

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study guide is to facilitate the study of Acts 1:12-26 as a supplement to the sermon. It is based on my (Michael's) study and meditation on the passage. This handout can be used for personal study or community group conversation. (I hope you join a group!)

ACTS 1:12-26 ESV

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. 13 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. 14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. 15 In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, 16 "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17 For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." 18 (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 "For it is written in the Book of Psalms, "'May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it'; and "'Let another take his office.' 21 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." 23 And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen 25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." 26 And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

STRUCTURE

- I. Introduction: Israel's restoration begins (1:12-14)
 - a. It begins with a return to Jerusalem (1:12)
 - b. It begins with Israel's new leaders in an upper room (1:13)
 - c. It begins with Israel's new community in prayer (1:14)
- II. God restores Israel's failed leadership (1:15-26)
 - a. God guides the choice of a twelfth apostle *through Scripture* (1:15-20)
 - i. Introduction to Peter's leadership over the growing community (1:15)
 - ii. Peter identifies fulfillment of Scripture through Judas (1:16-20)
 1. Judas' fate explained as "fulfillment" of Scripture (1:16-19)
 2. Judas' legacy fulfills Ps. 69:26 (1:20a)
 3. Judas' replacement fulfills Ps. 109:8 (1:20b)
 - b. God guides the choice of a twelfth apostle *through wise qualifications* (1:21-22)
 - c. God guides the choice of a twelfth apostle *through prayerful seeking* (1:23-26)
 - i. Joseph and Matthias (1:23)
 - ii. Prayer and casting lots (1:24-26)

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

Jesus has just spent the last forty days teaching about the kingdom and about the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit associated with it. The disciples have responded obediently. Now we see them both united and praying for the first time, and we gather the sense that God is up to something important. He is.

Just as the baptism of the Spirit has dominated the first chapter of Acts, His restorative work begins in earnest with the restoration of Israel's leadership and community. This happens before the Spirit falls because without established leadership, there could be no firm direction for the church. This is why God does not wait until after the baptism of the Spirit to establish the twelfth apostle. In the wake of Judas' absence, his replacement must come immediately.

In this regard, the number twelve is significant. On the surface, it would seem that eleven leaders would do just fine, but twelve was the number of apostles Jesus chose (Luke 6), and He chose it for a reason. Undoubtedly, it relates to the number of Jacob's sons, who were heads of the twelve tribes. In choosing twelve disciples, Jesus was establishing Israel's renewed leadership. That 120 disciples gather in the upper room—a multiple of twelve—means that both Israel and her leadership are being renewed.

Luke wants us to know in the present section that Israel's renewed leadership is reliable. They are grounded in Jerusalem (Acts 1:12), which fulfills the OT promise that the Scripture would go out from there (Isaiah 2; Micah 2). They are established in an upper room, reminiscent of Sinai (1:13). They are devoted to prayer (1:14). And their selection is not of human origin. Rather, it is guided by Scripture (1:15-20), wise qualifications (1:21-22), and prayerful seeking (1:23-26). In the end, their selection is God's selection. After all, "the Scripture had to be fulfilled" (1:16; cf. 1:20) and "one of these men MUST become with us a witness to His resurrection" (1:22). To submit to Israel's new leadership, then, is to submit to the God who hand-selected them.

By way of application, this means that our faith is not in a Jesus cult that happened to catch fire two thousand years ago. The apostles were not so much a "new Israel"—as if the old one had disappeared—but a "renewed Israel." They and the 120 were a restored remnant, whose roots could be traced all the way back to Abraham. Our faith is not a Johnny-come-lately, like Mormonism or so-called "Progressive Christianity." Each of these refuses to submit to the historic witness of the apostles, making up rules as they go. This passage reminds us that we don't make the rules. Our faith is historic, and as such, must submit to the witness of the apostolic church. As believers, this should comfort us. "New" is not always better, and is oftentimes worse. If God is both good and real, then He has communicated Himself since time immemorial, and we should expect a faith that is antique, without being antiquated.

On the last note, the only thing that makes our faith "antiquated" is when we resist the need for renewal. Israel needed renewal, not because she needed a little lighter fluid, but because she burned incense to other gods. She had departed from the covenant. In like manner, the motto of the Reformation was "always reforming"—why?—because we are always departing! Believers need a faith that is rooted, but let us be careful that our roots grab the soil of Scripture—not vain tradition. Rootedness without renewal is Pharisaism; renewal without rootedness is heresy.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. 13 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.

