

Preparing For Power

Acts 1:12-26

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We begin in Acts 1:12. We actually were doing a running commentary and were going to move all the way into the end of the chapter but ran out of time. So, beginning in verse 12 (I want you to follow with me in your Bibles), Luke records, "Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet," this is what's called the Mount of Olives. It's east of Jerusalem. It's a very famous mountain in the New Testament. "...which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, we have that recorded in Acts 1 where the disciples had gathered with Jesus on top of the Mount of Olives and told them to go into all the world and preach the gospel. That great commission, so-called, is not recorded by Luke here in the book of Acts, but we know from the gospels that Jesus commissioned them and us to go into all the world and to preach the gospel to every creature. The disciples were thinking that Jesus was going to establish the Kingdom right here, right now, and so said, "Lord, will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" Jesus responded, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." He said, "I want you to wait," and this is the key tonight, "in Jerusalem until the Spirit comes," because the Holy Spirit would empower them to go out and to be witnesses. I want you to notice it there in the eighth verse, he says, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

I pointed out last Wednesday that you really have an outline here in verse 8. They would receive the power of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses in Jerusalem (Acts chapters 1-7, and we're going to discover that as we go through the book of Acts), in Judaea and Samaria (Acts 8-12) and unto the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 13-28). You really have an outline for the book of Acts there in verse 8. Acts starts in Jerusalem and ends in Rome. It's the birth of the Church (which we get in chapter 2), and the Church going out in the power of the Holy Spirit witnessing and preaching the gospel until the Church arrives there in the city of Rome.

What motivated these disciples to go out into all the world and to preach the gospel? Well, a little review...back in verse 3 they had experienced the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Luke tells us that Jesus "shewed himself alive after his passion," or death "by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days," an important number to take note of, "and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." We're going to discover tonight there are several things (actually about five things totally) that these early Christians believed that motivated them to go

into all the world and to preach the gospel. The first is that they had experienced the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We too can experience the risen Christ—Jesus died, Jesus rose—and we can experience Him in a personal, powerful, intimate way. They believed in the reality of Christ's resurrection. If we are gripped by that, we know that Jesus has forgiven our sins. We know that He is at the right hand of the Father, and that really is a motivation to go out and to preach the gospel.

The second thing that they believed is in the power of the Holy Spirit, and they would experience the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. In verse 4, we just saw that. He says, "And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." This would take place in Acts 2. In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit would come in His fullness and in His power.

Thirdly, they believed in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. For that background, we see it in verse 11. He says, Which also said, Ye men of Galilee," they're looking up into the heavens. They just saw Jesus ascend (verse 10) up into heaven, and two angels show up and said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven," here it is, "shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." They believed in the resurrection, they believed in the Holy Spirit, and they believed in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. These are things that we need to believe in. Amen? As you go through the book of Acts you find that the Church had this experience with the risen Christ, with the Holy Spirit, and they had the promise that Jesus Christ was coming again. He was going to return, and this would be motivation.

Man, I tell you, as I look at this world that is shaking right now—in more ways than one—I still believe the Lord Jesus Christ is coming again. Even though I've been preaching that for 40 years, I still believe it. Do you know what that means? It means that we're just 40 years closer. It means that we're closer. I'm not going to stop believing it, and it motivates me to continue to serve the Lord and to preach the gospel. They believed in the resurrection, they believed in the Holy Spirit, and they believed in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

In our text tonight (verses 12-26), we're going to see two more things that they believed in that motivated them to fulfill the Great Commission. First, they believed in prayer and, secondly, they believed in the Scriptures—the Word of God. They believed in prayer, verses 12-14. Go back with me to verse 12. After Jesus had ascended into heaven, what did they do? "Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet," where they saw Jesus ascend, "which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey," which is about three-quarters of a mile. The phrase "sabbath day's journey" meant that's the distance a Jew could travel legally on the sabbath day. You see, on the sabbath day you were not allowed to work, you were not allowed to kindle a fire, and you were not allowed to travel a certain distance. So, they concluded that you could go three-quarters of a mile (which really is just under a mile), which is the distance between Jerusalem and Mount Olivet. You couldn't go any further, so they traveled that

distance which was a “sabbath day's journey.”

