

## Acts 1:12-26

### "Waiting, Worshiping & Praying"

The power, the purpose & the pattern. These are the things that Jesus was instructing His disciples in just prior to His ascension.

He'd told them that they were to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued (or provided with) power from on High. That the Holy Spirit would come *upon* them "not many days from now". The Holy Spirit had been *with* them, they'd been "born again" & the Holy Spirit had come *into* them. But Jesus said, there's something more (& we see it in Vs 8). He said, "You shall receive *power* when the Holy Spirit has come 'upon' you". & Again, context is everything. He wasn't saying you'd receive the power to leap tall buildings in a single bound, or deadlift 500lbs having never been to the gym. He was saying that God would give them the power to fulfill His purpose in their lives. **They'd receive power to be witnesses to Him (the Holy Spirit will always point to, magnify & glorify J.C.).**

**But this is the 3-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit that you will at times hear us speak about. The bible uses 3 separate prepositions to describe the ministry of the Holy Spirit. "With", "in" & "upon".**

Before you come to Christ the Holy Spirit is *with* you. That is, He's there to convict you of sin, of righteousness & of judgment. Once you see yourself (I see myself) for the sinner I in fact am & I cry out to Jesus, I turn from my sin, believe on the Lord J.C. It's at that point that the Holy Spirit literally comes *into* me. Dwells *in* me, takes up His habitation in my heart (it's a spiritual transaction). **I am now a new creation, old things have passed away, behold all things have become new. I've been "born again" of the Spirit of God, I'm a child of God. This is where the disciples are at in Acts Ch 1. In Jn 20:22 after Jesus had risen from the dead & appeared to His disciples, we read that He breathed on them & said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."** Now I'm just naïve enough to believe that if Jesus breathes on you (which is reminiscent of creation) & says, "Receive the Holy Spirit" that you "receive the Holy Spirit" 😊. They were born again in that moment. (Saved by faith prior, no different than any other O.T. saint. But now "born again" under the new covenant).

But here in Acts Ch 1 Jesus uses *another* word. He says to them that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes "upon" them. That's when things would shift gears in their relationship w/the Lord. They'd go from cowering behind closed doors to boldly proclaiming the resurrection of J.C. & forgiveness of sin through faith in Him.

There would be a new dynamic of power that they *needed* & we *need*. It would enable them & it enables us to be the witnesses we've been called to be.

Jesus said that they would be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria & to the ends of the earth. Listen, they could've objected at every turn. "Jerusalem!? That's where they *crucified You!* They hate us there!" "*Judea!?* They rejected Your ministry there!" "*Samaria!?* They aren't even full-blooded Jews, they're an impure people!" "& The ends of the earth is nothing but Gentiles, just fuel for the fires of hell!"

Listen, there's no *place* that God doesn't want to get the gospel & no *person* Christ didn't die for. We can make up any excuse we want, but at the end of the day God wants to use our lives to get the message of the gospel to everyone around us. **You can tell me why it's so hard where you work, or they'll make fun of you at school... or whatever. God has promised you the power, & He has so loved the world... He's called you (& me) to be His witnesses... The darker the environment, the brighter your light will shine.**

The power; the Holy Spirit. The purpose; to be His witnesses. The pattern; it starts right where you are & branches out from there.

Then Jesus ascended right in front of them & a cloud received Him out of their sight & they were left standing there staring up at the sky. His earthy ministry (physically) officially over. **Eventually a couple of angels appeared to them & said, "Hey guys, quit standing around gawking at the sky. Jesus is gone up into heaven, but He'll come again in like manner, meanwhile let's do what He's called us to do."**

#### **Vs 12-14**

Few things we want to note here. #1 They're beginning on the right foot. They're doing what they were told to do; being obedient to the command of Jesus. He'd just told them that they were to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit & that's exactly what they did. We might say that they were "doers of the Word." **They didn't do as we so often do, hear the word & then just kind of go on about their day as though they'd forgotten the word. They heard what He said; & did what He said... He said, "Wait in Jerusalem", so they went back to Jerusalem.**

It wasn't far from them, about 2/3's of a mile (a Sabbath day's journey); & they made their way back to the upper room. Presumably the room where they'd shared the last supper w/the Lord, but we can't know that for sure. & Luke gives us a couple of details here. 1<sup>st</sup> of all he lists which apostles were present, there were 11. 1 was missing... Judas. Something that Peter will address pretty quick.