—"Then": their return to Jerusalem follows its two-fold mention in the prior context. First, they were told not to leave Jerusalem, and then, that their global witness would spring from there. In this light, the sequence portrays them as obedient to Christ's commands.

—"Sabbath day's journey": this is about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. More importantly, the language emphasizes their Jewishness. The Gospel goes forth from Jerusalem, and from Jews, just as God promised.

—"from the mount called Olivet":

- Also called the Mount of Olives. This mountain connotes significant eschatological import. It is where the Messiah will return at the end of the age (Zech. 14), it is the site of Armageddon (Zech. 14), it is where Jesus taught about the last days (Matt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21), it was His favorite prayer spot (Lk. 22), and it is where they watched Him ascend (Acts 1).
- The mention of Olivet thus postures the disciples' mission in the shadow of Christ's return and the end of the age. Put differently, the mission of the church and the end of the age bear close relation. Jesus says as much in Matthew 24:14: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."
- From Jesus' ascent to heaven until His descent back to earth—the church must bear witness: Jesus is king.

—"the upper room":

- It seems possible that Luke assigns symbolic significance to upper rooms in His narrative. Here are the mentions in Luke-Acts, in context:
 - The last supper / first communion (Luke 22:12)
 - Pentecost gathering (Acts 1:13)
 - Raising of Dorcas (Acts 9:37, 39)
 - Raising of Eutychus / communion (Acts 20:8)

- Two of the upper room narratives relate to communion. Three relate the power of the Spirit, and two of those, to resurrection. Perhaps I am making too much of the connections. But it seems like there's a common thread: when God's people gather (upper room) with hearts centered on Christ (communion), the Spirit breaks out in power (Pentecost, resurrection).
- Schreiner: "Though this might seem simply like a factual marker, Luke likely intends a deeper meaning for a few reasons. First, the context is littered with spatial connotations. Jesus just ascended (1:9-11), they were on the Mount of Olives... and Jerusalem was on Mount Zion. Second, they wait for the Spirit who will be poured out on high, so they go to a 'high room.' In ancient cosmology mountains and high places were the meeting places between heaven and earth—the place of temples (Isa. 2:2-3; Mic. 4:1-2). God's presence will be dispersed on his people in homes and not be confined by temple walls... As Matson says, 'The mission of the church begins in a house (1:13; 2:2) and ends in a house (28:30).'"

—"Peter": listed first because he takes leadership. This does not mean he is the first pope as Roman Catholics assert, but even Jesus affirmed his leadership (Matt. 16; Jhn. 20). Peter will lead the discussion about Judas' replacement (1:15), and he will continue to operate as the de facto leader of the early church in future chapters.

—"Peter and John and James and Andrew": When Jesus found them, the sons of Zebedee were together (James and John), as were Peter and Andrew, who were also brothers. Luke's rearrangement emphasizes that spiritual ties run deeper than familial ones. This is further emphasized when we learn that Mary and Jesus' brothers have joined the ranks, but do not hold leadership positions (14).

14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

—"one accord... devoting themselves to prayer... together":

- We have seen Jesus pray on many occasions. We have observed our Lord trying to wrangle the disciples into praying. On one occasion, they ask about prayer. But this is the first time in the Gospel accounts that we actually see the disciples praying.
- That they are of "one accord" means that they are in relational harmony and of a common focus. Unity is a common theme in Acts (2:46; 4:24; 5:12).
- Not only do they pray, but they devote themselves to prayer. There is an element of perseverance involved.
- They are "together" not just mentally and spiritually, but also physically. The Gospel is incarnational. We are not just pixels on a screen. Togetherness matters.
- It is significant that Jesus promises them the Holy Spirit, but this promise does not preclude prayer. They still must devote themselves continually and corporately to it.
- Schreiner, quoting Peterson: "It is striking that at almost every important turning point in the narrative of God's redemptive action in Acts we find a mention of prayer (1:24; 8:14-17; 9:11-12; 10:4, 9, 30; 13:2-3)."

