

All Part Of The Plan

Acts 1:12-26 (January 19, 2025)



Do you ever look at the church and think – surely this mob can't be God's chosen vehicle to reach the world? I do.

I am sure you have been discouraged at times by the state of the local church.

I can't think of a year in which we didn't hear about one of the better churches in Brisbane having division. Division among the leaders or division among the members or both.

I would struggle to think of a year in which we didn't hear reports of serious sin among the leaders of one of the better churches.

And while it is rarer – there have been leaders who have embezzled money, physically attacked other leaders and wider afield even reports of some leaders actually killing each other.

Imagine what events like that do to the morale of a church?

Throw in the reality that most churches have members no one is sure are really saved.

Other members who barely give, serve or share the gospel.

There are always those members who are really hard to live with.

It is not just the local church. I am sure you have been discouraged at the state of the church throughout the world.

In the west, church attendance is plummeting and woke liberal ideology is rocketing.

Churches are accepting homosexuals or those who deny core gospel truths into ministry en masse.

Strong Bible teaching is vanishing.

The gospel is being undermined.

And then it gets worse. You look in the mirror and realise – you have your own struggles. Too much sin, too much apathy, too little kingdom zeal.

And you think – how on earth are we – the church – ever going to ever reach the world for Jesus?

Sometimes we wonder if Jesus chose the wrong way and wrong people to reach the world.

Often, we can wonder if the weaknesses of the church and our own failings might derail the plan of God.

In our passage this morning – we are encouraged to pull back from the discouraging micro events – and see the big picture – the macro.

The failures of leaders, individual Christians and churches will **not** halt the plan of Jesus to reach the nations.

God is greater than our failings.

In fact, somehow, Jesus uses our struggles and failings – and weaves them into His plan.

Most of the time we will not know why God ordains certain things to happen – but we must trust that it is all part of His plan.

Here is the point of this morning's passage:



Even when we can't understand why, trust that God's plan uses sin, struggles and tragedies to build His kingdom.

Now, whatever you hear this morning – do **not** hear that God doesn't care about our sin, our apathy, our failures – far from it. He will hold us accountable.

However – they don't take Him by surprise and they certainly do not derail His plan.

In fact, He even uses them in the building of His kingdom. God works all things together for good.

We are working our way through Acts. We have seen that the book of Acts summarises our task in this way.



We must strive to see His kingdom come, through the empowering of His Spirit, by witnessing to the nations, until He comes again.

This morning, we come to Acts 1:12-26 where Jesus makes it clear that the difficulties and disappointments the church faces is:



1:12-26 All Part Of The Plan

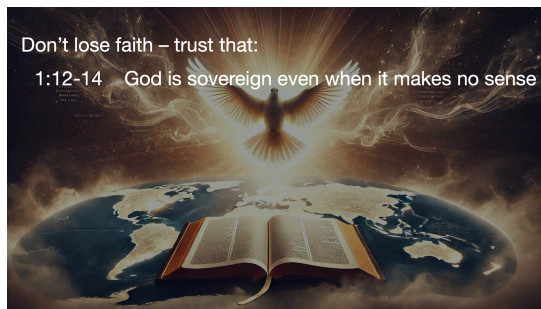
You may wonder why this section is here.

Jesus has told them to wait until He sends the Spirit – so why include this? Why not go straight to Pentecost?

Because the betrayal of Judas and his death had to raise some huge questions in the minds of this core group.

They had to know that even something as huge as this – is all part of God's plan.

So, turn with me if you will to Acts 1:12 where we are encouraged **don't lose faith – trust that:**



1:12-14 God is sovereign even when it makes no sense

Acts 1:12–14:

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is near Jerusalem—a Sabbath day's journey away. When they arrived, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying: **Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.** They all were continually united in prayer, along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

If you were God and you were going to choose the 12 men to be the foundation of the church – who would you choose?

I'm fairly certain it would not be the 12 Jesus chose.

Moreover, if you knew one of them would betray you to death – would you choose that one?

No.

But Jesus is God and He chose Judas.

I suspect that this made little sense to this group initially.

But they had to know – it is all part of the plan.

The really significant part of these verses is that Luke lists the Disciples – but *only* lists **eleven**.

One is missing and not just missing – he betrayed Jesus and took his own life.

This becomes the focus of verses 12-26.

How could this be part of the plan of God?

And if Jesus messed up the choosing of His leaders – how can we trust He knows what He is doing with His plan to reach the world?

This is huge.

There had to be some serious questions in the minds of this group.