Luke is also careful to inform us that Mary (the mother of Jesus) was w/them as was His brothers (the ½ brothers of Jesus, same mom, different dad ☺).

That's interesting to us for a couple of different reasons. 1<sup>st</sup> of all (just so you know) this is the 1<sup>st</sup> & last time that Mary (the mother of Jesus) is seen in the book of Acts. She's present *among* the disciples, but has no special place *over* the disciples. You don't find them going to her & asking her to petition her Son for them, there's nothing redemptive about her actions or anything else. *Honored?* For sure. More blessed than any other woman? Most definitely. Special place of prominence, more pull or power w/God than any other? Not at all.

We also love the fact that the Lord's brothers were there, why? Because as far as we knew up to this point, they *didn't believe* in Him. When you see them mentioned in the gospels they're always *skeptical* of Him. & We can understand that, *can't we?* I mean, imagine for a moment growing up w/Jesus as your big Brother... ☺ He always got straight "A's", He was always setting a perfect example, always respectful, always honored His parents... Here you are arguing w/your mom, not cleaning your room & all you ever hear is, "Why can't you be more like Jesus!" You'd probably grow a little bitter toward Him over the years! ☺ Then, when He gets older, He goes out & everyone seems to follow Him, He's getting famous & the more status He's getting the more under *your skin* He's getting... At one point they even thought that maybe He was a little bit off His rocker (Mark 3:21)!

What changed? What was it that actually revealed to them who He truly was? The resurrection. Now; there's both warning & encouragement there. The warning; even *Jesus'* family weren't guaranteed to be saved simply because they had the same mom. Because my dad was a preacher, because my mom served in the church. We're not saved by family ties... We're saved by grace through faith in the Person of J.C. & it's personal decision we all have to make... The encouragement; you may've been a skeptic previously, even a staunch cynical unbeliever formerly, but you can see Him for who He is & still be saved today. It's not about the past, it's about the present. Believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved.

& We love these words, "These all continued w/one accord in prayer & supplication." Think about it. How easy it would've been to stir contention in this group. Perhaps Mary or the Lord's brothers could've sought to claim some special recognition. Peter could've been criticized for his denial of the Lord. Thomas dogged out for doubting... John could've brought up that Jesus commended His mother into *his* care, not theirs...

But there was none of that; they were *of one accord*. There was a wonderful unity as they waited together, worshiped together & prayed together. There was diversity in this group, fishermen, tax collectors, nationalistic zealots; but they all held the resurrected Christ in common. Jesus brings unity in diversity.

They “continued”. It’s a word that speaks of a steady persistence. Their attitude is that of oneness, prayer, worship & waiting. An unbeatable combination of attributes pertaining to drawing near *to God that we might hear or receive from God...* But they didn’t just pray once or twice & then put it on the back burner, they “continued”. The bible exhorts us (Rom 12:12, Col 4:2) to *continue* steadfastly in prayer, don’t be so quick to give in or to give up, keep praying, keep waiting, keep worshiping...

“With one accord”. This brings us back to the idea of diversity. They were different fellas, they came from different backgrounds, different interests, but they were one. It almost carries the idea of an orchestra. Different instruments, different notes all in harmony under the leading of the Maestro. Even so the Holy Spirit blends together the lives of the members of the body of Christ in a beautiful, unified way.

