

Waiting for the Spirit

- Acts 1:12-26
- We find the apostles and the disciples at a unique time in the history of the church in these verses today. You could call it, “post-incarnate/pre-Spirit” days. We have heard of the pre-incarnate appearances of Christ in the Old Testament. And of course, He was incarnate, present among us, for 33 years. Then He ascended, and the followers of Jesus were left in a period of ten days in which they were “post-incarnate/pre-Spirit.” No Jesus, and no Holy Spirit?! Wait a minute. I think we all can be assured that the Spirit of God was present, lest Jesus lied when He said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” The Spirit was present in the very beginning of time when Genesis 1 tells us the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the deep. In fact, should God remove His Spirit from the earth for a nano-second, the whole thing would be over. Creation itself groans under the weight of man’s sin as it waits for redemption, and it is only the Spirit of God that holds it together until final redemption is completed and He brings many sons (and daughters) to glory. Colossians 1:16-17 instruct us that “BY Him” (Christ), all things were created. And “IN Him all things hold together.” But here in this passage we find the followers of Jesus, being obedient to His final instructions. They go to Jerusalem to wait for the coming of the Spirit, as they were told. I want to examine two things with you in this text this morning. First, the response of the disciples. Second, the replacement of an apostle.
- The response of the disciples.
- We need to once again combine Luke’s two writings about this period to get the full picture. Luke 24:52 says, “And they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.” And Acts 1, we see they returned to Jerusalem and went to the upper room where they were staying, and our memory verse, 1:14, tells us that with one accord they were devoting themselves to prayer. That’s a powerful punch!: praise in the temple, and prayer in the home. Add the element that most described the followers of Jesus, “great joy,” and you have a dynamo. It reminds us of the angel who said to the shepherds, “I bring you good news of great joy which shall be to all people.” The followers of Jesus Christ, even after He ascended into heaven, were marked by great joy! Which resulted in continual praise and powerful prayer. Luke tells us two things about the prayer of the saints.
- They prayed with great unity.
- They were not all crammed into a Honda, as the joke goes. It doesn’t say they were “IN” one accord, but with one accord. Besides, 120 in an Accord would be almost as crowded as a Haitian tap-tap. “With one accord,” is one Greek word, and one of Luke’s favorites. He uses it ten times and it only occurs one other time in the NT. The way it is used by Luke means that there was agreement in prayer. They were unanimous in their prayer, agreeing all together about the things they were praying for. Who was praying? Again, Luke says there were 120 of them, which included the eleven apostles, the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers. We know who the eleven are. Who are the women? Are they the same ones we read about in Ruth? No, they’d be over 1200 years old, so they’re long gone. But Luke may be referring to the three women he counted among Jesus’ supporters and followers in Luke 8:2-3, namely Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna. There were others, I’m sure, like Mary the mother of James who was one of the first to the empty tomb. Then there was Mary, the mother of Jesus. She is the only woman mentioned by name by Luke here, not because she was without sin, but because she held a position of honor. Then there were the brothers of Jesus. Remember them? None of them believed in Jesus until after His resurrection. He appeared to His brother James, Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 15, and apparently it was then that James became a believer. Jesus may have also appeared to His other brothers, we are not told, or it may be that James led them to faith in their elder brother kinsman redeemer! James went on to be the leader of the church

in Jerusalem, and to write the letter of James. Another half-brother of Jesus', His brother Judas, or Jude, went on to write a letter himself. So here they all are, praying with one accord. Also,