Think about it. The faithful are few in number – but they had been commanded to wait until the Holy Spirit had come upon them in power.

There are around 120 of them in Jerusalem. A few others in other parts of Judea – and a few believers further afield.

Now the core group – the Disciples – the women who were with Jesus – and His family – gather to pray.

Jesus has ascended. Gone.

Imagine the first time this group gathered.

The temptation had to be there to look around the room and get discouraged and they must have some questions.

It is hard to know if this is the same upper room they were in the night before Jesus died.

I think likely it was – but regardless, just gathering like this would have brought back memories of that night.

That is the night on which Jesus was betrayed – **to death – by one of the 12.**

The opposition was not just from outsiders – Jew and Gentile leaders.

It is not just from the mob.

It also came from an insider – a brother – a trusted friend.

Remember, when Jesus said that one there eating the Passover with Him would betray Him – they were stunned – no – couldn't happen – You must be wrong.

But, here Luke lists out eleven names – one is missing – Judas Iscariot.

Please note that Judas the son of James is a different Judas.

He is often called Thaddaeus – and if I were him – I would always introduce myself as:

Hi, I am Thad – one of Jesus' disciples.

Otherwise, it would always be:

Hi, I am Judas – one of Jesus' disciples – but **not** that Judas.

This other Judas is the one we all know. He betrayed Jesus – the Messiah – to death.

Crucially, none of the Disciples picked it. None of them realised that hiding in plain sight among their little flock was a thief, greedy – willing to betray Jesus to death – for 30 lousy pieces of silver.

The core group was small and fragile – and something like this had to rock them.

There had to be questions.

How could God allow this to happen?

Is He actually sovereign?

Is reaching the nations through the church even possible?

Imagine a church under communist rule – where one Elder is bribed by the party to betray another – to death.

How do the remaining Elders answer questions the next Lord's Day?

How did you Elders miss this? How could you serve together and not see it? How can we now trust you guys who are left?

But this was worse. Travelling with Jesus for three years cemented this group. They were brothers. They had seen each other at their best and worst. They had a united goal.

Yet – no one saw the flaws in Judas.

And now as they gather – there are two empty seats.

Jesus betrayed by Judas – and Judas dead by his own hand.

It is not that Judas just missed the church meeting memo.

They have to be thinking – how did we miss this – are we up to this – and how could God allow this?

Is there someone else here who will fail the group and desert the mission?

What if Matthew buckles and goes back to tax collecting? We know Peter will probably end up fishing again.

What if Thomas has more doubts – and turns from the faith?

What if someone else – right here – betrays us for money, power, sex?

What if I fall away or betray the group?

How can God use a group like us?

And crucially – they **have** to be asking – if Jesus is God – how did He end up choosing Judas?

Remember, Rabbis had students approach them and they chose the best and brightest.

Not Jesus – He prayed all night to God – then very deliberately chose the 12 – and they certainly never looked like a group of Israel's brightest and best.

Did Jesus mess up?

And if He messed up with Judas – could He have messed up with someone else?

And then they look around and see who else is in the room – Jesus' family and a few others – including some women.

And well, frankly this whole motley crew is weak and unreliable.

His family had thought Jesus was mad.

The Disciples had fought over who was greatest.

Peter had denied Jesus three times and gone back to fishing.

Women were considered weak and unreliable.

And they all missed the traitor in their ranks.

Now all they have to do is face the power of the Sanhedrin and Rome and take a gospel of a dead Messiah to a world that doesn't want it.

What could go wrong?

In circumstances like this, how do you trust that Jesus knows what He is doing?

This is often us. We look at a situation – in our lives – in the church – and think – God what are you doing? God surely this can't be right?

Honestly – I have done that.

I have been discouraged about this church – the good churches in Brisbane – and the state of the whole church worldwide.

But here is the problem – while we don't say it out loud – even thinking like this says that we know better than God about how He should run His church. He should not do this.

A dedicated missionary is killed – well this could **never** be part of the plan of God.

An Eldership dissolves into civil war – God **can't** work through that?

An entire denomination goes woke and liberal – isn't the kingdom supposed to grow **not** decay?

What do you do when you have those thoughts?

When you read verses 12-14 – despite every reason to be discouraged you actually don't get the sense that they are discouraged and disheartened and questioning – despite having good reason to do so.

In fact – just the opposite – there is a sense of expectancy and hope.

Verse 14 – **They were all continually united in prayer.**

What were they praying?

Send Your Spirit? Make us bold? Send us to the nations? Work your will through us?

