

A. The Apostles return to Jerusalem and begin pray as they wait (READ 1:12-14)

1. At His ascension, Jesus commanded the Apostles not to return to their homes (most were from the region around Galilee), but to Jerusalem where they were to wait to be baptized by the Holy Spirit
2. Our passage today opens with them doing just that:
 - a. The Mount of Olives is just under 2 miles from Jerusalem—here described as “**a Sabbath day’s journey**” (e.g. the distance a loyal Jew was permitted to walk according to Rabbinic law)
 - b. We are told that when they entered the city, all eleven of them retreated together to the upper room of the inn or house in which they were staying
 - c. Luke tells us that they were joined by others (14):
 - 1) Mary, the mother of Jesus
 - 2) Jesus’ brothers (He had four: James, Joseph, Simon and Judas per Matthew 13:55)
 - 3) And a group Luke simply refers to as “**the women**”:
 - a) This is likely a reference to the women who followed Jesus from Galilee and witnessed both His crucifixion and His resurrection (Luke 23:49, 24:1-10)
 - b) The group included Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women, including some who had been healed of evil spirits and sickness (Luke 24:10; 8:2)
 - c) It may have also included the Apostles’ wives and Jesus’ sisters (He had at least two unnamed sisters; Matthew 13:55)
3. The passage states that they had one primary purpose in meeting together in the upper room—to pray (14a): “**these all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer**”
 - a. The first thing we see here is that they were of “**one mind**”—your version may say they were of “**one accord**” or that they “**joined (or continued) together**”:
 - 1) The word Luke uses refers to single- or same-mindedness, but it implies more than just agreement
 - 2) It signifies a genuine unity in thinking and purpose:
 - a) Here the emphasis is on the fact that they were united in how they prayed
 - b) However, we see in Acts 15:25 (READ) that the Apostles were also united in the decisions they made
 - c) We even see it as a hallmark of the first Christian converts (READ Acts 2:46)
 - 3) Did you know we are called to the same kind of one-mindedness? (READ Romans 12:16; 15:5; Philippians 1:27; 2:2)
 - b. It was this one-mindedness that led to them “**continually devoting themselves to prayer**”:
 - 1) I love the word that Luke uses here because it refers to doing something with intensity and endurance
 - 2) One of my favorite lexicons describes it this way: to continue to do something with intense effort, with the possible implication of doing it despite difficulty (Louw & Nida)

When I swam in high-school there were two kinds of swimmers—those who merely swam and those who were devoted to it; I was devoted to it (up at 4:30am to get newspapers delivered so I could go to 6am workouts with drill sergeant; two afternoon workouts; 3-times hardest worker award)

- 3) The Apostles and those with them didn't just pray; they were **"continuously devoting"** themselves to it:
 - a) This means it was a priority, they invested time in it, they worked at, they endured at it
 - b) In fact, the Apostles believed that their two greatest responsibilities were to pray and teach God's Word (READ Acts 6:4)
- 4) Just like we are called upon to have the same kind of one-mindedness that the Apostles had, we are also called upon to share the Apostles devotion to prayer:
 - a) This was a hallmark of the first Christian converts (READ Acts 2:42)
 - b) Paul often reminds us in his letters of the need to be continuously devoted to prayer (READ Romans 12:10-12; 1 Corinthians 7:5; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17)
4. Why was devotion to prayer so critical for the Apostles? Think about what they were about to do and what Jesus had taught them about prayer:
 - a. It would align their will with God's (Matthew 6:9): **"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."**
 - b. It would remind them of their dependence on Him and of His provision (Matthew 6:11): **"Give us this day our daily bread."**
 - c. It would help them not lose heart (Luke 18:1): **"Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,"**
 - d. It would help them deal with temptation (Luke 22:40): **"When He arrived at the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."**
 - e. It would help them deal with their enemies (Luke 6:28): **"27 But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."**
 - f. We also learn from Paul that it would help keep them alert (Ephesian 6:18): **"With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,"**
 - g. James even wrote that it would help them overcome weariness and at times even physical sickness (ref. James 5)

****The Apostles just had life-as-they-knew-it shattered and were now about to embark on a new difficult and challenging mission as His witnesses to the world—the Apostles devoted themselves to prayer because they knew it would be essentially to the success of that mission**

B. The Apostles prepare for their mission (1:15-26)

1. Initially, I titled this section, "The Apostles replace Judas", but it's really not about replacing Judas; it's about preparing for the mission they were given
2. The Apostles have been in Jerusalem for at least a few days and at this time were meeting together with about 120 believers (READ 15):

