

B. The Apostolic Foundation (1:15-26)

Jesus had repeatedly insisted to His disciples that His resurrection was a matter of scriptural prediction and fulfillment (ref. Luke 18:31-33, 24:45-46; cf. also Matthew 16:21, 17:22-23, 20:17-19). But this was so, not because the Old Testament scriptures directly and explicitly predicted the Messiah's resurrection from the dead. True, *life out of death* is a key redemptive theme in the Old Testament, and Isaiah's prophecy of the Servant of the Lord's self-offering does seem to imply resurrection (53:10-12). But Jesus' words suggest more; they indicate that His death and resurrection were predicted *throughout* the Scriptures, such that His generation was culpable for its lack of understanding. But how could the Lord make such a claim? Luke provides important insight by linking Jesus' resurrection from the dead with "*entering into His glory*" (cf. Luke 24:44-46 with 24:25-27; also 9:18-31). ***The Law, Prophets and Writings all predicted Jesus' resurrection in that they predicted the messianic kingdom and its King.***

- The coming Davidic King was to exercise His royal dominion sitting on Yahweh's throne (cf. 2 Samuel 7:12-16; 1 Chronicles 29:20-23). But unlike Solomon, his typological predecessor, this true Son of David would sit, not on Yahweh's symbolic throne in Jerusalem, but at His right hand in His heavenly sanctuary.
- To assume His reign as predicted from the time of Abraham (Genesis 17:1-6, 15-16, 49:8-10), the coming Seed would have to ascend from earth into Yahweh's presence.
- But more than that, this Davidic king was to reign as a priest upon His throne (Zechariah 6:9-15; Psalm 110). He would take His place at His Father's right hand by virtue of the efficacy of His high-priestly presentation of the fruit of His own self-offering (ref. again Isaiah 53:10-12). And then, enthroned as Yahweh's perpetual King-Priest, He would embark upon His royal task of building the Lord's everlasting sanctuary.
- The Scriptures everywhere predict Messiah's resurrection precisely because they predict His *glorification*, namely His enthronement and reign as the King of the universe. But this King of kings rules forever as God's great High Priest – the promised priest according to the order of Melchizedek; the prototypical king-priest who held his priesthood uniquely and perpetually (cf. Genesis 14:18 with Hebrews 7:1-3).

The Scriptures didn't simply predict a coming king, but a king who would reign over the everlasting kingdom of the new creation – the all-embracing *kingdom of God* that is the renewed and transformed created order. The Scriptures spoke of and promised a king who would conquer the curse and usher in renewal and the shalomic restoration of all things to their Creator. *Given the redemptive nature of the kingdom predicted by the Scriptures, the messianic role of king was necessarily conjoined to the role of high priest, and both of these roles were to be accomplished from the Lord's throne in His true sanctuary* (Hebrews 5-9; cf. also Revelation 5:1-14).

Now, with Jesus' ascension and enthronement, the preeminent work of preparation for the inauguration of the kingdom was complete. But there remained one more preparatory work to be accomplished, and that was the *completion of the foundation* for the everlasting house the King-Priest had been appointed to build. Luke records that completion in 1:15-26.

One of the outcomes of the Christ event was the loss of one member of Jesus' immediate circle of disciples. Judas Iscariot had determined to betray Him, and he was consequently disqualified and removed from the body of the Twelve. One might question why he alone was disqualified when all of the Twelve were guilty in some sense of betraying the Lord (Matthew 26:31-56). In particular, Peter's betrayal was an act of profound unbelief and it required that he be restored (Luke 22:31-34), and yet his apostolic status wasn't stripped from him. Only Judas suffered that loss, evident most clearly in his suicide which ended his apostleship.

Judas' betrayal was arguably more egregious than Peter's, but the Scripture doesn't regard that difference as the main issue in his disqualification. Though acting for personal reasons according to his own self-determination, Judas *fulfilled the Scripture* by his betrayal of Jesus; the Son of Man was to go "just as it had been written" (Matthew 26:24; cf. Luke 22:21-22). Christ's betrayal by a close friend and the results of that betrayal were matters of divine foreordination.