Not recorded here by Luke but recorded in his gospel, it says that they returned with great joy. Wouldn't you return with great joy? Your hopes are all dashed. You think that Jesus is dead. He is gone, and then you experience the fact that He rose from the dead. By the way, he records here that was for a period of 40 days. So, Jesus died at the Passover, and then for a period of 40 days He appeared and disappeared and then reappeared—those are called the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ.

Acts 2 happens on the day of Pentecost. The day of Pentecost actually happens 50 days after Passover (we'll get into more the feast of the Jews at that time), but the word “Pentecost” literally means “fifty” or “fiftieth.” It's a 50-day celebration of the harvest ingathering where they would gather together in the city of Jerusalem, and that's when the Holy Spirit would come. There was a period of 10 days that they would be waiting for the promise of the Father. Jesus is with them. He's coming and going, and then He ascends up into heaven bodily, physically, and the promise of His return, “...this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” For 10 days they were wondering, where do we go? What do we do? Shall I go back to fishing? Shall I go back to my business in Jerusalem? No. You do what Jesus told you to do. Out of obedience, you go back to Jerusalem and you do what? You wait.

Do you know that's one of the hardest things we have to do, isn't it? I hate to wait. I hate to wait in lines. I hate to wait on the phone...I made a call today, “Can you please hold?” “Yes, I can hooooold!” And I'll listen to their stupid music for a long time, you know. It's like, “Gosh!” Think of all the time you've wasted waiting on the phone, waiting in line, or waiting at a red light—pray for me. Jesus didn't say, “Just go out there.” He commissioned them to go into all the world and preach the gospel; but before they go, they need to wait. I believe that one of the most important things we can learn to do as Christians is learn to wait on the Lord. “They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” That's kind of a lost thing today in Christian circles—this whole idea of waiting on God. We're so rambunctious and so go-get-it. We always want to do things for God, but whatever happened to waiting on the Lord, and that God would be developing our character? We don't like that. We want to start into our ministry right away. We want to get doing things and get serving the Lord. I think sometimes the Lord puts us in a waiting period for many years to prepare us for future ministry.

I think about Moses on the back side of the desert waiting for God to call him. He finally gave up all hope, and he was eighty years old when the Lord called him from the burning bush. He was done with it and said, “Lord, send my brother. I'm not able.” God had used that waiting period to prepare Moses. I just want to speak to anyone that's here tonight that feels a call of God or a sense of urgency, I want to be used by God. God is not in a hurry. I'm not trying to encourage you to be slothful. I'm not trying to encourage you to put off serving God, but you don't want to rush ahead. You don't want to go where God doesn't want you to go or when God doesn't want you to go. Doing what God calls you to do is very important, but doing it when

God calls you to do it and being prepared to do what God calls you to do is very important, so don't despise the day of small things. Don't despise that time of just waiting in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to fill and empower you to be a witness. So, they waited. It was a 10-day period but I'm sure that they were antsy. You actually read in the gospels that Peter said, "I'm going to go fishing. I just gotta go do something. I'm going to go fishing." They had a hard time waiting on the Lord, and we sometimes have a hard time waiting on the Lord.

Verse 12 is actually a fulfillment of His command in verse 4 to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father (which Jesus promised in the upper room, that the Comforter, the parakletos, would come), the Holy Spirit. Verse 12 is a fulfillment of verse 4. They were waiting. "And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room," verse 13. There's a lot of debate going on as to where and what this upper room was, whose house it was, and some feel it might have been the temple. Other people thought it might be the same upper room they had the last supper in. One of the most common views is that it actually was an upper room of the house owned by Mary the mother of John Mark, the author of the gospel of Mark. The truth is we don't know. When you go to Israel, they'll take you to an upper room where Jesus had the last supper. How they know no one knows, but it's a great tourist stop. When I go to Israel, I like to go to the places where you know that somewhere around here Jesus walked or this happened. Some of the buildings there they're not really clear that that took place (most likely it did not) but needed a place to have a little communion service, so they give you this upper room. They're in this upper room, and we're going to see there is about 120 of them gathered by the time the day of Pentecost does come.