We have faith.

They are trusting that God knows what He is doing.

The betrayal of Judas.

The weakness of the core group.

The magnitude of the task.

God knows it all and has it all in hand.

The Bible is crystal clear about two things.



1. God has planned and determined every event.

Isaiah 46:9–10:

I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and no one is like me. I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: my plan will take place, and I will do all my will.

Read those verses a few times and marvel.

God says – before the world began – I declared the end. Everything that happens is part of my plan.

2. God's plan even uses our sin and failures.

In Genesis, Jacob's sons sold Joseph into slavery.

An evil act.

Genesis 50:20 – You planned it for evil – BUT – God planned it for good.

God used the sin of the brothers to place Joseph in a position to save the nation and preserve the seed line.

How these two truths work **I don't know** – but God does.

Do not ask me about determinism and free will.

I can tell you God's decree does not negate your role and responsibility in your choices – and it certainly does not make you a robot.

So, here is the thing – when Elder Bob commits adultery – refuses to step down – and a civil war ensues – with the result that local church is decimated.

1. It did not take God by surprise.
2. Somehow it is all part of God's plan.
3. God even uses events like this to further His purposes.

Who knows? Maybe one young man in that church says – I have seen how an Elder should **not** act – God if I become an Elder, help me to become a man who does serve you well.

How do we put this together?

I can't give you a why for every event in your life.

I can't give you a why for every event in the life of our church or the worldwide church.

But what God does is this. He asks us to **trust** that **He** knows what He is doing.

And to help us trust, in a handful of cases He pulls back the curtain to give us a why – so that we will trust Him and don't need to pull back the curtain on every curveball and struggle in life.

In this case – we will see God pull back the curtain on why He chose Judas and how far from derailing His plan – it was part of the plan.



So pray and depend on God.

This core group prayed and trusted.

In fact, we will see this time and again in Acts.

When times are tough – when life doesn't go the way we expect – here is what most of us do.

We pray – God please make this situation better – and really soon.

Heal my wife, bring me a husband, stop this war.

We wait patiently for a day – maybe two or three – then our patience is exhausted and we let God have it.

God – I prayed – so where is my answer? Did you not hear – do you not care?

It is almost as if we know what God **should** do.

We treat God as a genie not the sovereign Lord.

We forget that **no** – or **keep waiting** – are the most common answers to prayer.

We are to pray – Lord if what will glorify you is to remove this thorn – fix this disaster – change these events – please do – if what glorifies you is not to – then strengthen my faith – or give me patience to wait or accept that Your answer is no.

We are going to see in Acts that the church regularly gathers to pray for the mission.

We can't do it without divine power. So, we need to pray and depend on God.

His will be done – not ours.

The church today has weaknesses.

Evangelism – yes.

But also prayer – and they are inextricably linked.

So, **pray**. Pray in private, come to corporate times of prayer – pray for your witness, Holland Park’s witness, the witness of missionaries – pray.

Now – a question – where did this faith that God has is all in hand come from?

Shocker – they read their Bibles and saw that:



1:15-17 God even planned the betrayal

The darkest event in history – God even planned that.

It is hard to imagine the magnitude of what Judas did.

Here is God in human flesh.

Three years – Judas watched the miracles. Feeding 5000, walking on water, raising Lazarus.

He saw a sinless life.

But as time wore on it became clear to Judas that he only wanted to be in it if it led to gain – money, power, position.

He was not up for persecution and struggle.

So, he cut his losses and betrayed Jesus for 30 lousy pieces of silver.

What is the cost of a man's soul?

Acts 1:15–17:

In those days Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters—the number of people who were together was about a hundred twenty—and said, “Brothers and sisters, it was **necessary that the Scripture be fulfilled** that the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David foretold about Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was one of our number and shared in this ministry.

It is **necessary that the Scripture be fulfilled**.

Basically, God **prophesied** that Judas would betray Jesus.

God revealed it beforehand – **so that** we would **know** that it was all part of the plan.

Where did God prophesy this?

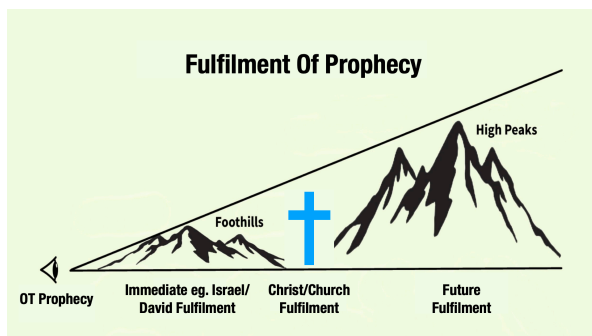
Can we point to a verse that says – the Messiah will come and one of His friends will betray Him?

