

Sermon Title: Providential Manhunt
Scripture Text: Acts 1:12-26 (Acts #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-22-23

Let's turn to the Book of Acts, where we have just begun our studies through this book.

When you say the name "Judas," that evokes feelings from anyone with even a whiff of Bible knowledge, and even people who don't know very much of the Bible know the idea of a "Judas Kiss" is an act of betrayal of a friend (cf. Matt. 26:47-49; Lk. 22:47-48). Well, the passage before us today closes the record on the tragic life of "Judas Iscariot" (Matt. 10:4); and when we finish this chapter—which we will today, Lord willing—that makes us ready for the next *enormous* step in God's plan.

We know that Jesus called Judas Iscariot to follow Him (Jn. 6:70). There were hundreds following Him that were all disciples; and remember, He "spent" a "whole night in prayer" (Lk. 6:12), and then in the morning He announced the 12 who were going to be the original "apostles" (vs. 13). And that was the same day that He preached the Sermon on the Mount; it was a *huge* day in His ministry, and Judas was one of those twelve.

But from the beginning, Judas was a *fake* disciple; he was a phony (Jn. 6:64; cf. Ps. 66:3; 81:15). Only he and Jesus knew it, and it was all in the plan of God (Jn. 13:18; 17:12). Jesus knew Judas was going to betray Him (Jn. 6:70). But through those three-plus years they were together, Judas was *so good* at his hypocrisy that *no one else* suspected him! That is a *world-class* hypocrite!

John Chapter 13, Verses 21 and 22—we read this not long ago: "When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.' " The reference to the "you" is "the twelve" that were with Him at that Passover meal (Mk. 14:20). "The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking."

They actually suspected *themselves* as much as they suspected Judas (Matt. 26:21-22; Mk. 14:19). I think they likely believed that the betrayal was going to be accidental—like, one of them would unintentionally do something that would tip off people to where Jesus was going to be so He could be arrested; because, "Surely," they thought, "none of *us* would betray our beloved Jesus!"

Well, John tells us what was going on that night. Skip down to Verse 27 in John 13—"After the morsel"—part of the fellowship of the Passover meal: you dip a "morsel" in the bitter and sweet stuff, and share it with somebody—"After the morsel" that He gave to Judas (vs. 26), "Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.' Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, 'Buy the things we have need of for the feast'; or else, that he should give something to the poor" (vss. 28-29; NASB-1995, and throughout, unless otherwise noted).

Well, you know how it played out. Judas did that horrible, Satanic deed (Jn. 18:2-3). Jesus protected the others from the arrest mob when they came to get Him (vss. 8-9), and Jesus voluntarily went to the Cross (Jn. 10:17-18; cf. Is. 53:10; Matt. 20:28). What Judas did next sets the stage for the passage that we will be looking at this morning.

Sermon Title: Providential Manhunt
Scripture Text: Acts 1:12-26 (Acts #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-22-23

But, remember where we left off: Last Lord's Day, we finished at Verse 11. Let's just remind ourselves what had happened *just before* our passage: Acts 1:9-11—"And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also 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 just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.' "

Now, immediately, the Book of Acts is going to continue with what needed to be done while they start waiting for Jesus' return—and, more imminently, waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:17; Acts 1:4-5). The rest of Chapter 1 is a unit, and so we will look at it as a unit. And *at last*, we are going to see the disciples—and specifically, the Apostles, but others as well—*finally* understanding, *finally* getting it!

How often, as we work through the Gospels, do you see where it has to explain: "They did not understand" (e.g., Mk. 9:32; Lk. 9:45; Jn. 12:16; 20:9)—He said He was going to be "betrayed" (Matt. 26:24), He said He was going to die (Mk. 8:31), and they were just thinking, "He is going to bring the Kingdom right now" (cf. Lk. 19:11; Acts 1:6).

Now they were catching on. He had just said to them, "After the Holy Spirit comes, *you will be* My witnesses," and it seems like *at last* they are starting to think, "We have a job to do! He's gone. He's coming back"—admittedly, they probably thought, *very soon*—"but we have work to do."