Notice who is waiting on the Promise of the Father. There is Peter, James, and John. That's the three inner circle—Peter, James, and John. They were fishermen from Galilee. We know Peter very well. We know James, and we know John. It's interesting that as far as the record goes in the book of Acts, it's only Peter and John that are mentioned after this point. From Acts 1:13, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James, Simon and Judas, the brother of James, these other disciples are not mentioned. You have Peter and John that are going up to the temple to pray in chapter 4. Then, John passes off the scene and Peter plays a dominant role in the book of Acts. Paul comes into the picture, but these other guys aren't really mentioned ever again. The point I'd like to make is that they are ordinary guys. They are disciples who spent the three years with Jesus and were disciplined by Him, so they were mentored and disciplined and prepared, but God uses ordinary men and women to do extraordinary things when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, fills them, and empowers them. So, there you have them, minus, of course, Judas Iscariot who betrayed the Lord and has killed himself.

Verse 14, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women," so you have now the women mentioned, you have, "Mary the mother of Jesus," and another little footnote here. This is the last reference to Mary in the New Testament. This is the last time you find her name mentioned or she is referred to or she passes off the scene from this point on. You also have, "and with his brethren," which is a reference to the biological brothers of Jesus. It's believed they came to faith in Christ after His resurrection. During His life and ministry, they

didn't really accept the fact or believe that their older brother was the Messiah, the Savior of the world. That's kind of difficult to accept that your older brother is the Messiah, you know. One day he walks into the bedroom and says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." "Mom, Jesus is flipping out." After Jesus rose from the dead, they did become believers and followers of Jesus as the Messiah, their Savior, and that's a reference to them there at the end of verse 14.

What I want to point out is that they believed in prayer. What is the first thing they do? They wait in obedience and they're developing character and learning to wait on God and being obedient to God, but the Church, as we are going to see in chapter 2, is going to be born in a prayer meeting. Amazing how through the book of Acts you find them praying, praying, praying, praying, praying, and praying. Let me mention some references. The believers prayed for guidance in making decisions (we're going to get that in just a few verses), Acts 1:15-26, and for courage to witness for Christ in chapter 4. Stephen prayed as he was being stoned, Acts 7. Peter and John prayed for the Samaritans in Acts 8. Saul of Tarsus prayed after his conversion in Acts 9. Peter prayed before he raised Dorcas from the dead, Acts 9. Cornelius prayed that God would show him how to be saved, and Peter was on the housetop praying when God told Cornelius how to be saved by sending for Peter and he would come and show him all the words of this life, Acts 10.

The believer in John Mark's house prayed for Peter when he was in prison, and the Lord delivered him from both prison and from death, Acts 12. The Church in Antioch fasted and prayed before sending out Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey, Acts 13. There was a prayer meeting at Philippi that God opened Lydia's heart, and another prayer meeting in Philippi opened the prison doors, Acts 16. Paul and Silas were in jail singing praises to God at midnight, praising the Lord, and worshipping God and praying. God sent an earthquake and opened the prison doors. Paul prayed for his friends before leaving them, Acts 20. He met with the elders there in Ephesus. In the midst of a storm, he prayed for God's blessing on the ship, Acts 27. After the storm, he prayed that God would heal a sick man in Acts 28. That's just a few actual references of prayer as you go through the book of Acts. So, they were waiting for power but were prepared for power by obediently waiting on God and spending time in prayer. What a great ingredient for us—waiting on God and spending time in prayer—prayer based on the fact that Jesus has ascended into heaven and is exalted at the right hand of the Father.