Well, we need to understand the way prophecy works.



Reading prophecy is like looking into the distance and seeing mountains.

From a distance you think all the peaks are in one place.



But as you get closer you realise that they are not all together.

Often there is an immediate fulfilment – it might be Israel or David.

Then often there is a fulfilment in Christ or in the Church.

And there may be a final future fulfilment.

So, we don't find a Psalm specifically saying – the Messiah will be betrayed to death by one of His own.

But, you **do** find passages that speak of David being attacked or betrayed – that then **also** applies to David's greater Son – Jesus.

We know Peter was at least thinking of passages in Psalm 69 and Psalm 109 – the Psalms he quotes in verse 20.

But other passages speak of David being betrayed.

Jesus Himself used Psalm 41 to speak of Judas' betrayal.

Listen to John 13:18:

The Scripture must be fulfilled – and then He quotes Psalm 41:9 – [Even My friend in whom I trusted] **One who ate my bread has raised his heel against me.**

When you read these Psalms – 41, 69 and 109 – you find that they are talking first – about David and his enemies.

But God intended these passages to then apply to Christ. Psalm 69 is often applied to Jesus in the New Testament.

In John 15:25 Jesus applies Psalm 69 to Himself:

But this happened so that the statement written in their law might be fulfilled: **They hated me for no reason.**

Each of the four gospels apply Psalm 69:21 to Jesus' crucifixion:

Instead, they gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Paul applies Psalm 69 to the enemies of Jesus in both Romans 11 and Romans 15.

Psalm 109 is similar. Matthew applies Psalm 109 to Jesus in Matthew 27.

So, it is no surprise that Peter can confidently say that the betrayal of Judas was prophesied by Scripture – and therefore it **must** be fulfilled – **and** this means it is all part of God's plan.

This is crucial to know:

For he was one of our number and shared in this ministry.

Judas was not some random – he was one of the twelve – but he betrayed Jesus.

This came as a total shock to the Disciples. But, it is very clear that Jesus always knew Judas would betray Him. It is in all the Gospels. For example, John 6:64:

Jesus knew **from the beginning** ... the one who would betray him.



This raises some **huge** questions.

If Jesus knew when He chose him that Judas would betray Him – **why choose Him?**

Could He not have picked 12 faithful men? – – Well, off course He could.

But, in the plan of God – Jesus had to go to the cross and in the plan of God that involved being betrayed by Judas.

Why? Here are a few reasons:

- **So that we would expect other tares in the church.**

If only saved people are in the church – while we might get attacked from without – at least we can trust each other to have our back – right?

I wish!

Christians keep getting shocked by moral failures, divisions, betrayals.

They expect better – especially of leaders.

On one level they are right – we **should** expect better.

But – we **shouldn't** be surprised.

Leaders are men too – sinful, prone to fail, too weak at times.

Just read your Bible.

In Acts we have sin in the church – division, racial discrimination, greed, lying, seeking power – even Paul and Barnabas parting ways.

Read the New Testament – there are always wolves in the church – and that includes leadership. There will always be apostates like Demas or the false Apostles.

So, if one of the 12 Disciples – the foundation of the church – could betray Jesus to death – then we need to realise just about any sin can and will arise in the church – including in leaders.

Be disappointed and troubled by sin in the church – but don't be shocked.

And we must never think this comes as a surprise to God – or is outside His plan.

Another reason Jesus chose Judas:

- **So that we would know God can even use our failures and sin to work good.**

Judas betrayed Jesus. Greatest sin imaginable. But God used **even this** for good. The greatest good imaginable.

Acts 2:23:

Though Jesus was delivered up according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him.

Those lawless people include Judas.

God has given us many examples of how betrayal and sin can lead to great good.

Joseph's brothers and Judas' betrayal are the classic examples.

Brothers and sisters, sometimes we can look back on an event and see how God used it for good.

The death of the Auca Five – the missionaries in Ecuador – including Jim Elliot – was humanly speaking a terrible tragedy – everyone was asking how could God let this happen? – but looking back it inspired generations to go to the mission field.

However, **more often than not** – we never see how God is using a particular event for good.

The death of a baby, invasion of a country, adultery in a Pastor, divorce.