So, we are going to work our way through the remainder of this chapter. And I have already gone to Amazon.com and ordered a new supply of the letter "P" to replace all of these that I'm using this morning. Here's an outline for you:

The Personnel (vss. 12-14)
The Problem (vss. 15-19)
The Prophecy (vs. 20)
The Plan (vss. 21-22)
The Proposal (vs. 23)
The Prayer (vss. 24-25)
and The Providence (vs. 26)

First, we meet The Personnel who were there: Acts 1:12—"Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet"—the "Mount of Olives," right across the Kidron Valley, overlooking the city of Jerusalem—"which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away."

Now, what is "a Sabbath day's journey"? Well, it doesn't mean, "How far can you walk on Saturday?" because you could walk a lot more than this, but it is about 2,000 cubits—and a cubit is the length from your fingers to your elbow, roughly a foot and a half; or, 2,000 cubits is roughly a half mile. The reason for *that* specification of the distance is that it comes from the understanding of Israel's encampments in the wilderness: Whenever they would move, come to a new place, and set up the camp, the Tabernacle was always

Sermon Title: Providential Manhunt
Scripture Text: Acts 1:12-26 (Acts #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-22-23

in the middle, and the twelve tribes camped around it; and you can probably find in your Study Bible a good portrayal of how that was. Well, the tents farthest out on the camp's perimeter were 2,000 cubits from the Tabernacle in the center; so that was the longest distance that anyone in the wilderness in Israel had to walk if they were going to reach the Tabernacle on the Sabbath. And they were not to work on that day—there were prohibitions of how much you could do—so that was where that "Sabbath day's journey" concept arose.

So, Verse 13—"When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying..." Now, notice: That is a very specific place; it's like everybody knew that: "*the* upper room where they were staying." It just *might* be the same "upper room" where Jesus had that Passover meal with the disciples: "*the* upper room" (cf. Mk. 14:15; Lk. 22:22:12). And it was not a tiny place, because you can see who all was there; but here are the primary Personnel: "that is, 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."

This is the fourth of four lists of the twelve original Apostles in the New Testament. This one obviously *doesn't* include Judas Iscariot—and you know why, because we'll see that in the rest of the passage. By the way, the other lists are in Matthew [Chapter] 10, Mark 3, and Luke 6.

It's an interesting thing to compare the four lists; put them in four columns side by side and you'll realize: they aren't always the same. Well, that's because the name can be written in one language or another. They are not always in *exactly* the same order, but they are in the same groups: There was the inner circle of Peter, James, and John. The groups are always in the same order, but not the individuals.

The ones that might confuse you: "Bartholomew" is the same as "Nathanael" (Jn. 1:45-49; 21:2)—two different versions of the name for the same guy. "Matthew" is also "Levi" (Mk. 2:14; Lk. 5:27-29).

There are two Jameses—there's "James" the "brother" of "John," "the son of Zebedee" (Matt. 4:21), one of the two "Sons of Thunder" (Mk. 3:17); and then there's "James the son of Alphaeus" (Matt. 10:3), who is also called "James the Less" (Mk. 15:40); he was five-foot-five—he was just exactly the right size, and obviously the other James was oversized. I could say his nickname was "Scott," but I won't.

You can find in one list "Simon the Cananite" (Matt. 10:4, Mk. 3:18—NKJV; "Cananaean"—another term for "Zealot"—ASV, AMP, DARBY) and then "Simon the Zealot" (Lk. 6:15; Acts 1:13)—same guy; he was a "Cananite" by family origin, anyway, but he was probably a member of the "Zealot" party before he came to Christ—the ones that were more radical in their desire to put a king on the throne in Israel.

Then there's another "Judas" that is "not" Judas "Iscariot" (Jn. 14:22): "Judas the brother of James" the Less (Lk. 6:16—KJV; "son of James," NKJV, NASB, LSB, ESV, ASV, NIV, etc.), and he is also called "Thaddaeus" (Matt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18). They are the same ones.

Sermon Title: Providential Manhunt
Scripture Text: Acts 1:12-26 (Acts #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-22-23

Then we get to Verse 14—"These"—these eleven—"These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer"—now there's *more* personnel—"along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers."