& Though we don’t know specifically what they were praying, it seems reasonable to deduce that more than likely they were praying for what He’d instructed them in. In Luke 11 He’d encouraged them, *“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”*<sup>1</sup> He’d just told them that they were to wait for the Promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit. He’d previously instructed them to pray for the Holy Spirit. He’d taught them the value of prayer & the power corporate prayer. He’d instructed them, *“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.”*<sup>2</sup> I’ll be honest w/you, I don’t understand it, but I’m grateful for it. Somehow & in some way when we pray together, when we agree in prayer as one, there is exponential power in that. Somehow God has ordained a quantifying, multiplying effect in the power of prayer that increases the more people are praying in unity.

It’s no wonder when we have a need, the enemy seeks to isolate us in our pride, when we could be gaining ground in praying w/others... Prayer/supplication, there’s an earnestness, almost a desperation about these words. It’s no wonder that prayer meetings fall flat, people don’t show up, the enemy is at work seeking to keep the power of prayer to a minimum...

<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Lk 11:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 18:19-20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It seems to me that we can be prayerful, or we can be prideful... It's one or the other. The disciples chose the posture of prayer. John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, said, "Prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge to Satan." We'll see a lot of prayer throughout the book of Acts. That should be communicating its importance to you & me.

Ok. We're going to see Peter stand up & propose an important decision that needs to be made. But prior to making the decision I think it's important that we see what's preceded it... Obedience to the Word, fellowship & prayer. What process do you use in making important decisions? (We'll speak more on that in a minute).

### Vs 15-20

We'd like to thank Luke for the graphic details in Judas' death 😊. Matthew tells us that Judas hanged himself. Here we discover that evidently the rope or branch broke & when he hit the ground (not sure if he was swollen or what) he burst open & his intestines gushed out. The reason for calling the field, "the field of blood" wasn't simply because Judas' blood was spilled in the field, but because it was blood money that bought it. It was bought w/the silver that was paid to betray the innocent blood of J.C.

But let's look at this. I don't know about you, but I for one am impressed w/Peter's knowledge & insight into the written word. This guy wasn't a seminary student, no doctorate in Divinity, he was a fisherman. But he knew the word. & Having spent time w/the Living Word (J.C.) no doubt increased his knowledge & insight into the written word... Don't buy the lie that makes you think you can't have the knowledge of the word that your pastor, or that guy who went to bible college has. Study the word of God & the God of the Word will speak *to* you, show things *to* you. Jer 33:3, "*Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.*"<sup>3</sup> Bible college is great if that's where God leads you; it's not necessary to gain a powerful working knowledge of the written Word.

He quotes from 2 separate psalms & saw in them a foreshadow in David's betrayer what was fulfilled in the Son of David's (Jesus') betrayer, Judas.

However, what I really want you to see here is found in Vs 16. 2 Things. #1 The disciples believed in the *inerrancy/infallibility* of scripture & the *inspiration* of scripture.

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Je 33:3]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

In essence he says, “Judas didn’t foil God’s plan, he fulfilled it.” “This Scripture had to be fulfilled.” The Word of God will never miss. Just like w/Joseph being betrayed & sold into slavery, men may’ve meant it for evil (the betrayal and crucifixion) but God used it for good.

As we read in the book of Numbers, “God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”<sup>4</sup> God’s word will always come to pass. Again, “For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”<sup>5</sup>

The word of God is inerrant, it’s infallible. How can that be? Because it’s “inspired”. Meaning it may’ve been penned by man, but it was given by the Holy Spirit. Every word of God is pure. Peter said it like this, “...for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>6</sup> Paul said it like this, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”<sup>7</sup>

So Peter pulls from 2 psalms & says, “Guys, we need to find a replacement for Judas. What he did was prophesied, & the fact that another was to take his office was foretold.” Notice, even though Jesus wasn’t there giving them direction personally, He didn’t leave them w/out any kind of leading, they had the word of God & prayer (so to w/you & w/me).  
Vs 21-23

Now w/this we can say that scripture didn’t give them these specific directions. The bible didn’t say, “Let it be someone who was there from the beginning of the Messiah’s ministry (baptism of John) till the end of His earthly on-goings (through His resurrection & ascension).” This is simply what we might call, “sanctified common sense.” They’re reasonable expectations/qualifications based upon their own experience & understanding of the Lord having been these yrs w/the Lord.