But, we are not told to understand each event – we are told to just to trust that God understands why and that He can use it for good.



So know tares are part of the plan.

Judas would never have been my plan.

But he was God's plan. And I am thankful for it.

Even as believers – we sin – my sin – your sin – but it does not derail His plan.

So, trust that God knows how to run the world, the church and your life better than you do – and that when the final plan – the finished tapestry is revealed – know that God will have worked all things for good.

However, the fact that God planned to use sin to work His ends does **not** make God responsible for sin – **nor** does it absolve us of our responsibility.



1:18-20 God is not responsible for sin we are

I am sure you have heard it many times.

So, if God is sovereign over all things – Am I just a robot?

If God planned all things – Then how can He hold me responsible for my sin?

If God didn't choose me – Why should He judge me?

I don't pretend to be able to explain this.

But the Bible is clear – God **is** sovereign over everything – **and** you are 100% responsible for your choices and your sin.

In John 17 Jesus is talking about those given to Him by the Father. Then in John 17:12 He says this:

Not one of them is lost, ***except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled.***

It might sound as if Judas is no more than a pawn moved on the board by God – we might even feel sympathy for him.

God chose who He would save – **and** poor Judas had to go to eternal destruction because the Scripture had to be fulfilled.

Judas was just one of the objects of wrath prepared for destruction that Paul mentions in Romans 9:22.

BUT – Judas is still fully responsible for His actions and his punishment is fully deserved.

Acts 1:18–20:

Now this man acquired a field with his unrighteous wages. He fell headfirst, his body burst open and his intestines spilled out. This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that in their own language that field is called *Hakeldama* (that is, Field of Blood). “For it is written in the Book of Psalms: **Let his dwelling become desolate; let no one live in it; and Let someone else take his position.**

Judas was in it for the money. He stole from the common purse – He betrayed Jesus for a handful of coins – and ended up acquiring a field with that money.

When you read Matthew 27 – Judas realised he had betrayed innocent blood – and threw the money back at the chief priests.

It was blood money, so they used it to buy a potter’s field – the one Judas ended up in.

This field became known as the Field of Blood – bought with the blood money that betrayed Jesus and Judas added his own blood to it.

He acquired this field by being buried in it. Divine justice.

Matthew also says he hanged himself – Acts says he burst open and his intestines fell out.

Both are true. Dead bodies swell and can burst like this.

While some may escape justice in this life – everyone receives justice in the life to come.

Judas received justice – **both** in this life **and** in the next.

All his scheming, thieving and betraying led to a lonely death and scorn forever.

No one calls their kid Judas – you don’t even call your dog Judas.

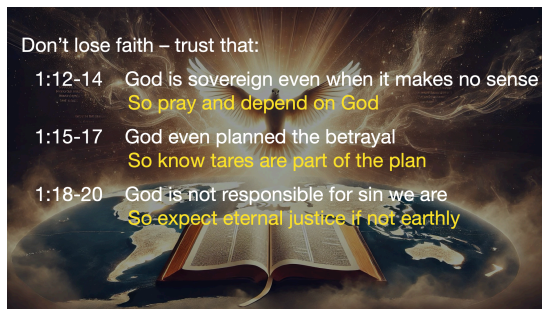
And he is the son of perdition – headed to eternal punishment.

He had everything – a place among the 12 – the friendship of Jesus – and he chose to throw it all away.

Scripture is clear – it was his choice and he must pay the penalty. Matthew 26:23–25:

Jesus replied, "The one who dipped his hand with me in the bowl—he will betray me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for him if he had not been born." Judas, his betrayer, replied, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" "You have said it," he told him.

Surely not I? Maybe Judas was blind to the corruption within ... Oh yes you – so it would have been better for you if you were never born.



So expect eternal justice if not earthly

Judas was not the last to betray the church.

Judas paid for that betrayal and so will all who betray Jesus.

But, we must not use the sovereignty of God to excuse sin.

The devil made me do it.

God made me this way.

I am not one of the chosen.

Judas was no mere pawn – and neither are we. Justice must be and will be done.

We can look at sinful men and women and many do not seem to receive justice in this life.

Judas **did** receive earthly justice – dead in the Field of Blood.

But many don't and many times what is called justice is woefully inadequate.

But God is not mocked. If your sin is not covered by Christ – you will line up right next to Judas for all eternity.

God doesn't grade on a curve. There are only two groups – those who have trusted Christ as Lord and Saviour and those who do not.

Those who do not may or may not receive earthly justice – but the real justice – eternal justice – there is no escape.