As I said, now they are showing signs of understanding, and praying. It's a big contrast to the last time we met this group, when Jesus was chastising them: "You couldn't stay awake while I go away and pray for a few minutes!" (cf. Matt. 26:40). And now, *they* are having—*instigating*—this prayer meeting!

It is most likely that they were praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit, which they now understood was going to be very soon; and Jesus had repeatedly promised that. And now that He was no longer around, that would likely be their focus: "When is that 'power' going to come, when we will be His 'witnesses' (vs. 8)?"

And notice that their prayers were "continual," and they were "with one mind."

You are going to see in another verse or two that there were actually a hundred and twenty people there. But among people we have already met, coming through the Gospels—and remember, Acts is the sequel to the Gospel of Luke—this group was not exclusive to the eleven Apostles; there were some other people you have heard of.

It included "the women"; that was kind of a designation for a little group of women who had followed Jesus through His ministry and all the way to the Cross, and had been the first ones to the tomb. "The women" probably included, at least: "Mary Magdalene and Joanna" (Lk. 24:10) and "Susanna" (Lk. 8:3)—those are the names that we know—and likely several others who had accompanied Jesus during His ministry, and played a very significant role.

Notice that Luke also points attention to Jesus' "mother...Mary" and "His brothers." Of the Gospel writers, God used Luke to give the most detail about Mary; it is only recorded in Luke, that visit to her about the Virgin Birth (Lk. 1:26-33) and about her "cousin Elizabeth" about to give birth to John the Baptist (vs. 36, KJV).

So this is Luke wrapping up, if you will, that story. And he shows here that Mary continued with the Apostles and the other believers, even to and through and beyond Jesus' ascension; we talked about how a "sword" would "pierce" her "soul" (Lk. 2:35)—can you imagine watching your son crucified, and knowing He is sinless?

And "His brothers" are mentioned here again. They are listed in Matthew [Chapter] 13 and in Mark 6—and there it also mentions His "sisters"; it names four of the brothers, and then it says "sisters," plural, so there had to be *at least* four other boys and two girls in this family; so Jesus had at least six half-siblings—natural children born to Joseph and Mary in the normal way (cf. Matt. 1:25). They did not believe in Jesus during His ministry (Jn. 7:5). We know His brothers became believers after His resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 9:5), but we know nothing about the sisters, not even their names; and we do not know if they were included here. I sure would like to think that they followed their brothers to the faith.

Sermon Title: Providential Manhunt
Scripture Text: Acts 1:12-26 (Acts #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-22-23

And as I said, you're going to see: There is not just the Eleven and "the women" and "Mary" and "His brothers"—a hundred and twenty people were there. How do we know that? Well, let's move from The Personnel to The Problem.

Chapter 1, Verse 15—"At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said..."

So, Peter is the spokesman; he led this meeting of this "hundred and twenty" people. This is the beginning of Peter's apostolic ministry. And for the first 12 chapters of Acts, he is going to be the main guy; he is going to be the de facto leader in the Church at Jerusalem. His ministry continued well after that, all the way through wherever else he traveled to. I take it that when he says he wrote from Babylon, he was probably in Babylon. Now, don't call me crazy, but I think the Holy Spirit knows which word to choose; I don't think it was a code word.

I think he traveled *extensively*. And the last thing we know of for sure that he did was write First and Second Peter, and tradition tells us he was martyred not long after that (cf. 2 Pet. 1:14). Peter was there as the Gospel spread in Jerusalem; we are going to see that, starting the next couple of Sundays—it's *glorious*. And then to "Judea" and then to "Samaria" (1:8), Peter was still the main guy in Jerusalem when that happened. And then Peter was the first Apostle to deal with a group of *Gentiles*—that's Acts Chapter 10. Then the Book of Acts shows the connection through Peter to the ministry of Paul, and the rest of the book chronicles the ministry primarily to Gentiles, primarily through Paul—but *always* "to the Jew first, and also to the" Gentiles (Rom. 1:16).

So, what did Peter say? Verse 16—"Brethren, 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. For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry."

