

## THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

### Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

#### Part III: Using Scripture And God's Precedents For Church Guidance In Christ's Absence (Acts 1:15-26)

##### I. Introduction

- A. When Christ was bodily present on the earth, He could give direct guidance to His disciples on all matters.
- B. However, His bodily departure in His ascension to heaven left a practical vacuum for such guidance.
- C. Thus, the way the disciples addressed a need for divine guidance in the absence of Christ's bodily presence in Acts 1:15-26 sets the standard for how the Church discerns God's leading in issues today (as follows):

##### II. Using Scripture And God's Precedents For Church Guidance In Christ's Absence, Acts 1:15-26.

- A. After the Lord Jesus had ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9), the disciples correctly returned to Jerusalem to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit as they had been directed by Christ, Acts 1:12-14 with 1:4-5.
- B. However, in the waiting period between the Lord's ascension to heaven and the Day of Pentecost, Peter expressed concern about the vacancy left in the office of the apostle by Judas Iscariot:
  1. Peter recalled that Jesus had appointed twelve apostles who would rule with Him in His coming messianic kingdom, with each man ruling over one of the twelve tribes of Israel, cf. Matthew 19:27-28.
  2. However, Judas Iscariot had been a "closet" unbeliever who betrayed Christ, and who then killed himself in his lost condition and went to hell, Acts 1:16-19; John 17:12. [The apparent conflict between Luke's Acts 1:18 account of Judas' death by falling headlong and that of Matthew 27:5 where he hanged himself is resolved in harmonizing the two accounts: Judas tried to hang himself, but failed, and he accidentally fell headlong unto his death, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., fn. to Acts 1:18.]
  3. Thus, it was **Biblically** fitting that another apostle be chosen for the apostolic office vacated by Judas.
- C. In addressing this vacancy in Christ's bodily absence, the disciples relied on Scripture and God's evident precedents, setting the standard for the Church's gaining future divine guidance in Christ's bodily absence:
  1. Peter and the other disciples couched the entire vacancy matter in the directives of written Scripture:
    - a. In starting to announce the need to fill Judas' vacancy, Peter alluded to the psalms of David, noting they were the authoritative Word of God penned under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:15-16.
    - b. Peter then referred to two applicable passages in David's psalms: (1) he mentioned Psalm 69:25 that the dwelling of evil enemies might become a desolation, and (2) he mentioned Psalm 109:8 that directed that a certain enemy might die in judgment before his time, and be replaced in his position of responsibility by someone else, F. F. Bruce, The Book of the Acts (NIC, 1980), p. 49; Acts 1:20.
  2. Peter and the other disciples relied on the precedents of God's past guidance to apply these Scriptures:
    - a. The disciples recognized that Christ had chosen the original twelve disciples (1) to be with Him as His disciples first, and then, as discipled men, (2) to minister to others in His behalf, Mark 3:14-15.
    - b. Thus, Peter asked that those gathered with him put forth a disciple who fit this pattern to the highest degree: he asked that he be a man who had been with Christ from the start of His ministry under John the Baptizer, who had thus been under His discipling all during His earthly ministry, and on through His death and resurrection, a man ultimately qualified to witness of Christ, Acts 1:21-22.
    - c. Two men fit these qualifications, Joseph called Barsabas, surnamed Justus, and Matthias, 1:23.
    - d. Accordingly, since in their Old Testament dispensations, God had made selection between parties based on lots according to Proverbs 16:33, the disciples prayed for God's gracious choice to be made evident by lot, and they put forth lots to find which man was to be Judas' replacement, Acts 1:24-25.
  3. The lot signified that Matthias be Judas' replacement as Christ's twelfth apostle, Acts 1:26.
- D. [Some hold this event violated God's will since it occurred before the coming of the Holy Spirit; however, Scripture's failure to condemn it along with Christ's John 14:2 revelation that God does not accommodate false beliefs for His own reveals that the Acts 1 selection event was completely upright!]

**Lesson:** *In the bodily absence of Christ, the Church is to find guidance from (1) written Scripture, and make its application as to method in line with (2) God's time-tested precedents of His past dealings.*

**Application:** *May we rely on (1) Scripture for ultimate guidance, (2) using God's time-tested precedents as to its application for divine guidance today in our Lord's bodily absence.*