What if Judas' fate had been to slip away with his blood money.

He published a blockbuster tell all – **My days as a spy with Jesus** – with the subtitle – **The Disciple who got away with murder.**

He set up His own religion – **Health and wealth the Iscariot way.**

He died a very rich old man with a dozen beautiful concubines.

Would it be worth it?

No!

Nothing is worth eternity in hell.

God may have ordained his actions – but Judas is responsible for them and will pay for them.

In verse 25 we are told Judas went where he belongs – it is a euphemism for hell.

There are many tares who have used the church to gain wealth, power, abuse others.

Sometimes they are blind to it. Surely not I? – At times they are not held accountable in this life – but judgment is coming.

Do not let the sovereignty of God be an excuse for sin.

I don't know where your heart is.

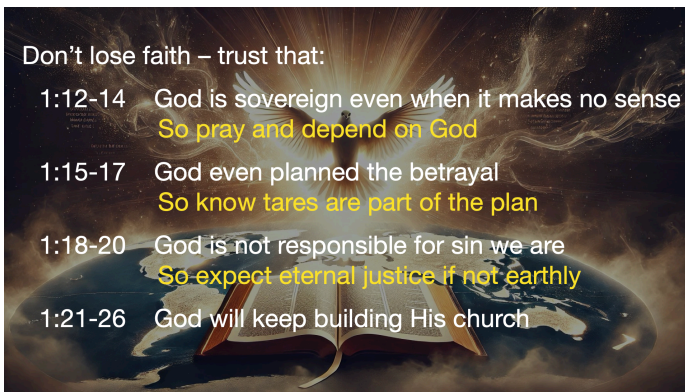
We are going to see other examples in Acts – members like Ananias and Sapphira. They look like faithful followers from the outside – but something is wrong inside.

Greed, ambition, lust.

God is not mocked – He will judge – eternally and at times in this life.

If you know you are cruising through life – but deep down you know something is not right – you are barely giving, barely praying, barely sharing – and trusting that turning up on Sundays is a ticket to heaven – I assure you – God will not be mocked.

Finally:



1:21-26 God will keep building His church

Sin, Satan, division, immorality, greed, apathy – it doesn't change the plan – God will keep building His church.

God has a plan for His church and nothing can change that.

Verse 17 said that Judas had a share of the Apostolic Ministry.

Verse 20 said Scripture also prophesied that someone else **must** take that position – that share.

So – Acts 1:21–26:

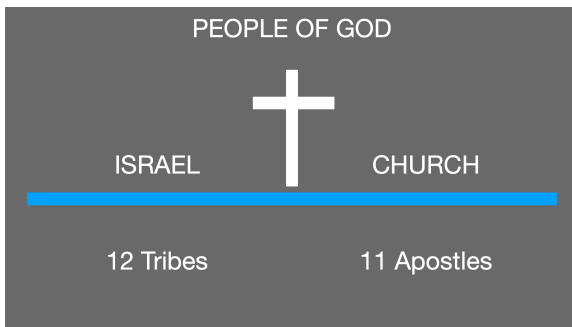
“Therefore, from among the men who have accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—beginning from the baptism of John until the day he was taken up from us—from among these, it is necessary that one become a witness with us of his resurrection.” So they proposed two: Joseph, called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed, “You, Lord, know everyone’s hearts; show which of these two you have chosen to take the place in this apostolic ministry that Judas left to go where he belongs.” Then they cast lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias and he was added to the eleven apostles.

A few questions.

Why was it necessary to replace Judas? Honestly, you read Acts and most of the Apostles are not mentioned. The church could have functioned just fine with 11.

In fact, we never read of Matthias again – so why go through the trouble of adding him?

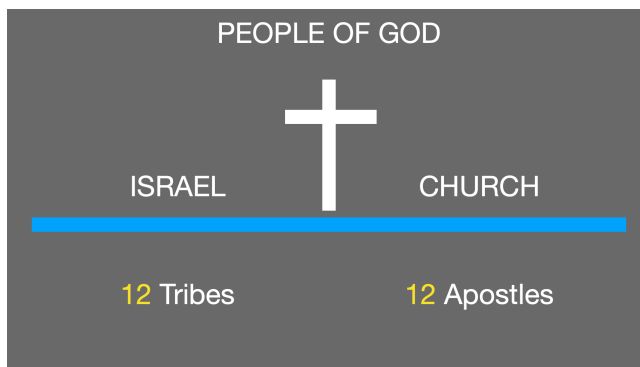
The reason is that the church is set up to be a new people of God.



