

1. The New Nation is Characterized by a Unified Devotion to Prayer
  - a. Expecting the ‘promise of the Father’ and the ‘power from the Holy Spirit to be witnesses’, they went away and devoted themselves to prayer together
  - b. ‘one - minded’
    - i. They were singular in purpose and desire for the Holy Spirit to empower them to be like Jesus, testifying to the Kingdom of God, etc.
    - ii. Consider how incredible this one-minded purpose is at this moment!
      1. Usually when a leader leaves, for whatever reason, there is a power vacuum which often leads to conflict over who should assume the powerful places
      2. But here we see a variety of people, with a variety of personalities, with a variety of relationships with Jesus, who should be fighting over influence and power, but who are singular in their purpose of perseverant prayer
        - a. Why mention Mary and Jesus’ brothers?
          - i. There is a genetic claim to power
        - b. Why mention the women?
          - i. There is a financial claim to power (Luke 8:2-3)
          - ii. There is a relational claim to influence (Luke 23:55ff) because they didn’t run away from Jesus like the 11
          - iii. They were witnesses to His resurrection first
      - c. And the Eleven
        - i. We know that they typically strove for power and influence, as noted last week
        - ii. Peter had denied Jesus, Andrew went fishing, James and John were petulant in their desire for power and antagonized the others because of it
        - iii. Thomas was a doubter, Bartholomew was blunt (Nathaniel, ‘in whom there is no guile’), and Simon was a Zealot.
      3. If there was ever a group of people amongst whom there could have been division and self-seeking, this would have been one of them – but there was one-mindedness
        - a. This is the first miracle of Pentecost
    - c. ‘were devoting themselves to the prayers’
      - i. To give constant and perseverant attention towards
      - ii. They were seeking, by dependent prayer to the Lord, to be empowered by the Spirit to continue Jesus’ ministry
        1. Luke 11:13
      - iii. This type of perseverance shows a deep and abiding faith that God fulfills what He promises
        1. It also really makes sense that coming off of seeing Jesus ascend into the heavens, that they would be full of faith and expectancy
  - d. It is striking that at almost every important turning point in the narrative of God’s redemptive action in Acts we find a mention of prayer
    - i. 1:14 – preparation for Pentecost (baptism of the Holy Spirit)
    - ii. 1:24 – selection of the Twelfth apostle to fill Judas’ portion
    - iii. 4:24-31 – the first persecution and the reiteration of the filling of the Spirit
    - iv. 8:14-17 – the inclusion of Samaritans in the New Nation, filling of the Spirit
    - v. 9:11-12 – the selection of Saul (Paul) by Christ Jesus
    - vi. 10:4,9,30,44 – the inclusion of Gentiles into the New Nation, Cornelius, filling of the Spirit
    - vii. 13:2-3 – setting apart Saul and Barnabas for pioneer missions
  - e. While we note this strong correlation, we must not press causality upon it
    - i. God is simply fulfilling what He had promised in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon His Church
    - ii. It was not the prayers of the people which caused the Spirit’s baptism in fire and power, it was God’s previous promise and His faithfulness to keep such a promise