You’re not going to get every nuance of your life addressed in scripture. But God has given you a mind, a way to work logically through things. They were in fellowship, in prayer, in the word & then they did what (to them) seemed best.

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Nu 23:19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Is 55:10-11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>6</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (2 Pe 1:21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>7</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (2 Ti 3:16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

I should also say this. The decision they made had a basis *in* God's word. The Holy Spirit will never lead you in a way that's contrary *to* God's word. They wanted God's *will*, they were in prayer & in God's *word*, then they made a decision.

### Vs 24-26

If you're like me you're like, everything about this seems so good, then it goes seemingly strange... They prayed before, then when it came time to pull the trigger they prayed again (just like Jesus prayed before choosing them; Luke 6:12-13) & then... they cast lots? It's like throwing the dice, or drawing straws... We read this & we go, why?

I would suggest 2 reasons. #1 It was the way the people of God sought the will of God in ancient times. *Prov 16:33, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD."* So though it seems strange to us, it was still a notable reliance upon the Lord. Rather than just pick, they let the lot decide. & Honestly, it's probably more reliable than the way some choose today. *People decide what to do based on how they feel (emotions) or they'll move somewhere based upon the pay they're gonna get (circumstances), they don't stop to seek 1<sup>st</sup> the kingdom of God, see how they'll fare spiritually, they just do what they want...* But 2<sup>ndly</sup>, the Holy Spirit had not yet been given. You'll never see this again in scripture, they're led by the Spirit from this point forward. So, no need to cast lots, seek the Lord, be in prayer, be in the word & let God lead your life through His Spirit.

*Now; the question is this. Were they right in doing this? I've told you before that there are times that God will tell you "what" but He doesn't always tell you "when". They knew God wanted Judas replaced (that's "what" was to happen) but the scriptures didn't say "when" to do it.*

Some say they erred. Because the time was coming when Jesus would choose the apostle to take the office... Paul. They will say, "you gave God 2 choices, He chose altogether differently". & That's completely possible... They say, "We never hear from this guy again." That's true as well (but then again we never hear from Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew... Andrew or many others either).

*Did God choose Mathias? Was His choice Paul? One day we'll know. Rev 21:4 tells us that the new Jerusalem is a city w/12 foundations; & the names of the 12 apostles are written on them. So when you see the new Jerusalem, have a looksee at it's foundation, then the mystery will be made clear. Until then, there's great men on either side of the issue.*

What I want to leave you with is the *process* that they employed & the *principle* of Vs 24. Before they made a decision they were in obedience to the word, in unified fellowship, in prayer & study of scripture seeking both the heart of God & the will of God. If you employ that process (& I employ that process) we will do well.

& Finally (I hope you've underlined it). "You, O Lord... know the hearts of all." God is searching your heart today. *For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*<sup>8</sup> God knows what's really going on w/us. *"I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings."*<sup>9</sup> & Finally, *"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."*<sup>10</sup>

We're confronted w/decisions every day. The biggest decision we can make is to trust *in* the Lord, to turn from our sin & give our lives *to* the Lord. Let's pray & ask God to search us & know us & lead us in the way... everlasting.

### Prayer Points:

God that's our prayer today. You search our hearts, you know our minds, not who we are outwardly, but who we are in reality. Strengthen us to follow You, to seek after You, to love You w/all that we are. Ignite a love in our hearts for Your word & use us to do Your will. May we be a people of worship, prayer, fellowship & obedience to Your word.

It's my prayer that we leave here different than when we walked in. More *like* Jesus than ever before. That starts w/surrendering *to* Jesus. If you've not turned from your sin & given your life to Christ, than do it today. Forgiveness awaits in the Person of J.C.

<sup>8</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Sa 16:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>9</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Je 17:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>10</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Heb 4:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.