The people of God moves from Israel to the church.

Building the church on 11 Apostles just would not make the connection.

There were **twelve** tribes as the foundation for Israel.



So, there must be **twelve** Apostles as the foundation for the church.

Matthew 19:28:

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, in the renewal of all things ... you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

12 becomes a crucial number – representing the people of God.

In Revelation 12 and 12 **or** 12 times 12 – is used to show the whole people of God – Old Covenant and New Covenant.

There had to be 12 to show the continuity *with* yet difference *from* Israel – the church is **not** Israel – so a new foundation.

That is why they couldn't add *both* Justus and Matthias – 13 wouldn't work either.

Another question. Why not pick the new Apostle before He rose?

Why didn't Jesus say – Oh one last thing before I ascend – Matthias is the new guy?

It seems Jesus wanted it clear that even though He is reigning in heaven – He is still head of the church.

He does not have to be physically present on earth to guide and direct His church.

So, are there always to be 12 Apostles leading the church?

Clearly no. First, no one living after the first century could meet the qualifications. In fact, even at that time only two men met the qualifications – Justus and Matthias.

Then in Acts 12 – James the Apostle dies – and he is not replaced.

It was Judas' apostasy that led to the vacancy – not his death.

The church is founded on the 12 and once Matthias is chosen that is it – when they die they are not replaced.

We have no record in Scripture or the early church of anyone filling a vacancy in the 12 from this point.

So, groups like the Mormons who have 12 Apostles leading their church are wrong.

You can look up the current 12 on their website. But Ephesians 2:19–20 is clear:

God's household is built on the **foundation** of the apostles and prophets.

You lay the foundation once.

So, is there a difference between these Apostles – the 12 – and others called apostles?

Yes. There were the 12 – the Capital 'A' Apostles – the foundational members of the church.

Apostle becomes a title for one of **the 12**.

But the word "apostle" literally means "sent one" and others in the church were sent ones – messengers who took the gospel to the world.

What about Paul – an Apostle 'untimely born'?

He was not one of the 12 – but the risen Jesus chose him and appointed him Apostle to the Gentiles. He became a separate unique category of one.

But here in Acts 1 – Apostle is used to refer to a very specific group – the 12.

Notice the criteria:

1. They had to have been eyewitnesses and followers of Jesus from the beginning to the end of His ministry.
2. There could only be 12.

And in 2 Corinthians 12 Paul mentions another one:

3. They had the signs of an Apostle.

They had the ability to do confirming miracles.

This means that there is no Apostolic succession. The groups with churches led by Apostles today have misunderstood.

Those 12 and no more.

Another question, what is with the drawing of lots?

‘Share’ and ‘lot’ both come from the same root word.

Verse 17:

For he was one of our number and was allotted a lot, a share, a [kleros] in this ministry.

Verse 26:

Then they cast lots [klerous] for them, and the lot, the share, the [kleros] fell to Matthias.

Verse 17 is literally:

For he was one of our number and was allotted a **lot**, a **share**, a [kleros] in this ministry.

The idea is almost like there were 12 shares in the Apostolic ministry. Judas held one of those shares.

That share had to be filled.

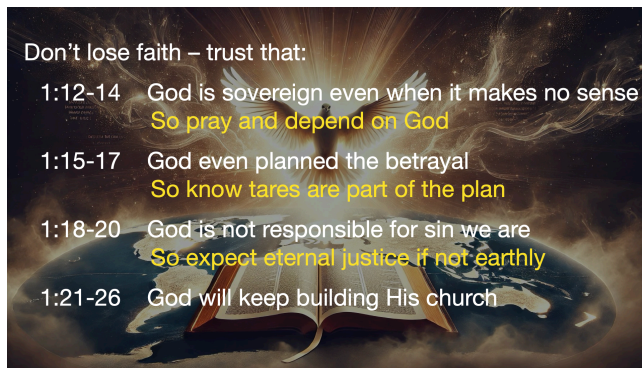
Verse 26:

Then they cast **lots** [klerous] for them, and the **lot**, the **share**, the [kleros] fell to Matthias.

The idea of casting lots is based on there being an equal number of shares. In this case two shares – so something like two stones with a name on each. Put them in a bag and pull one out.

In this case the lot – the share – fell to Matthias.

So, the share in the Apostolic ministry that had belonged to Judas – now fell to him.



In Scripture – casting lots is not a game of random chance.

It was a way for God to guide.

