagates, reminds and explains, the teaching of Jesus, the Word of God, Who exists as Truth itself. The Truth with a capital “T” is the Light. The Light that illuminates the thinking of man.



We must come to the Light, but the Light reveals all and so to come to the Light we either need to be incredibly humble and repentant, or we need to be so self-deluded that we don't see much amiss in ourselves. No one is coming to the Light of Truth outside of those two ways... At least not until the Last Day. On the Last Day everyone will be forced into the Light and then, of course, it will be too late.

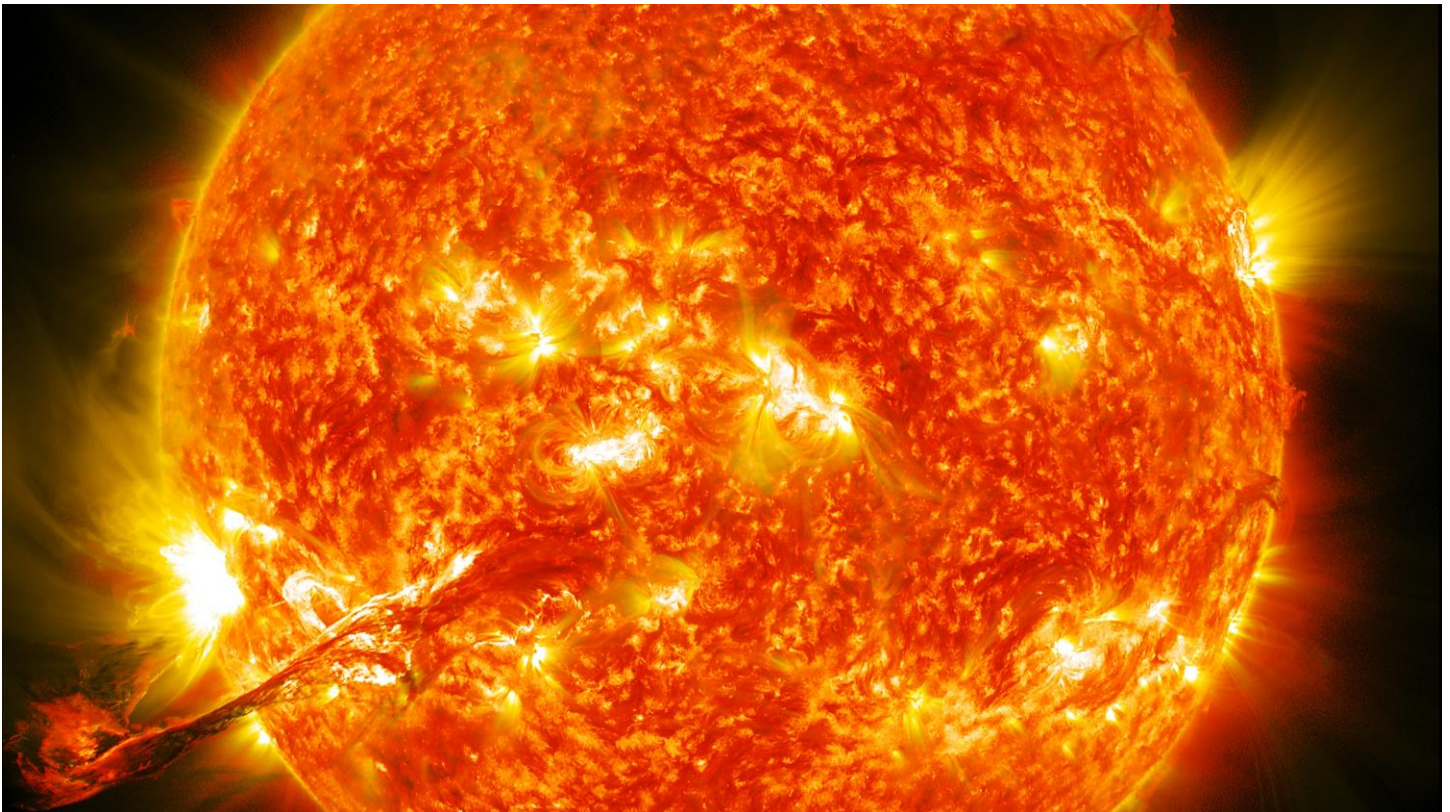
Please, my friends, please see this vital Truth. No one who comes to the Light voluntarily, without being crushed by the weight of their sins, overwhelmed by their inability and unworthiness, and brought to their knees in weeping repentance, has truly come to the Light.