—"the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers":

- The women were probably the ones who supported Jesus' ministry financially (Lk. 8). While Jesus chose twelve men as apostles, He nevertheless broke cultural norms to disciple women. Luke gives them special mention.
- Mary is singled out from the rest of the women for a place of honor. According to tradition, Luke personally interviewed Mary to record her reflections in Luke 1-2.
- Jesus' brothers did not believe before the resurrection (Jhn. 7:1-4), but now they do. We know that Jesus at least appeared afterward to James (1 Cor. 15:7), who is different from the apostle listed above, and who wrote the book of James.

15 In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said,

—"In those days":

- During the period of praying and waiting. Luke thus connects what is about to happen—the choosing of the twelfth apostle—to their continual devotion to prayer. The same Peter who neglected prayer and rejected Christ, now having repented, devotes himself to prayer and strengthens the brothers—just as Jesus commanded (Jhn. 20).
- "In those days" is also a typical prophetic language for speaking of the last days (Joel 3:1). The choosing of the twelfth apostle carries eschatological significance, for God is renewing His people in order to renew the whole earth.

—"the brothers": the cross creates family.

—"the company of persons was in all about 120":

- We were at first introduced to the eleven, who clearly lacked the twelfth man in their circle. Now we are introduced to the growing community.
- Some think that "120" is merely a historical report, and it is at least that. Others think it is merely symbolic, since there are (or will be) twelve apostles, and $12 \times 10 = 120$. I believe it is both historical and symbolic. Luke approximates the number—"about 120"—as if he wants it to land on that number. Given the context, where "twelve" is significant, 120 must also be.
- The point, then, is that God is restoring not only Israel's leadership, but Israel itself. This is Israel, renewed.

16 "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17 For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry."

—"Brothers": Jesus has created a new family, where spiritual ties run deeper than blood.

—"Scripture had to be fulfilled":

- Peter sees their circumstances as being predicted by the Scripture. This follows closely with the tone set in 1:12-14, where the disciples are gathered in one accord, seeking God in prayer. The point is that God has His hand all over the selection of the next apostle. First through concerted prayer, and now through Scripture, God will soon make His selection known.
- Calvin: "Judas may not be excused on the ground that what befell him was prophesied, since he fell away not through the compulsion of the prophecy but through the wickedness of his own heart."
- That Judas' opposition was part of the plan shows that the budding Jesus Movement was not just a reaction to plans being spoiled. It was rooted in biblical history.

—"which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David":

- Scripture is God speaking. It is also humans speaking. Some have tried to say that the hard parts of the Old Testament are really just "words about God, told from the perspective of His kids." On the surface, this is not untrue, but what they mean is that we can't trust the words as though God Himself were speaking. We must treat them as if the perspective of His kids might have mischaracterized God. We are thus left having to discern the actual Word of God! This is not how the apostles understood Scripture. David spoke AND the Holy Spirit spoke simultaneously. We should note the human author but emphasize the divine one. Many "Christians" do the reverse.
- This makes me think of Charles Ryrie's definition of inspiration, which is my favorite: "God's superintending of human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error in the words of the original autographs His revelation to man."
- Ryrie's definition captures God's primary activity, while not diminishing man's secondary activity. Unlike the Koran, the Bible is not dictated. The author wrote in his own words. It just so happened that they were also God's words.

—"Judas... guide... arrested... numbered among us... allotted his share in this ministry": despite Judas' fateful decision to serve as an accomplice to Christ's enemies, he nevertheless had been assigned as an apostle (Lk. 6). Jesus knew from the very beginning that Judas would betray Him (Jhn. 6:64); nevertheless, He appointed the betrayer to be an apostle. Why? The Scripture had to be fulfilled, Peter told us (as does Jesus in John 17). Perhaps God wrote this into the story and chose not to avoid it because He wanted to show that He can't be surprised, while at the same time relating to us in our moments of deepest betrayal.

18 (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

—Matthew says it like this:

- Matthew 27:3 *Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, 4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." 5 And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. 6 But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money." 7 So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers. 8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.*

—Do Luke and Matthew contradict? Matthew says Judas hung himself, but Luke says he fell headlong and his guts poured out. Probably, Judas hung himself by a tree, and when his body became bloated, a tree limb broke, and the gruesome scene transpired. As for the naming, "Field of Blood," Matthew says it got the name because the money was used to pay off a killer, while Luke suggests (possibly) that it got the

name because of Judas' bloody death. I would just say that Luke does not necessarily tie the name to Judas' bloody death, although I concede that he probably does. More importantly, it is easily conceivable that the name originated because of what Matthew said, but the language and its association developed after Judas died. Perhaps after Judas died, everyone associated "field of blood" with the final scene Peter described.