It's interesting, those who prayed. The men prayed, the women prayed, the apostles prayed, and then 120 disciples gathered together in the upper room and prayed. Then we see the new converts were praying when they came to the Lord. They were united. In verse 14 it says they were "...with one accord," and that's a repeated phrase that you find through the book of Acts as they were united in prayer. It would have been very easy for them at this time as they are waiting on the Lord and waiting for the Promise of the Father (Acts 2) that they could've gotten in fights and divided or bickered with one another but instead they waited and prayed which brought unity and fellowship among them. The purpose of prayer, too, was that they would find God's will in electing a new apostle who would take the place of Judas Iscariot.

The second thing they believed in was the Scriptures, verses 15-26. Follow with me in verse 15. "And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)" so a lot more than just the names listed right here. I thought about that. I wondered if Nicodemus was there in Acts 2 of the upper room. I wondered if Joseph of Arimathea was there. I wondered if Jairus, his little girl, his wife, and some of the people that Jesus healed were there. Wouldn't it be neat to actually know? Maybe when we get to heaven we can interview people, "Hey, were you one of the 120 in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost?" So, "(the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)" 16 Men and brethren," Peter says, and here's the point, "this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. 17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. 18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out." It's in the Bible. I just read it. Don't get upset with me.

"And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. 20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick," or his position, his leadership, "let another take. 21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. 23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed," here they were praying again, "and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, 25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. 26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

They were gathered together praying, waiting on the Lord, and Peter stands up (go back with me to verse 15) "in the midst of the disciples, and said, Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus." You see, they believed the Bible. They believed the Scriptures. They believed in the resurrection. They believed in the Holy Spirit. They believed in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, they believed in prayer, and they believed in the Scriptures. These are elements that we, as Christians, need to hold onto. It's interesting that Peter says, "...this scripture must needs have been fulfilled," in other words, what God has spoken cannot be broken. God said this would happen. Now, it could be that they were a little concerned, How could it be that one of us that Jesus actually chose to be one of the disciples could actually betray and turn away from Him? How could this happen? What Peter is doing is saying, "Look, I'm not sure I can answer that question, but I know that God is in control. God was not caught unawares. God knows what is going on."

The Scriptures prophesied and spoke about it in Psalm 41:9. David, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said, "...mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat

of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” David was talking historically about a man by the name of Ahithophel who betrayed him, but Peter now understands that it had a prophetic fulfillment in Judas Iscariot. Now, it’s interesting that David was actually the one through whom the Messiah would come, so there is a sense in which David becomes kind of like a type or a picture of Jesus Christ and those who persecuted and came against David, kind of a picture of those who would come against the Christ Messiah. Here we see clearly that the Scriptures that fulfilled in the historical setting was Ahithophel betraying David, but they saw it as a fulfillment of Judas Iscariot—that God was in control—that Judas was actually fulfilling the Scriptures that God had spoken back in Psalm 41:9.

Going back to Acts 1:17, “For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry,” he gives us a little history about what happened with Judas, and it’s pretty graphic and radical. “Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity,” some say, “Well, how did he purchase the field? He hung himself and was dead. How was the money taken and he purchased a field?” The answer to that is it was purchased with his money. Judas was given 30 pieces of silver (you remember that) to betray Jesus. In the end, he felt that remorse and went back to the priests and religious leaders and said, “I’ve betrayed innocent blood,” and threw the money on the ground and walked out. They collected that money and used it to buy this field where Judas would actually hang himself. They would purchase that field and it would be called the field of blood (verse 19). Whether it was called the field of blood because they purchased it with the money that Judas used to betray Christ or whether it was already called the field of blood, Aceldama, we don’t really know.