Anyone and everyone who allows the Light of Truth to shine upon them knows instantly what Isaiah knew, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5). They know that their "righteousness is like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6), they know what Peter knew when he fell to his knees before Jesus, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"

(Luke 5:8). No one can stand under the scrutiny of a perfect and holy God.

Once a person has had all their illusions of personal goodness and worth torn down and willingly discarded, then they are in the humble position of true surrender to the Light. And it is in the Light that Life is found.

Abundant Life is the gift of God by the Will of the Father through the completed work of the Son made accessible by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables the Agapê Love of God to be received much like our atmosphere allows us to feel the heat and see the light of the sun.



The sun in our solar system exists, whether we do or not, it exists whether we could see or feel it or not. The sun is there, 93 million miles away even without the light and heat that it produces. The nuclear fusion taking place is the effulgence of the sun. The light and heat make the sun knowable to us. Without any effulgence, the sun would still be there, but we wouldn't be aware of its existence. The Sun's effulgence makes the Sun obvious. Even though the tremendous light and heat is emitted, we would still not see and feel it if there wasn't a medium through which it is propagated. This is an analogy of our God. The Father is the sun, the Word is the Sun's effulgence, and the Holy Spirit is the medium or the atmosphere that allows us to see and feel that effulgence.

In that way, it is the Holy Spirit Who enables us to receive the Love of God, which then enables us to Love God with Godly Love. We Love Him because He loved us first... It is His Love that we reflect back to Him. It's like the moon reflecting the sun's light back – while the moon produces no light of its own it can be extremely bright. In us, this reflected Love is made possible by the Holy Spirit within us.



Peter could only love Jesus with a human love and affection because he was not yet indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Only a person who has the Holy Spirit within them is able to Agapê Jesus because Agapê can only come from the Father, through Jesus, by the connection of the Holy Spirit.

Beyond that the Holy Spirit points the Believer to Christ by conforming the Believer to Christ. This is the Fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is the edification of the Believer. Finally, the Holy Spirit points others to Christ through the Believer who allows the Holy Spirit to operate through them. These are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit which are for the edification of others. The edification of

the church by direct ministry to the church and indirectly by ministry to nonbelievers who may join the church.

The Holy Spirit is given at the moment of Salvation, but the Christian's ability to fully embrace God's Love and share it, as well as their growth in the Fruit of the Holy Spirit, as well as their willingness to be used by the Holy Spirit in as ministry Gifts comes through intentionality.

To intentionally embrace Love and share it, to mature as a Christian and to become an active minister of Grace requires discipline... Which is to say, the discipline of learning and applying the Truth. That's precisely what the Holy Spirit will empower you to do if you are humble, willing, and intentional.

You can't do it without the indwelling Holy Spirit and, as God would have it, the Holy Spirit is a Gentleman. He will not forcibly possess your body a make you be a proper Christian.