- a. The NASB says, “**And at this time**” giving the impression that this took place in the upper room when they arrived in Jerusalem (vs. 12-14)
 - b. But, as you might see in your margin notes, the Greek text is more specifically, “**in those days**” (plural) which simply means that what took place simply did so at some point during the nine days between their arrival in Jerusalem and Pentecost
 - c. It’s unlikely they were in the upper room because Luke records that there were “**about 120 persons there together**”—so the group had grown from the much smaller group we saw in vs. 12-14 (likely some of the 500 to whom Jesus appeared after His resurrection)
3. During the gathering, Peter stands up and addresses the group based on two necessities and both relate to Judas—it’s not quite so easy to see in English but both v. 16 and v. 21 use the same phrase in the Greek (“**it was necessary**” and “**it is necessary**”):
- a. The first thing that was necessary was for Scripture to be fulfilled regarding Judas (READ 16-20a):
 - 1) Imagine one of the things that must have been on the mind of the Apostles:
 - a) Jesus had personally chosen each one of them to be His closest companions and friends
 - b) They spent over three years traveling, eating living and growing together not only in their relationship with Jesus but with one another—they were like brothers
 - c) Then, one day they discover that Judas had betrayed Jesus to the religious authorities for thirty pieces of silver, led them right to Jesus to arrest Him, and was ultimately responsible for His crucifixion—in v. 17 Peter said that this was possible because Judas “**was counted among us**” and was part of “**this ministry**” (their role as Apostles)
 - d) Then, a short time later they learn of his death and the disturbing details surrounding it, and that his property was ultimately turned into a cemetery:
 - Matthew and Luke’s accounts differ in details, mainly over how Judas died and who bought the field
 - Luke’s account is in v. 18-19 (READ)—essentially, Judas “acquired” the field and died by falling “headlong” and bursting open
 - Matthew’s account is in Matthew 27:3-10 (READ)—essentially, Judas felt remorse, returned the money, hung himself and then the Pharisees bought a field with the money and turned it into a cemetery
 - As to the field, Luke doesn’t specifically say Judas bought the field but “acquired” which one could argue he did, but after his death when the Pharisees bought it with the money they paid him
 - As to his death, it’s unlikely that simply falling on his head in a field would cause his torso to burst open and spill out his insides; however, if his body hung unnoticed for long enough in the sun and elements after he hung himself it may very well have swollen, begun to decay, and may slipped from the noose, and then fell to the ground and burst open
 - 2) In some respect, Judas’ betrayal should not have shocked them because Jesus said Judas would do it and even said it was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy:
 - a) John 13:12-30 (READ)—Jesus uses Psalm 41:9 in a typologically prophetic way to refer to Judas (e.g. David is likely referring to Ahithophel, a close personal advisor who betrayed him and supported Absalom when he rebelled against David)

- b) John 17:12 (READ)—here “that the Scripture might be fulfilled” applies firstly to Jesus’ guarding and keeping His disciples so that none would perish, but He includes as part of this fulfillment the loss of Judas as the “son of perdition” (either the one who caused destruction or the one bound for destruction)
- 3) Peter may have had Jesus’ words in mind, but he also specifically references Psalm 69:25 in verse 20 (REREAD):
 - a) Like Jesus did above, Peter uses this quote in a typologically prophetic way meaning that while David was referring generally to his enemies, it could be applied to Judas
 - b) The crux of verses 22-28 of Psalm 69 is a call to God to judge David’s enemies, including leaving them desolate with no one to inherit their possessions or dwell in their land
 - c) This is precisely what happened to Judas—he betrayed Jesus and his suicide and field being turned into a cemetery were deemed as God’s judgement (Matthew 27:9-10)—NOTE: Matthew quotes Zechariah 9-10 but attributes it to Jeremiah, likely because in the Hebrew OT the writings of the prophets were all grouped together and Jeremiah was listed first and the writings were often simply referenced as Jeremiah
- 4) What we have here in Peter’s words is a recognition that the events surrounding Judas—both his betray of Jesus and his subsequent judgment in his death and desolation—were a necessary part of God’s redemptive plan and subsequently a fulfillment of Scripture
- b. The second thing Peter said was necessary was to find someone to replace Judas (READ 20b-22):
 - 1) Peter quotes another Psalm, 109:8 and also uses this one in a typologically prophetic way as evidence that they needed to find someone to fill Judas’ place as an Apostle
 - a) This psalm, like the first, is ultimately a call by David for God to judge those who have betrayed him, but this one appears to be aimed at one of David’s advisors (possibly Ahithophel (see v. 4 and 8 with the reference to office)
 - b) Just as David had to fill the vacancy (e.g. office) left by Ahithophel’s abandonment and betrayal, so too the Apostles would need to fill the vacancy left by Judas
 - 2) There were two requirements for the right candidate:
 - a) The first was that he had to be one of the men who had pretty much been with the Apostles throughout Jesus’ entire earthly ministry--starting with His baptism all the way up until His ascension (22a)
 - b) The second was that he would have to be a witness of the resurrection (22b):
 - What’s interesting about this is that Peter wasn’t simply suggesting they needed a man who had seen Jesus after His resurrection (for he would have said something like “**one who witnessed**” the resurrection)
 - However, what he said was this man needed to “**become a witness with us of His resurrection**”
 - In other words, this man needed to be someone who not only witnessed Jesus’ resurrection but would be willing and able to go out into Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth and bear witness of the resurrection alongside the Apostles in fulfillment of Jesus’ command to them

- 3) Ultimately, the Apostles appoint a man named Mathias as the 12th Apostle (READ 23-26):
 - a) Some have questioned whether the Apostles were led by God to replace Judas because Matthias is never mentioned again
 - b) However, contextually everything points to God's involvement—they had spent days in prayer, Peter sees support in the Scriptures, they pray during the process and ask for God's help, and they cast lots (used in the O.T. to determine God's will)

**The Apostles knew that God's redemptive plan required not only Judas' betrayal, but that they take their mission seriously as witnesses to the resurrection. We see this in their actions to find a man who could replace Judas.

Conclusion

1. One take away for me from this passage is how seriously the Apostles took prayer:
 - a. The first thing they did when they got back to Jerusalem was begin to pray
 - b. They did it continually
 - c. They devoted themselves to it
 - d. They depended upon it
 - e. As I reflect on my own prayer life, I wonder if I am as devoted to it as they were and what difference I might see in my own life if I were
2. The second take away for me is how seriously the Apostles took their mission:
 - a. They went directly to Jerusalem just as Jesus instructed them (without returning home or to their jobs)
 - b. They immediately sought the Lord's help and guidance through prayer
 - c. They made Jesus' priority their priority—He called 12 to be His witnesses, Judas abandoned that role, so they immediately found someone to replace him so they could carry out their mission
 - d. I often wonder about myself—there are a lot of things that distract me and make me forget that my main mission in life is to be a witness for Jesus