—J.A. Alexander: "There is scarcely an American or English jury that would scruple to receive these two accounts as perfectly consistent."

—What is Luke's point (or Peter's point) in mentioning this? Judas' manner of death says something about his eternal legacy. It was "the reward of his wickedness". Those who oppose the advancing kingdom will suffer the terrible consequences. Let Judas be a warning.

—God would not restore Israel without restoring her leadership. And her leadership could not be restored if one of the twelve heads was either wicked or dead. Judas was both. The replacement of Judas is about achieving the restoration of Israel, and through her, the nations. Like Israel of old, Israel's new leadership has twelve representative heads.

—"gushed out": the same Greek verb (*ekcheo*) is used in 2:18 to depict the Spirit being poured out on all flesh. In such close proximity, a contrast seems intentional. Judas' guts pour out as a result of his shameful death; God's Spirit pours out as a result of Christ's glorious ascension. In the world's eyes, both Jesus and Judas died in shame. But in truth, Christ conquered the shame, triumphed in the ascension, and then gushed the Spirit out upon "all flesh" in order to restore them to Himself and empower them for mission.

20 "For it is written in the Book of Psalms, 'May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it';

—This first quote is from Psalm 69, which is clearly a messianic psalm, for Gospel authors cite it often. Here are some examples (NT fulfillment indented):

- [Psa 69:4 ESV] 4 More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies. What I did not steal must I now restore?
 - [Jhn 15:25 ESV] 25 But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'
- [Psa 69:9 ESV] 9 For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.
 - [Jhn 2:17 ESV] 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."
 - [Rom 15:3 ESV] 3 For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me."
- [Psa 69:21 ESV] 21 They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.
 - [Mat 27:34, 48 ESV] 34 they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. ... 48 And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink.
 - [Mar 15:36 ESV] 36 And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down."
 - [Luk 23:36 ESV] 36 The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine
 - [Jhn 19:28-29 ESV] 28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." 29 A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.
- [Psa 69:22-23 ESV] 22 Let their own table before them become a snare; and when they are at peace, let it become a trap. 23 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually.
 - [Rom 11:9-10 ESV] 9 And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; 10 let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever."
- [Psa 69:25 ESV] 25 May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents.
 - [Act 1:20 ESV] 20 "For it is written in the Book of Psalms, 'May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it'; and 'Let another take his office.'

—Psalm 69 is about David's zeal for God's house and lament over God's enemies. Given the overt links to Jesus' life, it is easy to see why Peter would see within the Psalm an allusion to our Greater David's

greatest enemy: Judas. When David prays for his enemy's camp to become desolate, it is fulfilled in Judas, who perished in the Field of Blood.

—This touches on the issue of imprecatory Psalms. I do not believe it is permissible, based on Jesus' teaching about praying for enemies, to call down curses on our enemies. Before Jesus came, we did not have the revelation of divine love that we now have (1 John 3:16). Because Jesus came, we are obligated to love like He does—by laying down our lives, even for our enemies. With all that said, God nevertheless used even the harsh words of David, by bringing about their prophetic fulfillment on Christ's enemies.

—The wish that Judas' "camp" be desolate refers to his family and legacy. The NASB translates it as, "homestead."

and "Let another take his office."

—This comes from Psalm 109, which is perhaps the harshest imprecatory psalm.

—Unlike the quotation of Psalm 69:25 above, there are no indications in the text that this psalm is messianic.

—Instead, what we have is a consistent hermeneutic from the apostles that treats Old Testament texts as types and shadows that find their fulfillment in Christ. They learned to interpret Scripture from Jesus, who opened the minds of the disciples on the road to Emmaus to see that Christ can be found on every page of Scripture.

—Employing the hermeneutic of the apostles to Psalm 109, we can look at it like this: Jesus is our Greater David because He reigns forever on David's throne. Because Jesus is our Greater David, the prayers and events of David's life foreshadow those of Jesus'. In Psalm 109, David prays about his enemies—and beginning in verse 8, a specific enemy—so this prophetically foreshadows the greatest enemy of our Greater David.