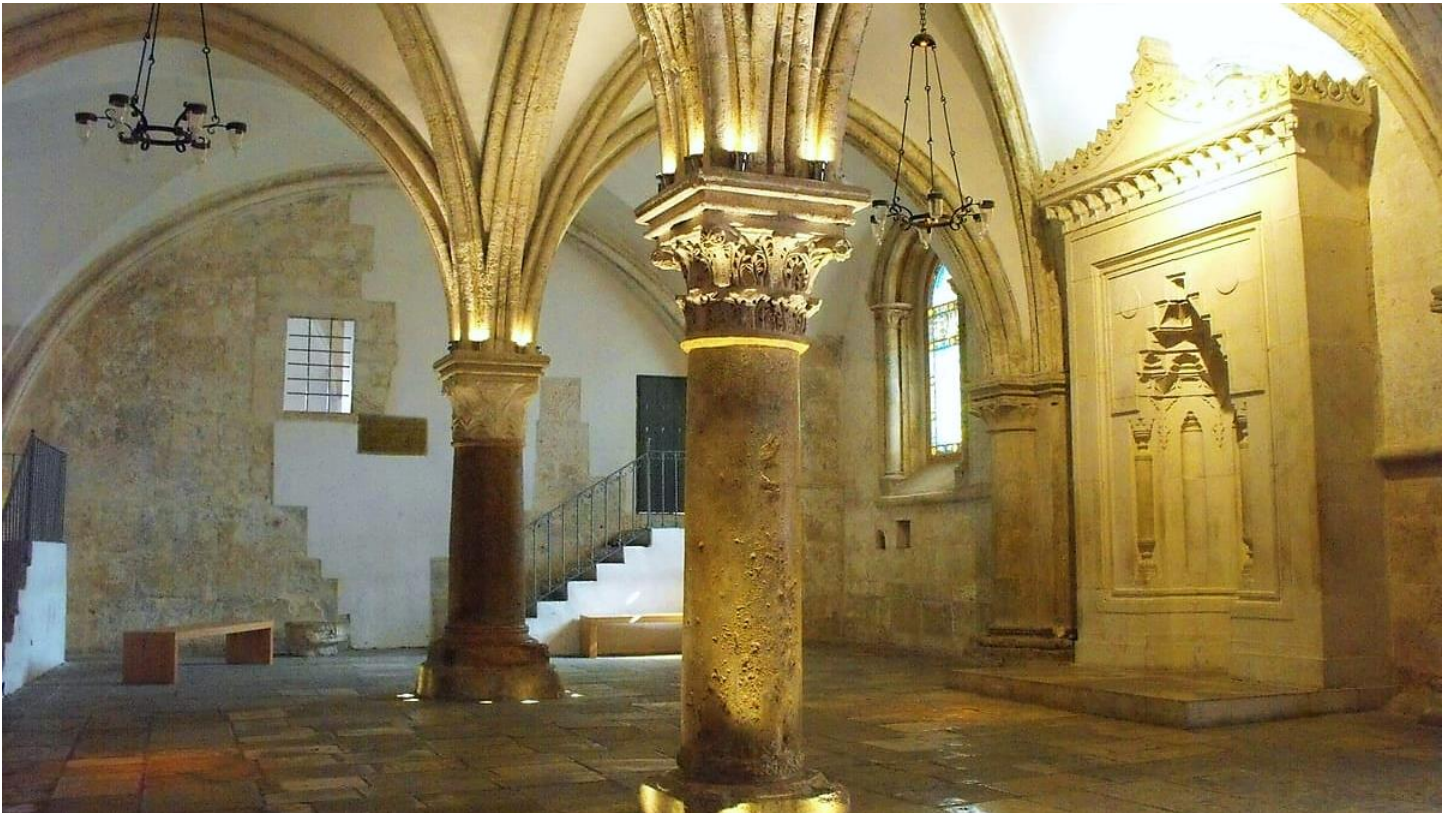
People are backsliders on their knees long before they backslide openly in the eyes of the world.

J. C. Ryle

You have the autonomy to ignore and hinder His work in you. To what end? You can resist the Holy Spirit and live your last few years, or perhaps decades, in a way that you think will be easier and more comfortable. Or you can sign up for the adventure, trust God, live for Jesus, be in-step with the Holy Spirit and enhance eternity for everyone.

Some people will enter Heaven experiencing loss – that doesn't seem great to me, especially when the payoff in this life is so pitiful. There is another thing to consider however... The Christian who consistently resists the Holy Spirit may not be a Christian at all. I

don't say that so Christians will examine others, but so that Christians will examine themselves.