- They prayed with great tenacity.
- They were “devoting themselves to prayer.” Great word, here, *proskartereo*. It is often used to talk about remaining with someone, cleaving to them, insisting on and committed to staying with them. Who was the object of their devotion, and to whom were they insisting on and committed to staying close to? The Lord! What would have been the subject upon which they were united and devoted? I believe they were praying about the coming of the Spirit. Their prayers were based on the command and the promise of Jesus. He had said, “Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:49) It was the most important clothing they would ever receive! And Jesus had promised they would receive it. Which points to an important biblical principle: the promises of God do not make our prayers unnecessary. They provide the authority with which we pray and the assurance we have that God will answer! What kind of prayer meetings did they have during those ten days between Jesus ascension and the Spirit’s arrival? Powerful! Explosive! Joyful! They had been promised something and now they were waiting to receive it, joyfully giving God praise for all he had done and excitedly looking forward to what He was about to do. Question: why are our prayers not like that sometimes? Or for some Christians, ever? The problem with prayer can never be traced back to a defect in the promises of God. Take hold of His promises and pray with great joy and expectation! Just be careful not to make something a promise which is not a promise.
- The replacement of an apostle
- There was only one action item on the apostle’s agenda for the ten days they were waiting on the Spirit. Of course there was praise and prayer, but those should not be agenda items but a way of life for the followers of Christ. The one agenda item Peter reminded everyone of was finding the replacement for Judas. As an aside, the way Peter describes Judas Iscariot’s betrayal of Jesus is interesting, isn’t it? You see how Luke holds in perfect balance an understanding of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. Right? Judas did what he did on the one hand because he had to fulfill the Scriptures. He was the son of perdition. Peter says, “brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled.” Then Luke says as explanation in verse 18, “now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness.” God foreordained it. Judas chose it of his own free will. It was God’s plan. It was Judas’ wickedness. One more aside. I used to think there was a contradiction between the Gospels and the book of Acts about how Judas died. The Gospels say he went out and hanged himself. Acts says something a bit more grotesque. But the truth can easily include both accounts as one. Judas hanged himself. Eventually the rope broke (who would want to take Judas’ body down and bury it?), the body fell, possibly hitting a sharp rock, which would have caused the overripe corpse to rupture.
- The qualifications of an apostle. Someone asked me this week what the difference is between a disciple and an apostle. Great question! I believe a disciple is any follower of Jesus Christ. The word *mathetes* literally means “taught one,” or “learner.” Verse 15: Peter stood up among the disciples. That’s the word that is used there, and the ESV translates it brothers. So, an apostle stood up among the disciples. How many disciples were there in the room that day? 120. How many apostles? 11. Soon to be 12. So, there really were twelve in the room, because the new apostle would be chosen from that gathering, not from some ringer who lived in another region. So, what is an apostle? An apostle could be defined in two ways. On the one hand, it is understood that an apostle was someone who had witnessed the resurrection of Jesus and was called upon to be a witness for Him. Acts 4:33, *And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.* This is how Paul could be called an apostle. The resurrected Jesus appeared to Paul on the Damascus Road. We know also that Jesus’ brother James was considered an apostle under this definition, right? By two things. 1 Cor. 15:7 says, “Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles.” And Paul says in Galatians

1:19 about his visit to Jerusalem to visit Peter in the early days, "But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother."

- The second definition of an apostle is spelled out by Peter in verses 21-22. This man needs to have been with Jesus from His baptism by John in the river Jordan all the way to His resurrection and ascension. Why? This man would be taking the place of one of the Twelve. He would be part of the foundation of the church, which Paul said in Ephesians is the apostles and the prophets, with Christ Jesus being the cornerstone. Revelation 21:14 says the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb! So, there were many apostles, in the sense that at least 500 people had witnessed the resurrected Christ. But there were only twelve Apostles, who would be the foundation.
- What did the eleven, led by Peter, do to choose Judas' replacement?
- First, they looked to Scripture. They believed the Word was clear that Judas had to be replaced and that there should be Twelve again.
- Second, they used their common sense in order to be able to put forward two candidates. If this man was going to replace Judas and be like the rest of them he had to have the same qualifications of the first twelve. He had to have been with Jesus from His baptism through to His ascension. Maybe these were the only two among the 120 who met the qualifications. Maybe there were many men who met the qualifications, but the eleven believed these two were the best candidates. I would love to know, but we are not told. So, they chose two. Then,
- Third, they asked Jesus to decide! They named two candidates, Joseph (who had two aliases, which may have been why he wasn't picked), and Matthias. Then they cast lots, praying, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two You have chosen..." (verse 24)
- Kardiagnostes= heart-knower!
- Casting lots was never used again in the church to make decisions after the Spirit came. Now we make decisions by 1-turning to the Scripture. 2-Using common sense (think it out! As Alistair Begg likes to say) and 3-prayer. (By the way, you can't skip the first and third and think you can rely on the second. Common sense that is not grounded in Scripture and bathed in prayer is nonsense.
- The Twelve is complete again. Now the 120 stand ready for the next big event on God's calendar.