

**Brief Introduction to
Acts 1:12-30
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Book of Acts Structure

- I. Jesus promises power for witness to the nations
- II. The apostles witness in Jerusalem and Judea
 - A. The church in Jerusalem is planted 1:12–2:47
 - 1. The Lord chooses a twelfth apostle 1:12-30**
 2. Jews are baptized in the Holy Spirit 2:1-13
 3. Peter preaches the gospel to Israelites 2:14-36
 4. The apostles plant churches in Jerusalem 2:37-47
 - B. The church in Jerusalem expands 3:1–6:7
- III. Believers witness in Judea and Samaria
- IV. The apostles witness to Gentiles
- V. The Jerusalem church affirms the conversion of Gentiles
- VI. Paul preaches the gospel to the Greeks
- VII. Paul preaches the gospel to the Romans

II.A.1. The Lord chooses a twelfth apostle 1:12-30

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mountain called [the Mount] of Olives (which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away). 13 When they had entered Jerusalem, they went to the upstairs room where they were staying.

“Sabbath day’s journey refers to the distance the rabbis permitted a person to travel on the Sabbath without breaking the Sabbath, specified in tractate Sotah 5:3 of the Mishnah as 2,000 cubits (a cubit was about 18 inches). In this case the distance was about half a mile (1 km).” [www.netbible.org]

Theological importance: What was significant about the Mount of Olives, regarding messianic or end-times expectations?

- Past: “The glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain that is on the east side of the city” (Ezek. 11:23).
- Present: Jesus had been crucified at Golgotha, atop the Mount of Olives.
- Future: “On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives” (Zech. 14:4)

Solid Bible Interpretation requires that we “get into the mind” of ancient Jews, because:

- God revealed the Bible to them in terms of their languages and worldview.
- Thus, the Bible means what it meant to them.
- Jesus spoke to them, not to evolutionists nor to creationists, not to Calvinists nor to Arminians, not to Catholics, to Orthodox nor to Protestants, Not to Baptists nor to Pentecostals.

13 Peter and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James

were there. 14 All these continued together in prayer [+and request] **with one mind, together with the women** [+and children], **along with Mary** [~Maria] **the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.**

Query: What had Jesus given to his 12 apostles, or promised to give to them?

- Jesus gave to the 12 apostles his authority and power to heal the sick, to cast out demons, and to declare the Good News. Luke 9:1-2
- The Father would grant to them whatever they agreed on and asked for in Jesus' name. Matthew 18:18-20; John 16:23
- The Father would send his Holy Spirit to abide with them, reminding them of all that Jesus had said. John 14:26

Query: What was so important about the number 12?

- Because Jacob had 12 sons, the number came to signify all the tribes. Genesis 35:22
- Whilst the northern ten tribes remained in captivity, the messianic kingdom could not come. Jeremiah 31:31; Zechariah 8:13
- The apostles would one day sit on 12 thrones judging the tribes of Israel. Luke 22:30

Theological importance: How can Christian churches be sure that they operate by the authority of Jesus Christ?

- The apostles' teaching would become the standard of truth for the early churches.
- The churches would admit into their 'canon' of authoritative Scriptures only those books written by an apostle or approved by an apostle.
- Protestant churches hold apostolic authority to be greater than that of church hierarchies.

15 In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a gathering of about 120 people) and said, 16 “Brothers, the [~this] **scripture had to** [~must] **be fulfilled that the Holy Spirit foretold through David concerning Judas—who became the guide for those who arrested Jesus— 17 for he was counted as one of us and** [~who] **received a share in this ministry.”**

Query: How could Peter know that David, 1000 years earlier, had written about Judas?

Suggestions:

- Peter believed that David's words were predictions about Jesus and therefore also about his betrayer, Judas.
- Peter found these psalms to be a good fit, so he was applying them to Judas.
- Peter was inspired by the same Holy Spirit to “re-purpose” Scripture.
- In John 13:18, Jesus cites Psalm 41:9, about Judas, and in 17:12 says that Judas fulfills Scripture as “the son of perdition”.

(Skipping verses 18-19, a parenthesis, perhaps inserted by Luke after his sojourn in Judea.)

20 “For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘*Let his house become deserted, and let there be no one to live in it,*’ and ‘*Let another take his position of responsibility.*’
21 Thus one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time the Lord Jesus [+Christ] associated with us, **22** beginning from his baptism by John until the day he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness of his resurrection together with us.”

Query: Was Peter too hasty? Would not Paul later become the 12th apostle?

Paul did not meet the qualifications to be a witness:

- He did not accompany Jesus during his earthly ministry.
- He was not amongst those to whom Jesus appeared alive before his ascension.

Note: In Psalm 69, the Hebrew Bible has plural pronouns, whereas Peter was quoting from the Greek Septuagint, which has singular pronouns.

In Psalm 106, the writer was quoting what enemies were saying about him! Not what he was saying about one of them.

Query: Was Peter, and therefore Luke, mistaken in their interpretation of these Psalms? If so, then how can the New Testament be inspired by God?

Suggestions:

- Literal prediction and fulfillment are not the only way in which the NT makes use of the Tanach (OT).
- NT writers often draw analogies or similarities between the Tanach and their own teaching, which their readers would find compelling.
- Drawing such analogies was a common Jewish method, approved in writings of some rabbis.

23 So they [~he] proposed two candidates: Joseph called Barsabbas [~Barnabas] (also called Justus) and Matthias.

Query: Who are “they” who proposed the men?

Interpretations:

- The apostles (who knew who were qualified).
- The assembly (who knew whom they wanted).
- Impersonal ‘they’ = “Two were proposed”.

24 Then they prayed, “Lord, you know the hearts of all. Show us which one of these two you have chosen **25** to assume the task [~lot] of this service and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.”

NOTE: Literally, “to take the place of the service this and apostleship” = “to assume this apostolic service”.

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“Knows hearts” occurs again in Acts 15:8 about God giving his Holy Spirit to Gentiles.

Query: Why would the apostles believe that God should answer this prayer in a way that they could be sure of His choice?

Proverbs 16:33, “The lot is cast into the lap, yet its every decision is from the LORD.”

26 Then they cast [~their] lots for them, and the one chosen was Matthias; so he was counted with the eleven apostles.

NOTE: “Counted” in verse 17 = *kat·arithme·ô* = to count, to reckon. “Counted” in verse 26 = *sug·kata·pséph·iz·omai* = to vote with pebbles.

QUERIES:

Who actually chose Matthias to be counted with the 11 apostles?

What importance do verses 1:15-26 have for Christians, today?

- The 12 apostles’ authority came from the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The apostles sometimes interpreted the Tanach literally (prediction-fulfillment), and other times they repurposed its patterns and examples.
- New Testament Scriptures, including the Book of Acts, draw their authority from Jesus’ apostles.
- Scripture has more authority than church leaders do.

NOTE: Seven terms describing the role of apostles in Acts 1:12-30

1:17 *kléros*, share, assignment > cleric

1:17 *diakonia*, service, ministry > deacon

1:20 *epaulis*, abode, dwelling > epaulet

1:20 *episkopé*, oversight, office > episcopal

1:22 *martys*, witness, testimony > martyr

1:25 *topos*, place, position > top (?), topographic

1:25 *apostolé*, delegate, envoy > apostle