Jesus told His people to wait for the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:12–14, 12Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mountain called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. 13When they had entered the city, they went up to the upstairs room where they were staying, that is, Peter, John, James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. 14All these were continually devoting themselves with one mind to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

The Mount of Olives is across the Kidron Valley from Jerusalem. The Garden of Gethsemane is located on the frontside and Bethany on the backside. The Prophet Zechariah foretold that it was the place where the Messiah would appear to fight the nations on behalf of Israel.

The mention that it was a “Sabbath day’s journey away” is a measure of distance, not a reference to the day of the week. The distance is 2,000 cubits or a bit less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, which is the approximate distance from the city to the summit of the mountain.

The “Upper Room” could have easily been a different room than the one in which they had the Last Supper and different still than the one in which Jesus appeared to them after His Resurrection, but it was probably the same. Church tradition identifies it as such and has venerated the site for over 17 centuries. It is called the Cenacle. The room has been destroyed and rebuilt a few times over the centuries and so, the structure that stands today that you see in the photo only dates back to the Crusades – roughly 900 years ago.

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1. Peter
 2. John
 3. James
 4. Andrew
 5. Philip
 6. Thomas
 7. Bartholomew
 8. Matthew
 9. James the son of Alphaeus
 10. Simon the Zealot
 11. Judas the son of James

Luke then lists the Apostles and while it is interesting, the most striking thing about it is that one of the 12 is missing. This sets the stage for what's to come. The second-most notable thing is that as in every other list, Peter is prominently mentioned first. There is no question whatsoever that Peter was the first Christian pastor. He wasn't the lone pastor for too long, as we will see, in the coming chapters.



In verse 14 Luke makes it very emphatic that the entire church, the 11 remaining Apostles, along with the male and female disciples and others were devoted to prayer and to each other. They evidently took serious what Jesus had taught. They were united in harmonious prayer, all of one mind and in one accord together in the Name of Jesus.

Finally, we see that within 40 days of Jesus' Resurrection, His entire earthly family were part of the church. The Apostle Paul confirms that James the eldest of Jesus' younger brothers was visited by Jesus post-Resurrection. That no doubt left an impression. James the brother of Jesus came to be known as old

camel knees due to the hours he spent on his knees praying. He of course eventually became the leader of the Jerusalem church and the author of the eponymous Bible Book.



Acts 1:15–26, 15At this time Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters (a group of about 120 people was there together), and said, 16“Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry.” 18(Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out.

19And it became known to all the residents of Jerusalem; as a result that field was called Hakeldama in their own language, that is, Field of Blood.) 20“For it is written in the book of Psalms: ‘May his residence be made desolate, And may there be none living in it’; and, ‘May another take his office.’ 21Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—22beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” 23So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. 24And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all people, show which one of these two You have chosen 25to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” 26And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.”

It’s quite remarkable how many Christians are taught and believe that the very first independent act that the church conducted was a mistake. Many people assume that the method of selection, along with the fact that they did this prior to receiving the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit, coupled with the absolute

obscurity of the man they chose, and the extreme influence of Paul is proof that the first church leaders were morons and that nothing has changed in 2,000 years.

Well, that's nonsense. All of it is nonsense. The way Luke records this incident, there isn't even a hint that he thought anything was amiss, it's just the reverse. What we see here is the church acting in unison to fulfill the will of God and the desire of Jesus with the resources given to them by God.

The number was originally 12 for a Scripture fulfilling reason and one of the 12 was lost for a Scripture fulfilling reason, but now the number needed to be restored to 12 for a Scripture fulfilling reason. The Scripture fulfilling reason was that the 12 Apostles represented Israel and the fulness of Israel needed to be intact before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

In the next chapter we will see that outpouring and it will be specifically noted as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. Joel is יוֹאֵל (yō-ěl), meaning Yah, short for Yahweh, is God. He prophesied for nearly two chapters about bad stuff happening to the Jews due to their lack

of love for God and calling them to repentance and getting that straight.

Joel 2:12, 12“Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping, and mourning; 13And tear your heart and not merely your garments.” Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in mercy and relenting of catastrophe... Skipping down to verse 27, 27“So you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God and there is no other; And My people will never be put to shame. 28“It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind... Skipping ahead again to verse 32, 32“And it will come about that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Will be saved... In chapter three Joel prophesies the destruction of God’s enemies in the “Day of the Lord.”