Now, here is one of the themes that is going to echo through the Gospel of Luke and into the Book of Acts: "The Scripture had to be fulfilled" (cf. Matt. 26:54; Mk. 14:49; 15:28; Jn. 13:18; 17:12; 19:24, 28, 36). The plan of God unfolds seamlessly, relentlessly, from "beginning" to "end" (Is. 46:10; cf. Ps. 33:11), and the connection with the Old Testament is crucial, and it is *unmistakable* (cf. Acts 26:22).

Notice how he says: "The Scripture had to be fulfilled." Well, "the Scripture" is the written Word (2 Tim. 3:15-16). The written Word was from "the Holy Spirit" through "the mouth of David" (cf. 2 Sam. 23:2; Acts 28:25). That's the connection! God uses people guided by His Spirit to write His Word, and we recognize it as "the Scriptures" (Lk. 24:27, 32, 45; Jn. 5:39). Men of His choice penned the written Scriptures, guided by the Holy Spirit.

As a matter of fact, it would be *Peter* who would eventually write this: Second Peter 1:20-21—"But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture"—the written Word of God—"is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." "Men" guided by the "Spirit" produced the Word of God, under the guidance of the Spirit.

Sermon Title: Providential Manhunt
Scripture Text: Acts 1:12-26 (Acts #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-22-23

So look again: "Brethren, 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. For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry.' " (vss. 16-17) It's interesting how Peter describes Judas' heinous deed as: he "became a guide to those who arrested Jesus." You know all about that; we don't need to go there.

But it is important to see—and this is a main point here: This was all in the plan of God. "For the wages of sin *is* death, but the free gift of God is eternal life *in* Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Why? Because "Christ Jesus our Lord" went to the Cross and took upon *Himself* our sins (2 Cor. 5:21; cf. Is. 53:5-6), and experienced the full "wrath of God" against sin (Rom. 1:18; 5:9), so that He could be our Redeemer (Gal. 3:13; 4:5; cf. Is. 53:11; Col. 1:14; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 3:18). He "rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15), and when we are identified with His death, His burial, His resurrection—we are trusting in Him and Him alone—we are "saved" (Rom. 10:9; Eph. 2:8; Titus 3:5; cf. Phil. 3:9).

But understand: That was *all* in the plan of God, *including* the Judas part of it! Even Judas' *horrible*, Satan-inspired act—that was part of God's plan all along (cf. Acts 2:23a; 4:27-28), and Jesus *knew it* (Jn. 13:18).

This is one of those situations that leads to the understanding of the phrase that I have said to you many times: God *uses* sin *sinlessly* (e.g., Gen. 50:20; Prov. 21:1; Is. 10:5-7; 46:11; Jer. 25:9). He is never the *author* of sin (Jas. 1:13; cf. Ps. 92:15; 119:68), but His eternal decree *includes* the sinful deeds of men and women (cf. Prov. 20:24; Eph. 1:11), and those men and women are *fully culpable* for all of their decisions (Ezek. 18:4). You are going to see this many times in Acts: God's sovereignty is *absolute* (Acts 2:23); Man's responsibility is *absolute* (Matt. 26:24).

Those two are side by side in Scripture—and *never* let your understanding of *one* of those overrule the other one! God *chooses* who will be saved (e.g., Acts 13:48; Rom. 9:15-16; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9). Well, wait a minute! I read ahead—Peter is going to say, "Repent" (Acts 2:38) and "believe" (Acts 10:43), and you "will be saved" (Acts 2:21)! Don't you have to repent? *Yes, you do!* Didn't you repent when you came to Christ? *Yes, you did!* Did *you* do that? *Yes, you did!* And God "chose" you specifically by name, "before the foundation of the world," to *do* that (Eph. 1:4; cf. Jn. 6:37, 44-45, 65; 2 Tim. 2:25-26). How do those two fit together? Don't worry about it! *They are both true!* Don't *worry* about it, *marvel* at it! "Rejoice" at it (Lk. 10:20)! His eternal decree *includes* working through *all* of those things—even those sinful actions!