- iii. Yet, there is, and always will be, an intimate functional relationship between the fulfillment of God's redemptive promises and the devotion of His people to prayer
    - 1. "Coming events cast their shadows before them, and when God is about to bless his people his coming favour casts the shadow of prayer over the church. When he is about to favour an individual he casts the shadow of hopeful expectation over his soul. Our prayers, let men laugh at them as they will, and say there is no power in them, are the indicators of the movement of the wheels of Providence." — Charles Spurgeon, *The Holy Spirit's Intercession*
  - iv. Also of interesting note is that the only two times that we see this "one-mindedness" and "prayer" connected together, we see the 'filling of the Spirit resulting in the bold proclamation of the Word of God' immediately following (here, and in 4:24-31)
  - f. What are the implications?
    - i. God moves through the one-minded prayers of His people
2. The New Nation is Characterized by a Dependence Upon the Holy Scriptures to Define and Explain All Things
- a. Fulfillment of Scripture – sovereignty
    - i. Note that they could have just lamented Judas' treachery, but instead they turned to the Scriptures to understand what was going on
      - 1. Why?
    - ii. Peter notes how the early church understood the Scriptures: They are "the Holy Spirit speaking through the mouth of one of His servants"
      - 1. "which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas"!
        - 2. The words of the Scriptures are the words of the Holy Spirit speaking through men – David, Moses, Jeremiah, Luke, Paul, Peter, John, etc.
        - 3. But it is the Holy Spirit speaking!
          - a. Do you want to hear the voice of God? Read the Scriptures!
  - b. Judas needed to be explained
    - i. He had a portion of Jesus' ministry, but became a guide to Jesus' arresters
      - 1. It was the pain of betrayal, the confusion, the sorrow, which led the apostles to search the Scriptures
      - 2. Let your pain lead you to listen to the Holy Spirit through God's Word.
    - ii. Killed himself in his own field - no portion with Jesus, chose his own portion purchased by himself
      - 1. Take the Scriptures and see the implications for the present moment
        - a. Judas was the treasurer, and it was discovered that he was a thief and liar who betrayed Jesus to death
      - 2. The tragic surprise is explained by the Scriptures – they were foretold, so even if the apostles missed it (which they may have felt guilty for not seeing it), God had sovereign control over it
  - iii. Akeldama – "Field of Blood"
    - 1. This detail is the detail of an eyewitness and an invitation to pursue the veracity of the claims
      - a. It depends upon a cultural context which would have answers for why a particular locale was dubbed "Field of Blood"
        - i. Oregon Place Names and their origins:
          - 1. Boo Boo Lake: Lane County accidently stocked it with trout
          - 2. Donner and Blitzen Rivers: not named after reindeer, but because a troop of soldiers had to traverse the creeks in a thunderstorm – the German words for "Thunder" and "Lightning"
          - 3. Voltage, in Harney County, was fed by the Donner and Blitzen Rivers, implying that it had enough "voltage" to survive
          - 4. Pileup Creek in Wallowa County: 400 sheep went over a steep ravine and piled up in the creek

- b. Imagine asking why “Deadman’s Curve” got its name, and you can see how the inhabitants of Jerusalem would have referred to the place of Judas’ suicide as “Bloodfield”

2. PROBLEMS:

- a. Matthew indicates that Judas didn’t purchase the field, but the chief priests did, and they named the field which they bought “the field of blood” not because of Judas’ blood, but because it was purchased with blood money, i.e. Jesus’ blood

- i. Possibilities:

- 1. Two separate fields named “field of blood”

- a. Matthew uses “field” of blood
- b. Luke uses “estate” of blood
- c. Matthew doesn’t indicate that the field purchased by the chief priests was the same place where Judas killed himself
  - i. Kind of like “Deadman’s Curve” – disagreement as to which curve is meant
- d. Luke says that Judas “obtained” the place, which may or not be an active purchase, but may allude to the passive obtaining via the chief priests’ purchase (weak)
- e. The “wages of unrighteousness” may not allude to the 30 silvers, but rather to the money he stole from the disciples’ moneybag for the poor
  - i. John 12:6; 13:29

- 2. Same field given the same name for two different reasons

- a. Matthew is explaining how the chief priests gave the field its name
- b. Luke is explaining how the common citizen of Jerusalem explained the name of the field

- b. Was Judas hung or did he die by spontaneous explosion?

- i. Matthew claims that Judas hung himself in shame
- ii. Luke claims that Judas “fell headlong” and “his belly burst open and guts spilled out”

- 1. Possibility

- a. Both are true
  - i. He hung himself, swelled in the sun, collapsed and ‘burst open’ upon hitting the ground
- b. Both are meant to invoke a curse
  - i. Cursed is the one hung on a tree
  - ii. Cursed is the one whose belly burst (used only of women)
- c. “fell headlong” (πρηνης), is a word only used here, and can linguistically come from the word for “swollen” or “distended”
  - i. This would indicate that Judas swelled “in the middle” and his “guts poured out”
  - ii. It would also be a medical term, possibly known by the physician, Luke