Quickly, what it means is that the Jewish people would go astray, God would give them hardship to bring them back. Hardship pushes people in two opposing directions. Some are pushed towards fear, victimization, resentment, anger, self-focus, and a burning desire for revenge. Such people either strive to take their vengeance, or wallow in it.

Others are pushed to humble repentance and a genuine seeking of God. Not seeking God to fix the present physical problem but seeking Him to correct the relational heart problem that they realize that they themselves caused.

The prophet wrote that some of Israel – the true Jews – would repent and humbly seek God. That's precisely what John the Baptizer's ministry was all about. A baptism of repentance. A Jewish person did not need to be dunked by a wild-eyed, Grasshopper-eating, dude in a camelhair cloak. The fact that some did, while many did not, was based on their attitude. Those that humbled themselves and were baptized accepted Jesus and those who were too proud and so, refused to be baptized, the Bible declares, were likewise too proud and opinionated to accept Jesus.

Joel prophesied that those who humbled themselves in repentance and earnestly sought the Lord on His terms, rather than on their own terms would be eternally Saved and receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, the Word of Almighty God made flesh for us is the Christ, which is merely the Greek translation of The Anointed One of God, His Messiah. The Messiah, מָשִׁיחַ (mä-shē-äx), was always to come from and minister to, Israel – the Jews – God’s people who He set aside for that redemptive purpose. The Messiah is first the Jewish Messiah. The totality of Judaism had to be represented and so the 12th Apostle, who would betray Jesus, had to be replaced prior to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.



What’s incredibly fascinating is that the Resurrected Jesus spent 40 days with His people between His Resurrection and His Ascension and He left the task to the church.

What's even better is that the church, which at that time, consisted of 11 Apostles (including all three of Jesus' inner circle) along with over 100 other disciples (including His mother and family), all of whom knew Jesus personally and all of whom saw Him in His Resurrected state... That church... That church didn't think for a moment that they were qualified to do anything out of their own wisdom and abilities.

They continually devoted themselves to communal, corporate, prayer. There is a saying that if you want to have a church event with the lowest possible attendance, just call it a prayer meeting. One of the most amazing church experiences that I've ever had was attending a prayer meeting at Times Square Church. The place was packed with literally several hundred people. I felt like Dave Wilkerson, and I were the only white dudes in the building, but the place was awash in the love of God and as everyone began praying together, I felt as comfortable and as in-tune with the Holy Spirit as I ever have. It was a truly remarkable time.

Well, at that time Pastor Peter stood up among the 120 or so people there and said, "Men of brothers," which

sounds weird and which no English Bible translates that way. A formal address in Greek rhetoric starts with the specific audience within the larger audience. It is the same as saying Senators of Greece, or Brothers of Israel, or Denver Broncos of the NFL. Here it is specifying the men of the larger group of brothers. The Brothers term could easily and very likely does include the women as an expression to mean Christians.

Most scholars today gloss over this and indicate that Peter was addressing the entire group. Maybe. What's absolutely certain is that He, without abjection from anyone in the group, was looking for a man to replace a man.



Lately, we get this attack on Christianity as being another patriarchal misogynistic tyranny oppressing women. Nothing could be further from the Truth. We will see many women prominently portrayed in our journey through the Book of Acts and the Epistles. Women were integral to Christianity before it was Christianity and have been ever since. It was women who made Jesus' itinerant ministry financially feasible. What the Bible makes absolutely clear is that there is no male/female difference whatsoever in their respective value, worth, and impact. What the Bible also makes absolutely clear is that there is God-ordained distinction in the roles in which males' and females' function.