—Peter interprets this verse to mean that Judas' office as apostle must be replaced.

21 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."

—From the place of prayer, Israel's new leadership and community first sought God's guidance from Scripture, using Jesus' method for interpreting Scripture, which is to find Christ in the whole Old Testament.

—Now they move to practical qualifications. When it comes to leadership, we need both God's word and good common sense. It makes practical sense that the "witnesses" of Jesus should have met the stated qualifications to be credible.

—The qualifications are:

- It needed to be a man. There would not be eleven male apostles and one female. Since this would be Israel's new leadership, twelve men would naturally replace the twelve sons of Jacob, who were heads of the twelve tribes. This was not because men are superior; Luke even emphasizes the presence of women (1:14).
- He needed to be with the apostles and Jesus from John's baptism to Jesus' ascension.

—Schreiner: "The primary requirement for leaders in the church is their proximity to Jesus."

23 And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen 25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."

—This meeting which started with leaders and expanded to a community is saturated with prayer, from beginning to end.

—We know nothing about Joseph and Matthias, except that Matthias was ultimately chosen. The point of their mention has nothing to do with them, however. It has to do with God's sovereign choice in response to prayer. The restored Israel seeks God's wisdom, and therefore qualified leaders are set in place.

—"you know the hearts of all": they call on God's omniscience because He can see who the most qualified candidate is in a way that we cannot. We are swayed by eloquence and chemistry and salesmanship. But God cannot be sold.

—"which one of these two you have chosen":

- God is the One who chose the candidate. A continual emphasis in this section.
- But why two? If they could narrow it down this far, why did they not just narrow it down to one? Probably, these are the two men who best met the qualifications. Furthermore, the inability to choose one sets up what happens in the next verse about casting lots.

—“ministry and apostleship”: the first word is broad, relating to any kind of service. The apostles are called to be servants first and ‘sent ones’ second. If the order was reversed, we might get the impression that service is an afterthought, or that bearing the title, ‘apostle’ outweighed the importance of service. While it is true that each apostle carried a weighty mantle, it was not for their own sakes, but for serving others.

26 And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

—Since they could only narrow it down to two men, they cast lots, which was an ancient equivalent of casting dice, but for the purpose of decision making. As we read in Proverbs 16:33: “The lot is cast in the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.” Yet again, we see an example of how the twelfth apostle is not man’s choice, but God’s. It is not enough to be qualified; we must also be called. Not all of us are called to apostleship, but all of are called to ministry.

—This is the last instance of casting lots in the Bible. It was used with some frequency in the Old Testament, which makes sense—the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to all believers. Back then, He visited at various times, on various people, and for short periods of time, for the purpose of fulfilling a specific task. The Spirit came upon Bezalel for the purpose of building the tabernacle (Ex. 34); He came upon the 72 elders to help Moses lead (Num. 11); He came upon Samson and various other judges to deliver Israel. In the New Testament, however, Jesus promises that the Spirit would be with us forever. The pouring out of the Spirit is granted on Pentecost. Ever since then, He has indwelt every believer and empowered us to serve Him. He has also granted revelation, so that in the future, the church does not have to cast lots. Instead, they can say, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” (Acts 15:28).

—There is another interesting connection with “lots,” since the same word used here in 1:26 for the casting of lots is employed in 1:17 for Judas’ “casting lots in Judas’ ministry” (translated by ESV, “allotted his share”). Schreiner remarks: “Judas cast his lot in their ministry and now is replaced by lots.”

—Interestingly, once the first apostle dies—James (12:2)—no effort is made to replace him. The twelve apostles have their names inscribed on the New Jerusalem and are unique in history (Rev. 21). They are irreplaceable. Judas had his shot to be part of that irreplaceable group, but he failed the “probation” through betrayal. The other twelve did not fail. They were reliable. This is one of Luke’s major points in the section.

—G. Campbell Morgan thought the disciples were wrong to choose Matthias, and that Paul should have been the twelfth man (see Stott’s commentary). I cannot fathom this. It violates the flow of the passage and intention of Luke. Luke is at pains to show us, not that the apostles erred and were unreliable, but that they were led by God and therefore reliable. Their movement was birthed in prayer, their number was rooted in history, and their selection was made in submission to Scripture, wisdom, and the providence of lot-casting.