1. In examining this context, the first thing that is important to note is that *Judas was a bona fide member of the inner circle of the Twelve*. In view of his outcome, the tendency is to regard him as distinct from the other eleven disciples, as if somehow he never was a legitimate apostle. But the truth is that Judas was in every way a member of the apostolic inner circle. Like his counterparts, He had been chosen by Jesus Himself (Luke 6:12-16) and was dispatched by Him in the power of the Spirit as part of the apostolic witness to the in-breaking kingdom (cf. Matthew 10:5-8; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-2). Jesus had counted Judas among the Twelve and given him equal portion in the ministry appointed to them (1:17). There was no distinction between him and the others, whether in his apostolic privilege and ministry or the relationship he enjoyed with his Lord. Thus when Jesus revealed a betrayer in their midst, none of the Twelve could identify who it was (ref. Matthew 26:20-22; Mark 14:17-19; Luke 22:21-23).
2. And yet, this chosen apostle was equally the "son of perdition" prophesied by the Scriptures (vv. 16-20; ref. Psalm 69:25 and 109:8 and compare with John 13:18-27, 17:12). What is most notable about Peter's citations is *his christological interpretation of David's words* which, in context, refer to David's own circumstance and petition.
 - a. The two cited psalms, like many others penned by David, recount a characteristic Davidic theme, namely his confident, trusting petition to God in view of hatred and opposition directed against him by wicked and unjust men (cf. Psalms 4-7, 9, 11, 13, 16-18, 22-24, 27-28, 30-31, etc.). In context, they are autobiographical rather than prophetic passages of scripture, and yet Peter understood them to have a prophetic fulfillment in relation to Jesus Christ.

For many Christians, such an interpretation is perplexing at best, if not an improper "spiritualizing" of the biblical text. By default, Christians accept Peter's interpretation because he is regarded as speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit (as also is the case with Luke's record of it), but those believers who perceive it to be a non-literal "spiritualizing" of David's words find themselves struggling to not find fault with contemporary readers who seek to interpret the Old Testament scriptures in the same way Peter did.

- b. The key to understanding Peter's interpretation (and, more importantly, the hermeneutical approach behind it) is Christ's own insistence – in solidarity with all the New Testament witnesses – that all of the Scriptures testify of Him. The entirety of the Old Testament has a christological prophetic trajectory and christological point of fulfillment. In the instance of the passages Peter drew upon, that christological dimension is bound up in David's own contribution to God's revelation of redemption: *David's person and experiences are messianic precisely because of the typological relationship God established between him and His covenant Son*. It is in Christ that David was to find his own destiny and meaning (so Peter in Acts 2:22ff; cf. also Ezekiel 34:20ff, 37:15ff; Hosea 3:1-5).

Peter wasn't at all denying that David wrote of himself and his own experiences in his psalms; at the same time, he recognized that David's life found its ultimate significance in the One whom David prefigured. Even as Israel's existence and theocratic story found their fulfillment in the true Israel who is Abraham's singular Seed (Isaiah 49:1-13; cf. also Hosea 11:1 with Matthew 2:13-15), so David's life story – namely, humiliation and anguish in undeserved opposition and suffering being triumphantly vindicated through yielded, dependent trust in God – found fulfillment and ultimate meaning in His royal covenant Son. Though Peter and the other apostles didn't yet have a solid grasp on the kingdom of God and its implications for national Israel, Jesus had sufficiently "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" such that they now realized that everything written in them testified of Him (again, Luke 24:44-48).

3. Crying out to God, David asked that the house of his enemies be made desolate (Psalm 69:1-25); elsewhere, he petitioned the Lord to give the office of such a one to another (Psalm 109:1-8). Far from randomly conjoining two distinct passages, Peter recognized both as having the same Davidic context and prophetic relevance. He recognized in Judas' disqualification and death the fulfillment of David's first plea, and now the latter one needed to be fulfilled as well. *Judas' apostolic office must be given to another* (1:20).

Peter regarded the replacement of Judas, not as something preferable or expedient, but as a matter of necessity. Left undone, the Scriptures would be broken, and this could never be. His citations explicitly connect this course of action with Christ's typological relationship with David, *but there is another significant component of fulfillment that only becomes evident with a wider view of the Scriptures and salvation history*.

- a. Looking forward into the scriptural record, the New Testament reveals Christ's determination to build His Church on the foundation of the twelve apostles (Ephesians 2:19-20; Revelation 21:10-14). This imagery primarily highlights the fact that the Church – God's eschatological covenant household related to Him through the New Covenant – would begin with the apostles. To them Jesus had pledged His Spirit, and they had been the first recipients of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Twelve were to be, as it were, the firstfruits of Christ's creational renewal, and, through their witness in the power of the Spirit, that work of renewal would spread outward to the ends of the earth (John 15:25-26).

- b. At the same time, Christ's determination in this respect didn't originate with His earthly ministry. Consistent with the promise/fulfillment relationship between the testaments, *the New Testament's declaration of the Church's apostolic foundation is simply its affirmation of the fulfillment of what the Old Testament predicted.* Understanding how this outcome was predicted explains more precisely why it was necessary that Judas be replaced. Peter recognized it to be a matter of scriptural fulfillment, but addressed it from only the vantage point of the typological relationship between David and His greater Son. But there is another aspect of fulfillment involved in Judas' replacement which focuses on the apostles themselves and their function in salvation history. Here the concern is with completion – on the need for a foundation consisting of *twelve* apostles.