Almost as an afterthought, Peter confirms that Judas was not just a magic trick or something. "He was counted among us and received his share in this ministry" (vs. 17). He was there *by* the will of God, *by* the choice of Jesus (Jn. 6:70). His departure was *one hundred percent* his own responsibility, because he *never was a believer* (Jn. 6:64; cf. Matt. 7:23; Heb. 3:14; 1 Jn. 2:19; Rev. 14:12).

The next couple of verses are a parenthesis. And this is really interesting—again, talking about God putting together His Word. We have information in Matthew 27, Verses 3-10, where Matthew tells us that after Judas' horrible deed, for which he had received "thirty

Sermon Title: Providential Manhunt
Scripture Text: Acts 1:12-26 (Acts #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-22-23

pieces of silver"—thirty pieces of silver was the penalty that you would pay under the Old Testament Law; for example, if your "ox" gored the neighbor's "slave" and the slave died, the penalty was "thirty" pieces "of silver" (Ex. 21:32); that's how much Judas regarded Jesus—after he did that, he was seized with "remorse" (Matt. 27:3), and he returned "to the chief priests and elders" the thirty pieces of silver that they had paid him out of the temple treasury to betray Jesus, and then Judas went and "hanged himself" (vs. 5). Now, the chief priests decided to use the money to buy a "Potter's Field" to become a "burial" ground for foreigners (vs. 7).

So Luke now, here in Acts 1, scrunches that account of Judas after the betrayal a little bit tighter. He portrays *Judas* as the buyer of the field, because the chief priests considered their payment to be "blood" money (vs. 6)—it was a "hit" they ordered on Jesus, right?—they refused to accept it back into the temple treasury. Isn't their righteousness *wonderful*? Figure that one out (cf. Prov. 7:14-20; Jer. 7:8-10). So technically, the silver still belonged to Judas; so, indirectly, Judas' money *did* buy the field.

So now, look at Verses 18 and 19—"(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. And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)" Aren't you glad you came to church this morning, to get *that* mental picture in your mind?

Well, this is a case of the Bible giving us part of the picture of a scene in one place, and *more* of the picture of that scene in another: Matthew describes part of it, and Matthew is exactly true; Luke describes some of it, and Luke is exactly true. But Luke doesn't mention that "Judas hanged himself." He says, "Falling headlong"—you get the rest of it. And he seems to connect it directly with that field, so it might just be that that field was where he killed himself; and there may have been some sort of an outcropping or a huge tree or some kind of a promontory where he could hang over the edge of a cliff. So we infer that Judas "fell headlong" as a result of being suspended in the air; the rope either broke under the weight of his falling body—maybe he threw himself over the edge on a rope; we don't know—or maybe it was cut by someone after he had hung there for who knows how long. It is not at all farfetched to suspect that his falling body may have hit a sharp rock that caused it to "burst open," but trust me: the paramedics did not like the sight when they got there.

That place was well known in and around Jerusalem at that time, and the purpose of the field as a burial place for foreigners who died was well known; and as I say, it is kind of implied in the sentence that that may be where Judas died also.

So Matthew emphasized the details most important to his *Jewish* audience: *They* understood: "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" (Gal. 3:13; cf. Deut. 21:23), so Judas was "accursed"—they understood that. However, Luke emphasizes different things for his *Gentile* audience. So those two accounts complement each other; they *harmonize*, they don't contradict. Just like we could have some sort of a big event happen, and you could go look at three different news sources reporting on television—they are all describing the same scene, but they are not going to use identical words; and some may

Sermon Title: Providential Manhunt
Scripture Text: Acts 1:12-26 (Acts #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-22-23

emphasize one thing, another may emphasize a different thing. So that is not a problem in *any way*.

We have met The Personnel. We have seen The Problem—Judas is gone. Now, a Prophecy.

Luke wants us to be sure that we understand that this is *all* the plan of God; he keeps emphasizing that. So he returns to what Peter said that *connected* the awful story of Judas to the Old Testament. Peter is going to cite and apply Scripture to reassure everybody there that day—and us, by extension—that Judas's defection, and the choice of his replacement, were *both* part of God's purposes.