If in our 21st century perspective we recoil against that Biblical fact, I encourage you to take it up with the Author. I'm simply explaining what He wrote. Bottom line, there is something for everyone to dislike in the Bible – trust me. There is something for every person to dislike in the Bible. Because that is true, the choice boils down to whether a person will try to conform the Bible and so, Christianity, to themselves and their particular tastes and proclivities, or will a person choose the far more difficult path and earnestly pray that the Holy Spirit conforms them to His Truth as it is

written. Because America is so far removed from its Christian moorings, today, most people don't try to conform the Bible anymore – they just chuck it in the dumpster.



The Scripture that Peter alluded to in verse 16 and then quoted in verse 20 is specifically the Psalms 69 and 109, but there are other passages that come to mind as well. The point of the narrative about Judas is to establish why there was a vacancy that needed to be filled.

While there are many Scriptures that foretold the betrayal, nowhere is Judas excused for being the one through whom Jesus was betrayed.



That's a vitally important concept. The excuse, "the devil made me do it," or more on point and far more popular today, the excuse "this is the way God made me," will not fly. We are all of us conceived in a world of our making. A world that is fallen and depraved, that is a corruption of what God spoke into existence. He allowed our distant ancestors to reject Him and go their own way. Generation upon generation of fear, immorality, and murder has a cumulative effect.

People are concerned about man-caused climate change. I'll tell you about man-caused climate change! It's called rebellion against our Creator, and it has

ruined everything. Pestilence, disease, disaster, murder, mayhem, war, and atrocity... God help us!

Despite all the vileness around us and all the temptations to take control and make the best of it without God, The Bible declares that we all know better. The Bible declares that on Judgment Day all those who rejected Jesus will be without any valid excuse at all.

Are you a person who in times of trouble shake your fist at God, or fall on your knees before Him? That's the real essence of what it means that God will judge the heart.



Luke shared a graphic description of Judas' penultimate fate. His account here seems to many people to contradict the account in Matthew 27:3–10, 3Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? You shall see to it yourself!" 5And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and left; and he went away and hanged himself. 6The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them in the temple treasury, since it is money paid for blood." 7And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. 8For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "and they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel; 10and they gave them for the potter's field, just as the lord directed me."

Luke, here in Acts, doesn't tell us how Judas died, but tells us what happened to his dead body. Many people suppose that He hanged himself and after a few days in the hot sun either the rope or the branch broke, and

Judas fell headlong onto the ground with predictable results. What's more likely, is that after his body was quite bloated the priests paid some guys to bury his body in the field that they had just bought. In the process the guys either threw his body intentionally or perhaps unintentionally dropped it and it burst open. The precise details would have been well known in the first century.



The other point of controversy is that Luke says Judas acquired the field and Matthew reported that the priests bought it. This is a case where the cause is said to be the actor. As an example, we say that the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C. was between Octavian and Antony and Cleopatra. Well, none of those people actually

fought in the battle. They were the cause, and so we simply say that it was their battle. Judas was the cause of the priests buying the field.

Peter, again without dissent from anyone present, set forth the minimum requirement for the replacement. It was a standard that none of Jesus' family members could meet.



The group as a whole, or more likely, the 11 Apostles with the approval of all present, offered up only two qualified candidates. Now, here's what's quite amazing. Even this group of people, about 20 of whom the Catholic and Orthodox Churches revere as Saints refused to decide. They prayed that God, and even

more technically, that Jesus, would decide. That the person to take that 12th spot would be appointed directly by Jesus as much as it was possible in those circumstances to determine.

They drew lots. Probably two nearly identical objects of different colors or with different markings, one for each candidate, was placed in a basket and then one was drawn. The lot representing Matthias was picked through the providence of God.

This passage brings up a lot of important questions for the church that Luke never intended to answer with it. What about apostasy? Can one lose their salvation like Judas? What about suicide? Is suicide a one-way ticket to the “bad place”? What about Christian decision making? Is casting lots evil? What about radical forgiveness? Was Peter forgiven and Judas condemned?



As I say, these are important questions that God doesn't actually try to answer in this passage. Yet, they are present within the passage and worth a little time to explore. Maybe next time, but for now we have seen that the people who knew Jesus best did their best, prayed a lot, remained in harmony together as the Body of Jesus going forward... Focused upon His purposes. The question is will we follow suit?