Notice they prayed. “You, Lord, know everyone’s hearts; show which of these two you have chosen to take the place in this apostolic ministry that Judas left to go where he belongs.”

Jesus is in heaven – but He is the One who selects Matthias.

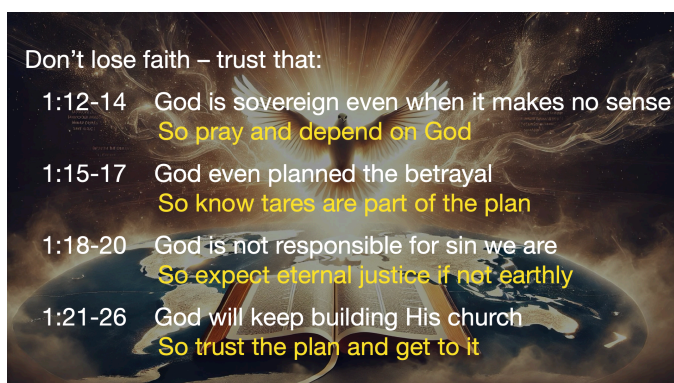
He builds His church – **He** restored the foundation for His church.

The lot falls to Matthias – he was added to the eleven – so 12 Apostles.

This choosing was unique. It is not how you choose Elders or a wife or make decisions today.

Jesus gave specific instructions to this group to choose this way.

Why? To show that God builds His church:



So trust the plan and get to it.

Don't get discouraged by the lack of resources, the sin, the failings.

Don't ever think things are outside the plan of God.

Trust His plan and get going following it.

If you do not know Jesus – then the passage this morning has a warning for you.

God will not be mocked. Perhaps in this life – certainly in the next – your sin will find you out and you will be held accountable.

Jesus offers a pardon – forgiveness in His blood. Trust Him and live.

For those who know Him – trust He has it all under control.

I look back at some of my biggest disappointments in ministry – and I see the invisible guiding hand of God.

Crushing disappointments when we tried for years to buy a bigger building only for the council to say no each time.

But it led us to move into church planting – which is better for the kingdom.

Crushing discouragement when we had division in our leadership.

But it led us to refine our selection process, to know who to look for – and I thank God for the leaders we have as a result.

Other crushing failures – I don't know why – but I trust God is using them.

Acts is a book of the triumph of the gospel – despite the sin and failings of the church.

And that this the story of the church for 2000 years.

The mustard seed is attacked, gets sick, looks in trouble – but God says – grow and it does.

I do not know what the future holds – except there will be struggles – disappointments – discouragements – and through it all God will say grow and the kingdom will be built – to His glory.

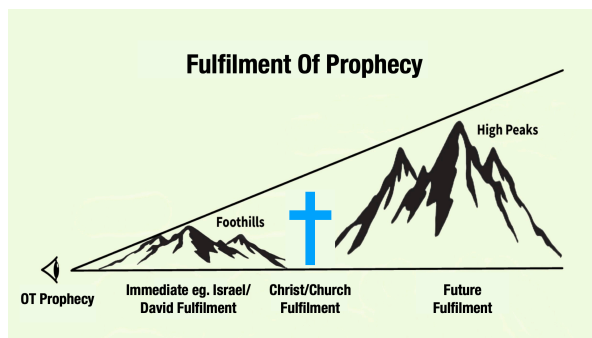
What a God!

All Part Of The Plan Acts 1:12-26 (January 19, 2025)

Main Point: Even when we can't understand why, trust that God's plan uses sin, struggles and tragedies to build His kingdom.

General Questions:

1. How does it help you to know God weaves our sin, struggles and tragedies into His plan?
2. Why did Jesus choose Judas?
3. Why would his betrayal have been such a heartbreaking event?
4. What are we to do when we don't understand why God allows something?
5. Why is prayer so inextricably linked to evangelism?
6. Why is no or wait such hard answers to our prayers?
7. Why was it important to know that the betrayal of Judas was prophesied in Scripture?
8. Discuss the fulfilment of OT prophecy?



9. Discuss this statement: Be disappointed and troubled by sin in the church – but don't be shocked.
10. Why does the sovereignty of God not negate our accountability for sin?
11. What does the choosing of Matthias tell us about God's plan for the kingdom?

Application Questions:

1. Do you ever have questions about how God is running His church?

2. Why is prayer such a hard part of the Christian life for many?
3. How does the betrayal of Judas help you to understand the failures of others in the church and God's plan for this?

What convicted me in the message?

What moved me in the message?

What will I do in light of the message?