So, look at Verse 20—"For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'Let his homestead be made desolate, and let no one dwell in it' "—in other words, like a field where only dead people would be; nobody would live there—"and, 'Let another man take his office.' "

That is a mashup of two Messianic Psalms: The first was from Psalm 69:25. Both Jesus and Paul quote from that chapter. Jesus quoted from Psalm 69 when He cleared the Temple. Paul quoted from Psalm 69 when he applied it to Christ being insulted and ridiculed. Peter quoted from it here because Judas is part of that story.

Then, Peter applied Psalm 109, Verse 8, to make the point that that apostolic place for Judas had to be given to someone else so that the circle of the Twelve would be restored (cf. Matt. 19:28; Rev. 21:14).

Now, I should point out to you, just for the sake of honesty: There *is* a view that says that this selection of Matthias to replace Judas was *wrong*—that it was a mistake. The theory is: Jesus said, "Go back and wait for the Holy Spirit to come." The Holy Spirit had not come yet; therefore, they should not have done this.

Well, that's alright, until the "therefore." It doesn't mean that they couldn't do *anything*. Did He say, "Go back to Jerusalem and remain *comatose* until the Holy Spirit comes"? No. It seems that they *caught on* to the idea; there were things for them to be *doing*, and they wanted to obey that (cf. Jn. 14:17).

And that theory goes on to say, "Well, no, we know *this* was a mistake because the Twelfth Apostle is *actually* Paul, who replaced Judas; and Paul was *clearly* appointed by God. *He* is Number 12."

Some good people hold to that theory, and you can get to Heaven believing that theory. I just don't think it's right. It is an argument *completely* from silence. Where does *anything* in the Bible say, "It should not have been Matthias"?

Where does *anything* in the Bible say they were doing something *wrong*? They were praying like crazy, searching the Scriptures! They were all of "one mind" (1:14)—so it was a *hundred-and-twenty-person delusion*? I don't think that *that* fits. It's just not stated anywhere.

Sermon Title: Providential Manhunt
Scripture Text: Acts 1:12-26 (Acts #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-22-23

Paul himself, by the way, distinguished between *his* ministry and the other apostles (cf. Gal. 2:7-9). Now, Paul *is* an Apostle (1 Cor. 1:1; 9:1)—but he's a different one; he is not part of the Twelve; he was *the* "apostle" to the "Gentiles" (Rom. 11:13; cf. Acts 26:17). So it's not a matter of heresy versus orthodoxy, but I think Peter's words here are quite strong in connecting what they did to the Old Testament. And since nothing anywhere in the New Testament casts doubt on that action, I'm not going to say it was wrong.

And by the way: Tradition tells us that Matthias was martyred for the faith, along with the other Apostles. Now, that doesn't prove he was an Apostle, any more than making up a theory that he *wasn't* proves anything. I even thing it's a little bit on the reckless side to declare this action to be a mistake, since the Bible doesn't say that.

Now, if I just stepped on your toes, excuse me. We can certainly get to Heaven without agreeing on that particular point. And when we are there, Luke, Peter, Paul, and I will be happy to sit down with you and Matthias. I'd really like to hear about his ministry as an Apostle—same with Andrew, same with Thaddaeus, same with Bartholomew. I would like to *hear* all of that stuff. And just to say that because Matthias is not mentioned in the Book of Acts, he is not an Apostle—you're *only going to have three Apostles* if you have to be mentioned in the Book of Acts, specifically for your post-Resurrection ministry.

Alright: Personnel, Problem, Prophecy. We need a Plan.

The criteria for who could fill this position were quite specific. Look at Verses 21 and 22—"Therefore it is necessary"—and notice, Peter is going to emphasize that: It is necessary. We believe this is necessary, based upon what we *know* from Psalm 69 and Psalm 109. "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—beginning 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."

There is *no* indication that anybody was acting on their own here, or that Peter *manipulated* this group. They were already praying and already of "one mind" when Peter said that. So remember that this is a group working together—apparently in complete unanimity.

The replacement had to have been with Jesus and the other disciples all along. Now understand: As you go through Jesus' ministry, it wasn't just Jesus and twelve guys everywhere that they went. There were dozens—*hundreds*—who followed Him, including the "women" who were with them along that time (Matt. 27:55). There were a lot more "disciples" beyond the "twelve" that Jesus "named as apostles" (Lk. 6:13). Remember: He prayed all "night" long (Lk. 6:12), and the next morning announced who the Apostles were going to be; it was the same day that He preached the Sermon on the Mount.