Here’s the thing that confuses some people. It says (verse 18), “...falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst,” and King Jimmy is quite graphic there, “and all his bowels gushed out.” You say, “Well, doesn’t the Bible tell us that Judas hung himself?” The answer is yes. It tells us Judas hung himself. You say, “Well, how does this work? Is this a contradiction of what the gospel tells us?” It’s actually Matthew’s gospel that tells us that Judas went out and hung himself, so I believe the most logical and reasonable explanation is either the rope broke and he fell on the rocks below or the rope was cut to get him down and he fell on the rocks below. So, we know that both are true—he hung himself and also fell or slipped out and hit the rocks below and “burst asunder” I guess you could say. There’s really no contradiction to the story there in verse 18 with the gospel accounts. “And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem,” and they purchased the field with that money that Judas had given back. Then he quotes from some other Scripture. First he says, “this scripture must needs have been fulfilled,” it’s all under control. God prophesied. God spoke through the mouth of David. It’s interesting that David was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Then he quotes from two other Psalms in verse 20, “For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick,” or his office, “let another take.” He’s quoting from Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8. If you look up those Psalms, he’s drawing from both of those Psalms.

They believed because Judas fell into sin and turned away that his office had to be filled. I say that because it’s interesting that later on when the apostles would die (James would be beheaded) they didn’t say, “Hey, we gotta fill his office. We gotta get another apostle.” It

wouldn't happen again. Evidently, in preparation for the promise of the Father (Acts 2), they felt there needed to be 12 of them, so they wanted to elect another apostle to fill this place. There is a lot of raging debate as to whether or not they were in or out of the will of God, whether they should've got an apostle or waited, whether Paul was that apostle, or whether it was really Matthias. All the debate is kind of a waste of time because the Bible doesn't really say. I tend to believe they were in the will of God, and Matthias was the man that God chose. They prayed about it. Based on the Holy Spirit not being there, they cast lots (they did the best they could) and asked God to choose from the two they had chosen. They wanted God's will, and I believe that God answered their prayer. Paul came along later and became an apostle but not one of the 12. He was one born at a later time, and he was in a different category—he would be sent to the Gentiles. Paul never really claimed to be one of the 12 apostles, but indeed he was an apostle called by the Lord.

Let me point out in verses 21-22 that in electing a new apostle to take the place of Judas, there were two qualifications. He says (verse 21), "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us." So, the first qualification was he had to have been with them and the Lord from the beginning, all the way back to the baptism of John. These two guys that are chosen here, one is Barsabas and the other Matthias, you don't read about in the gospels but evidently they were around. They went all the way back to the baptism of John and the whole ministry of Jesus. The inference is that they could not be a newcomer. They couldn't be newly planted. It is important when you talk about spiritual leadership, very important, that it not be a new convert or a newcomer.

When people come to our church, we don't want them being strangers to immediately get involved in ministry. You know, settle down and make sure this is where God has called you. Understand who we are and what we believe. Let us get to know you and you get to know us, and then get involved in ministry. Make sure you're not newly planted when it comes to a pastor. The Bible says, "Let not a new convert, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." So, the first qualification was not a newcomer, he had to be around for a while. He had to be back from the good ol' days, and it says (verse 22), "Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."

Here's the second qualification for this apostle. He had to have seen and experienced the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is one of the reasons why I don't believe that there is a succession of apostolic authority in the Church today. I don't believe there are apostles that contain apostolic authority to write Scripture or to continue writing Scripture or speak with apostolic authority. I don't believe they would meet these qualifications—being with us from the baptism of John until Jesus ascension and having witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Again, uniquely—I do say uniquely—Paul the apostle did see Jesus Christ. He had a vision of Christ, he experienced Christ, and he encountered Christ, so you might say that Paul had a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus Christ—maybe different than the 12 initially during the 40 days—but Paul did see the resurrected Christ but didn't accompany them. He wasn't with them from the beginning, so he didn't meet qualification number one.

And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed,” and it's a good prayer. They said, “Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men,” some wonder why there were only two for the Lord to pick from. It could be that only two met the qualifications or maybe they prayed and it narrowed down to these two. I don't know. We do know that there were only two, and they prayed from the two, “Lord, which of these two.” The focus in their prayer was, “God, you know their hearts.” I think that's an awesome thing. What's important isn't necessarily gifting and ability, that's important, but God looks where? God looks on the heart—not as man looks on the outward appearance. When we think of a leader, we think of somebody that's tall, handsome, good-looking, charismatic, dynamic—that's the leader we want. God knows because He sees the heart, and the heart is what's important. When God called David, he was somebody that was insignificant and you would never on the exterior think that he's the next king of Israel, but God looks at the heart. God doesn't look on the outward appearance, and that's a beautiful thought.