- c. Yet, the Scripture foretold it

- i. Even the worst betrayal, unto death, was known and ordained by God
- ii. Note also how the apostles use the Old Testament to frame their current experiences
  - 1. In this case, with a betrayer of the righteous one
  - 2. See Psalm 109:8 & 69:25

- iii. Chiasm

- 1. Prayer

2. Scripture
  3. Judas Explained – the turmoil & confusion of unjust betrayal is wrapped in prayer and Scripture to determine its meaning and how to move forward
  4. Scripture
  5. Prayer
- d. What are the implications?
- i. Our current experiences are interpreted by the Scripture and we are told how to move forward by God’s Spirit through the Scripture, and this ought to move us to pray
    1. Even the most evil betrayals, injustices, and horrors associated with these things leading to immense pain and suffering (crucifixion)
    2. Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane AND he knew that Judas had gone to turn him over to the chief priests for his torture and execution
    3. His knowledge of God’s plan led Him to pray, not to run, to entrust Himself to God and His promises in His Word, not to destroy Judas
  - ii. God has given us “all things pertaining to life and godliness” in His Word
    1. The Scripture is sufficient for all of our life – nothing else is needed
  - iii. Prayer is our petition to God to clarify our understanding of those promises and to deliver them according to His good purposes
3. The Church is the New Nation of God Through Christ Jesus - Selection of the Twelfth
- a. Reason bounded the selection
    - i. The office required a man who had been with the apostles since the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (baptism of John) through all the events leading to the ascension
      1. Purpose was to witness to the resurrection
      2. Apparently, there was only two.
    - ii. What we learn from this is that the apostles didn’t “leave things up to chance” when they cast lots.
      1. They used reasonable, thoughtful, wise principles
      2. This kind of reason narrowed it down to two *qualified* men whom the Lord needed to clarify the proper choice
        - a. Joseph (Son of the Sabbath, Justus)
        - b. Matthias
    - iii. Let us strive to be reasonable, thoughtful, wise people
      1. We live in a society that places authority in its “feeling”, in its “heart”, in the affections and desires of the soul, rather than in the reasoned, objective, and consistency of truth
      2. There are many examples of unreasoned inconsistency in our world, but I will keep it light
        - a. For example, Christ’s Church in Kansas City wanted to reduce complaining in its people in 2006, so it ordered bracelets with the inscription “Spirit” on it. The purpose was that for 21 days they weren’t supposed to gossip, criticize, or complain. Why only 21 days, I don’t know. They ordered these bracelets from a website, and then they returned them because they didn’t like the quality of the bracelets.
  3. Let us seek to be reasoned, consistent, thoughtful, which is the biblical expression of wisdom
    - a. Seek to know the biblical worldview: God’s revelation of what is important, real, valuable, good, right, and perfect
    - b. “Follow your heart” is terrible advice when God has revealed that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately ill, who can comprehend it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)
    - c. We must learn to reason from God’s revelation, for His ordering and interpretation of reality fits what we can observe better than anything else
- b. The “fulfillment of the Scriptures” demanded the selection
- i. In the Scriptures they saw the necessity for someone to “take his office”, and so they moved forward with reasoned and thoughtful action