It was a *huge* turning point day in His ministry, to name those twelve, but we *know* there were a lot more. During His ministry, at one time He sent out "seventy others" on a mission—just like He had sent out the Twelve "two by two" (Lk. 10:1; NKJV). So, a lot more disciples to choose from, in addition to the Twelve.

Sermon Title: Providential Manhunt
Scripture Text: Acts 1:12-26 (Acts #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-22-23

So that's The Plan: "We have to find somebody that goes *all the way back* to when John was still around." Now, remember: John's ministry *overlapped* Jesus' ministry (cf. Jn. 3:26-29); so it doesn't have to be from *day one*, when John the Baptist introduced Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29), but from right there in those early months—"all the time" of Jesus' ministry, as we know it from the Gospels (cf. Lk. 3:23).

So we have a Plan now; we need a Proposal.

We are not told just *how*, exactly, the process worked. The requirement of having been there all along—that would have eliminated *some*; likely, it would have eliminated *most*, because we know that that number swelled through His ministry.

None of the women could be chosen because the eleven Apostles were part of the hierarchy, and they didn't want anything to do with anything like *a woman*...No, that's not it! God's order for spiritual leadership is that it be males (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 1:11-12; 3:1; Titus 1:5-6).

Another factor that would have whittled the number could have been the matter of willingness. It would not be a sin to not believe that you are a good choice for a special role, even though you really love Jesus and you want to serve Him (cf. Jas. 3:1). Like even in the New Testament church in selecting elders: It is a good thing that "he desires to do" (1 Tim. 3:1)—there has to not only be the choice of God and the spiritual maturity, but also the desire. So *that* would have whittled it down.

We don't know how it worked; but we know *somehow*, among the hundred and twenty, they came up with a specific Proposal, and it's in Verse 23—"So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias." Remember: same guy, different languages; "Barsabbas" is "also called Justus."

Let me tell you everything we now about them: You just read it. That is what we know about these guys. Joseph's Latin name was "Justus"—okay, we can say *that's* one more thing. "Barsabbas": In that name, "Bar" means "son of," so it could mean that either his father's name was "Sabbas"—that's a possibility—or, it could be that he was born on a Sabbath, and so they called him "Sabbath Son," "Son of the Sabbath." That is all we know (cf. Mk. 3:17; Acts 4:36). "Matthias"—what we know about him is that there is a longer version of the name: "Mattathias" (Lk. 3:25-26), which means "Gift of Yahweh."

The other thing we know about them is: They were part of the "hundred and twenty," and the "hundred and twenty" believed they were the best candidates for this possibility. Clearly, they wanted to make sure they were not acting on their own; they wanted the decision to be from the hand of God.

So, The Personnel with The Problem, acting on The Prophecy, developed The Plan to put together a Proposal, and then came more Prayer. This is an appropriate prayer of people who want what God wants (cf. 1 Jn. 5:14).

Sermon Title: Providential Manhunt
Scripture Text: Acts 1:12-26 (Acts #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-22-23

There is no hint that Matthias and Joseph did any campaigning of any kind, nor that they made speeches. There was no black or white smoke involved from a secret group that made the decision. There were no multiple ballots required while the staffs of those two candidates worked out a compromise on their rules of apostleship.

No, they turned to God. Verses 24 and 25—"And they prayed and said, 'You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men; show which one of these two You have chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.' " They wanted *God's hand* on this; they wanted it to be *His* decision.

And by the way: That final part of that sentence there makes it quite clear that this group understood that Judas chose the way of Satan and rejected Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:24; Lk. 6:16; Jn. 6:64, 70-71; 17:12). Remember at the Last Supper: "Satan then entered into him" (Jn. 13:27; cf. Lk. 22:3). They realized that Judas had *never* been the real thing (cf. Matt. 7:23; Heb. 3:14; 1 Jn. 2:19; Rev. 14:12).