Twelve represents completion because of the biblical correspondence between the apostles and the *twelve tribes of Israel*. God had promised to make Abraham a great nation – more precisely, a covenant household through whom He would mediate His blessing to all the earth's peoples. By being the father of one covenant nation, Abram would become *Abraham*: the father of a multitude of nations comprising a global covenant community (Genesis 17:1-7).

Two generations later this promise settled on Jacob, through whom God initiated the transition from covenant individuals to a covenant nation. Through a divine encounter Jacob was transformed into *Israel* (Genesis 32:24-30), and this man "Israel" became the fountainhead of the nation of Israel through his twelve sons. *The twelve tribes of Israel – being an extension of the twelve patriarchs (Genesis 49:28) – were thus the foundation stones of the Abrahamic covenant "house."*

The covenant household of Israel had its foundation in Israel's twelve sons, but this community was non-ultimate; by divine design, it was preparatory and prophetic. Abraham's *physical* covenant offspring anticipated and prepared for a *spiritual* counterpart consisting of non-natural as well as natural descendents. In making His covenant with him, God had pronounced Abram to be Abraham; his destiny lay in a household of descendents drawn from all the nations.

Moreover, this formation of a global, spiritual people was to be the fruit of the covenant mission of the Abrahamic "seed" to bring the knowledge and blessing of Yahweh to all the families of the earth (cf. Genesis 22:18, 26:1-4, 28:10-14). ***The very first book of the Scripture reveals that the ultimate fulfillment of Yahweh's promise to build a worldwide Abrahamic house would depend on the witness mission of the twelve-fold Abrahamic foundation.***

As promised, Yahweh constructed the prototypical covenant house of Israel on just such a foundation, and this alone established the reality of twelve foundation "stones" for His final house, for "salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22; cf. Psalm 14:1-7; Romans 9:1-5). But this latter house was to be spiritual, and so demanded a twelve-fold spiritual foundation rather than a natural one. Judas' replacement was necessitated by God's design to build His everlasting house on the new foundation of the twelve apostles.

At the same time, this twelve-fold completion aspect of fulfillment raises some important questions: First, why were none of the other apostles replaced when they died? In particular, James was martyred in the early years of the Church (Acts 12:1-2), and yet the remaining eleven didn't seek *his* replacement as they had Judas'. Second, what does this criterion of twelve apostles mean for Paul's apostleship? Should he be regarded as the thirteenth apostle, and therefore not part of the apostolic foundation? Finally, what of those later men the Scripture identifies as apostles (cf. Acts 14:14; Romans 16:7)?

- 1) First of all, the Twelve were appointed to comprise the *foundation* of the Church, and one may argue that, by the time of James' death, the foundation had already completed its purpose inasmuch as Christ's house was then being built on it.
 - 2) From this viewpoint, though Paul's ministry to the Gentiles was clearly critical in fulfilling the Abrahamic mandate of a global household, his apostolic work wasn't foundational, but one of expanding upon the already-existing "superstructure." On the other hand, it may also be argued with some merit that Paul was *indeed* one of the twelve foundation stones, serving as James' replacement after his death. Luke at least suggests this by recording Paul's formal commission to the apostolic ministry immediately following James' martyrdom (Acts 13:1ff).
 - 3) As to the other apostles beyond the Twelve, they were later converts to Christ who weren't part of the original apostolic foundation. They were "apostles" in the sense that they participated in the apostolic function as missionary witnesses.
4. Finally, because Judas' replacement was to complete the apostolic foundation, *it was necessary that this individual possess the essential apostolic credentials* (1:21-26).
- a. This meant first of all that this man must have a personal knowledge of the Lord; Peter insisted that he be someone who had been present during the time "that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us" (v. 21).
 - b. This first-hand knowledge of Jesus must include the personal witness of His resurrection (v. 22). At the heart of the apostolic message was the testimony of Christ crucified and raised from the dead (cf. Acts 2:22ff, 3:12ff, 4:1ff, 5:17ff, 7:51ff, 13:16ff, 17:16ff, 22:1ff, 23:1ff, etc. with 1 Corinthians 15:1-4), so that no man could fulfill the apostolic office who wasn't a witness to the resurrection.
 - c. Finally – and most importantly, this new twelfth apostle had to be chosen by Christ Himself in accordance with His Father's will (vv. 23-26). Jesus had chosen the original Twelve after spending a night in prayer seeking His Father's mind and leading (Luke 6:12-16). The original patriarchal foundation stones were the product of divine determination and election (Genesis 12:1-3, 17:15-19, 25:19-23, 49:1-28; cf. Deuteronomy 10:14-15), and so it was to be with their antitypal counterparts. Jesus had ascended into heaven, but He was still with them as the One who is the "Knower of hearts" (v. 24) and who hears and directs His own as their Lord and Shepherd when they call upon Him.