So, he said, “Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men,” and certainly He does, “shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell,” notice the focus, that Judas transgressed and fell. They didn't say Judas died. They said Judas transgressed and he fell. They felt it necessary to replace him. It says, “And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.” What does that mean? We can't be absolutely sure what method they used of lot casting, but it was a common practice and something they did in the Old Testament. They would actually have sometimes colored stones. They would have a white stone or a black stone. They would put it in a pouch (sometimes in the pouch of the priest, the Urim and the Thummim) and would reach in and pull one out. If it was the black stone it would be “no,” and the white stone would be “yes.” It's basically what we would call picking straws. Whoever picks the short straw, you're it; or whoever picks the long straw, you're it. They believed that God would superintend their little casting of lots, and God's will and purpose would be done.

I want to make a point here. As I mentioned last Wednesday night as I introduced the book of Acts, not everything that happens in the book of Acts should necessarily be practiced or normative with the Church today. This is one of them. We don't pick our spiritual leaders by picking straws or casting lots. It just doesn't work that way. At no other time in the book of Acts...it never happened again, especially after the Holy Spirit comes in Acts 2; which, I believe, changes everything. When He comes in His fulness, they no longer find themselves casting lots to determine the will of God. I don't think it's the smartest thing to do for us as well today. I think we should pray, seek godly counsel, read the Scriptures, and make decisions based upon God's Word—God speaking to us through His Word—take our time, be patient, make wise decisions, don't just willy-nilly, “Lord, if today a bird flies over my head it's Your will for me to be a missionary,” or something. I hear people do the craziest things, you know, and I suppose God can lead you in some crazy ways, but you really need to be careful.

“And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias,” so I believe that he'll be listed in the New Jerusalem as one of the twelve foundations that have the names of the apostles, that

Matthias' name will be mentioned there. In Matthew 19:28, Jesus said they would sit on twelve thrones judging the nations, (Matthias would be part of that group) but Paul was an apostle that would come much later. "...and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

Now, I titled this message tonight: Preparation for Power. Last Wednesday was the "Promise of Power," and tonight is the "Preparation for Power." I want to point out (as I opened up tonight) the things that they believed in that prepared them for the day of Pentecost. First, as I mentioned, the resurrection of Jesus Christ—they saw Christ risen. Luke says, "...by many infallible proofs," we all need to encounter the resurrected Christ. We all need to have a personal, powerful, intimate experience with the resurrected Christ. They also believed in the Holy Spirit, and we do well to believe in the Holy Spirit—in His power and surrender to His power, to yield to His power. Thirdly, they believed in the Second Coming. As the two angels appeared on Mount Olivet and said, "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." They were motivated, "He's coming again. He's coming again. He's coming again." We can never lose the blessed hope of the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Don't ever lose that blessed hope. It's motivation to purity and to getting out the gospel. So, their sins could be forgiven—Christ is risen. They could have power to be witnesses—the Holy Spirit would come. They believed and had hope that Jesus Christ would return, and we have that blessed hope.

Then, they prayed, and that's what we need to do as a church. We need to pray. They prayed, and they prayed, and they prayed, and they prayed, and they kept praying. We need to be a people of God who prays—pray for God's will and purpose to be fulfilled. They searched the Scriptures. Peter said, "this scripture must needs have been fulfilled," and we must be men and women of the Word of God—people of the Book. Amen? That's another line that you're going to find through the book of Acts, all the way through—they searched the Scriptures, preached from the Scriptures, and believed the Scriptures. They were people of the Book—people of God's Word—and that's what we want to be as well. Let's pray.