So, The Personnel with The Problem following The Prophecy developed a Plan, produced a Proposal, Prayed again; and then, The Providence: the providence of God in working this out. Verse 26—"And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles." And the other one went down the street and joined the Presbyterian Church...*No!*

They were all of "one mind"! They were led by the Apostles, but they chose to use and they applied God's Word, they prayed diligently, they prayed with "one mind," they prayed again; and then they decided to use the Old Testament custom of casting "lots" (e.g., Lev. 16:8; Jos. 18:6). It's a process that is mentioned about a half dozen or so times in the Bible; it is basically a black or white, up or down, yea or nay, one or two, binary decision kind of a process; and this is how God led them.

But notice: They considered and applied Scripture, they prayed diligently, they were of "one mind" all along—on *doing* the process, *and* on the completion of the process. Their desire, above all, was to honor God; and they applied rational thinking based on all that they knew. *Then* they cast lots. Don't just haphazardly decide to apply this!

Remember, I said that there are going to be times in Acts when, it being a historical book, you will read things that are *prescriptive*, and there are things that are *descriptive* only. This is *descriptive*; it describes exactly what happened. It is not *prescriptive*, saying, "If you need to make a decision, go cast lots." I mean, you can get up tomorrow morning and you can say, "God, I think I would like a new car. I'm going to cast lots. Is it going to be a Maserati or a Lamborghini?" And then you flip a coin. That would be twisting everything.

These are serious believers seeking Scripture, praying, and being of "one mind." We know from Proverbs 16:33 that, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord." Which stone comes out of the bag, or which one you pick out of the pocket or whatever—we are trusting that that is the "decision" of "the Lord" (cf. Prov. 18:18).

Sermon Title: Providential Manhunt
Scripture Text: Acts 1:12-26 (Acts #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-22-23

There are different examples in history of different ways that it was done, including the mysterious "Urim and Thummim" (Ex. 28:30; cf. Ezra 2:53) that were stones that were part of the gear of the high priest. We don't know exactly *how* they did it, but we do know that they did it, and we do know that they were confident about Matthias—and as it says, "and he was added to the eleven apostles."

A dear brother in Christ named William Hendriksen wrote a fantastic commentary set on the New Testament. Sadly, he died before he finished, but *another* dear brother—a good friend of William Hendriksen named Simon Kistemaker—finished, and Acts is one of the books that Kistemaker wrote; and he said this, wrapping up this section:

"Apostleship as such is an intriguing subject. Paul is unable to meet the qualifications for apostleship, yet he becomes the apostle to the Gentiles. Next to Peter, Paul is the prominent apostle in the Early Church. However, Paul could not have filled Judas's place, for his apostleship is entirely different. The difference between Paul and the Twelve is obvious: Paul submits his work to the scrutiny of the apostles (see Gal. 1:18; 2:1-2, 7-10). Nevertheless, Paul and the apostles share a common appointment because Jesus Christ Himself commissioned them."

And now, my friends, the stage is set for the *spectacular*, dramatic fulfillment of the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit! And Lord willing, next Lord's Day we will again peek in on this group, and we are going to see something *unprecedented* happen.

This morning as I was going over my notes and praying, I said, "This is a *turning point* in human history!" Well, wait a minute; I said that at the Cross, I said that at the Resurrection, I said that at the Ascension. Well, think of it this way: At Christmas, we put a silly little electric train around our Christmas tree. I mean, we want to be *biblical*, so we go the whole way there. Well, it's not just a circle, it's a little bit of a square; but I have to put together about three or four pieces of curved track to make the turn. So, the "turning point"—this is the curve. The trajectory of history *will never be the same* after what we are going to see, beginning next Lord's Day.

Let's pray:

Oh, Father, we know what we are going to see next in the Book of Acts. Oh, but how we rejoice that we live on this side of that event! Christ is in us—Christ, "the hope of glory"! It is by His strength, it is by His power, it is in His grace that we can know You and worship You and serve You; so, may that be the case for us this week. Please bring us into the company of people who need the Savior, and give us wisdom and grace to "speak the truth in love" about the Gospel of Jesus Christ—the One in whose name we pray. Amen.