1. They didn't mystically conclude anything
2. They informed themselves with God's Word, thought through the problems and the Scripture's revelation, and then planned to fulfill it
- ii. What was it that they saw in the Scriptures that necessitated filling Judas' "portion?"
  1. Twelve apostles are needed because Jesus is the New Covenant keeper, as Jacob was the Covenant keeper in the OT
    - a. The use of the word "portion" by Luke informs us of the Apostles' reasoning
      - i. They saw the Church as the New Nation, the New Israel from which 12 portioned tribes would grow into a people of God innumerable (Numbers 26:55-56)
    - b. The 12 tribes of Jacob (Israel) each had a portion of the covenant land
    - c. The 12 apostles of Jesus (True Israel) each were given a portion of the New Covenant Church leadership
      - i. All who believed "account of them" are included as familial sharers in the covenant of Christ
      - ii. They are the beginning of a New Nation, which will be made up of people from every tribe, nation, tongue, and ethnicity who are included in the covenant not by blood, but by faith in Jesus through the testimony of the 12
  2. The apostles knew that Jesus was building the New Nation
    - a. In Jesus' revelation to John, the New Jerusalem has 12 gates with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, and 12 foundations with the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb (Revelation 21)
    - b. This is probably why Luke also mentions that there were 120 people there
      - i. Not merely because it was historically accurate, which it was, but because he saw significance in it
      - ii. 12 x 10 – the tribes of God's people times the Greek number for completion
      - iii. The Church was the completed Israel and God was building a New Nation, the complete people of God, through His Son
        1. We will see as the book progresses, that this Church is made up of Jews and Gentiles as equal heirs in the Kingdom of God
        2. But the Church of Jesus Christ is the Kingdom of God which remains
- c. Prayer discovers the selection
  - i. Note how they ask the Lord, who is the "Heart-Knower" (compound noun), to reveal the man He desires
    1. They were both qualified, so there would be no "horrible" decision
  - ii. Yet, they knew that God alone knows the hearts of man and who he had elected for the role of filling out the 12
    1. This was not an election – it was a selection by God
    2. Thus, God was asked to make it clear
  - iii. Note that these leaders weren't made by some program of apostleship training enforced by the Church – they were men raised up by God
    1. This is why prayer is important
    2. When God wants missionaries to the field, Jesus tells his disciples to "pray that God would send workers out into the harvest"!
      - a. Stick to the qualifications, and ask God for them
    3. When you really get them, you will know that they came from God!
      - a. Before Jesus selected the original 12, he was up in prayer all night (Luke 6)
      - b. The apostles did the same before they appointed Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13
  - iv. They understood that God selects leaders according to their heart
    1. "You are the heart-knower"
- d. God revealed the selection – the casting of lot was how God would reveal His choice
  - i. not random, but revealed by God

1. Pr 16:33
2. The disciples believed that God would select between the men and reveal it, after asking Him, to do so through the Old Testament norm of casting lots
  - a. Small pebbles or shards of pottery put into a bag and one is removed
3. They were not trusting in chance, or luck, or their own choice, but rather to God who controls the laying of the lot
- ii. done in dependence and prayer
  1. note the theology behind it: “The Lord is the Heart-Knower, so please make it clear to us.”
  2. I have found that people who have a hard time praying, have a hard time making wise decisions, including myself
- iii. not repeated after the pouring out of the Holy Spirit
  1. The New Testament, after the gift of the Spirit, never used the lots again
  2. Rather, in Acts 15 when there is a theological contention regarding whether Gentiles had to be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses to be fully included in the Church, there is reasoned debate, according to Scripture (15:16-18) and reason (15:7-12), and then there is consensus (15:22-33)
    - a. This decision was also based upon the fact that God is the “heart-knower” (15:8), the only other use of this term
- iv. Matthias was chosen to ‘receive the portion of the service’
  1. The portion is an office of service, not an office of power
  2. There is authority in the office, but it is the authority of Christ-like service which lays down its life for the flourishing of those whom it serves, i.e. the Church
    - a. 11 of the 12 apostles were executed for their witness to Jesus and His resurrection
    - b. The 12<sup>th</sup>, John, was boiled in oil but survived, then exiled to the island of Patmos where it was believed he couldn’t influence anyone
      - i. He received the Revelation of Jesus Christ (the book of Revelation) from there to strengthen and encourage the church
      - ii. Nothing stops God from moving because His Spirit is living and active within Her
- e. What are the implications?
  - i. Leaders should be chosen by dependence upon God and in accordance with wisdom/reason
    1. They must meet the requirements set forth in the Scriptures
    2. They must be placed before “the Heart-Knower” through prayer
    3. He must be asked to “make it clear” with whom to proceed
    4. There will be consensus, not division
  - ii. Our elder candidate: Tim Hunt
    1. Does he meet the qualifications set forth in the Scriptures?
    2. Let us ask the Heart-Knower to reveal His will to us through prayer.
    3. If there is consensus through the Spirit of God, we will proceed.