

## “The difference between disciples and apostles” Acts 1:12-26

“Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city.”<sup>13</sup> When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.<sup>14</sup> They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

<sup>15</sup> “In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty)”<sup>16</sup> and said, ‘Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus.<sup>17</sup> He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.’<sup>18</sup> (With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out.<sup>19</sup> Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)<sup>20</sup> For “said Peter “ it is written in the Book of Psalms: “May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,” and, “May another take his place

of leadership.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us,<sup>22</sup> beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.’

<sup>23</sup> “So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias.<sup>24</sup> Then they prayed, ‘Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.’<sup>26</sup> Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.”

**Today’s reading might seem long to you.**

**Do we need all this detail?**

**Would it pique your interest to know that this text tells part of a heroic rescue effort-- a mission that affects virtually every aspect of your life?**

**You know how life operates.**

**You spend months and years attempting to get one area of your life settled and in minutes something unexpected scuttles your victory.**

**A phone call, a text message, or letter comes.**



There's an old story of two guys riding a Harley on a crisp autumn day enjoying the sights, the breezes, the freedom.

Suddenly the north wind began to bite. The guy driving decided they should stop so he could zip up his leather jacket. In fact, he put his jacket



on backward because that cold wind was chilling his innards. After they started up, his chest felt so warm and cozy, he stopped again so he could put his pants on backward, too. They sped on— at eighty mph—until a deer jumped in front of them. The animal, the guys and the Harley hurtled into a ditch.

Later a highway patrolman asked the EMT's who came to the scene about the condition of the two Hog riders. "Strange" they said, "the guy on the back died immediately of his injuries and by the time we got the other guy's head and feet straightened out, we lost him, too."

I confess that this is a dubious tale.

You already knew it was, of course.

But today's text tells absolute truth concerning elements of a dangerous rescue effort.

The scope of this operation staggers all imagining.

Ages ago, God planned and predicted it;

He coordinated and involved scores of people.

Potentially it can benefit all who ever lived.

**What was/is the mission?**

**To rid us of your/my deadliest enemy.**

**Can anyone alive say that he/she never shivered at the prospect of dying?**

**At being snuffed out, totally terminated?**

We can joke about another's death as did Saki<sup>1</sup>

**"Waldo is one of those people who would be enormously improved by death."**

But most of us likely agree with comedian Woody Allen: "It's not that I'm afraid to die. I just don't want to be there when it happens."

**From the dawn of history, news reports have reminded how death stalks from all directions.**

At age 31, the Greek poet Aeschylus died one of the strangest deaths.

**"Ancient biographies record than an eagle, seeking to smash the shell of a tortoise held in its talons, mistook the poet's bald head for a stone and dropped the tortoise on him."**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Saki was the pseudonym of British author Hector Hugh Monroe. Quote from *Beasts and Super-Beasts. The Feast of Nemesis.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Ultimate Reference Book*, Lance Davidson, p. 101

Today's Acts text gives an insider's view of God's plan to tell everyone how Jesus reversed death.

**How did the Lord spread the news about Jesus?**

Our text gives us three brief close-ups.

**It's as if a drone camera recorded it.**

After Jesus arose from the dead, he spent 40 days proving to his disciples that he was alive again.

**It required a lot of evidence to persuade the 11 of that reality.**

Last week we saw Jesus and the 11 disciples going to a mount east of Jerusalem where he ascended into a cloud out of their sight.

**Even though Jesus told them to hurry back to Jerusalem and wait for a powerful Holy Spirit moment, the 11 stood there gazing.**

Everyone has been told or has told someone else: **Don't just stand there, get going!**



1. The 11 likely went to the same Jerusalem upper room where Jesus and the 12 ate the last supper.

**Other believers gathered there including some women who supported Jesus' ministry.**

**Mary, Jesus' mother was present.**

**So were Jesus' four half-brothers, James, Joses, Simon, and Jude.**

During his ministry, Jesus' brothers never believed he was the Messiah.

**Until after his resurrection, they thought Jesus was a nutcase.<sup>3</sup>**

They even had mother Mary doubting.

**On resurrection morning, Jesus appeared to the women who went to the tomb:**

Jesus then instructed the women:

**"Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."**

**Jesus convinced his four brothers he was alive.**

**For a long time, I wondered why his brothers didn't believe in Jesus and his mission.**

**It finally occurred to me: What if one of my brothers had claimed he was God's chosen?**

**Even if I idolized one of my brothers and thought he was the nicest kid on earth, I'd have a hard time.**

**A second reason is envy, one of hate's sources.**

**A too perfect sibling irritates us, right?**

Jesus finally convinced his brothers of his real identity; he wasn't trying to make them look bad.

The 11, Mary, several women, Jesus' brothers, and many others, spent much time praying in that upper room.

<sup>3</sup> See John 7:3 & 5

## 2. Our second view starts in verse 15.

Peter stood up one day and reviewed how Judas, one of Jesus' 12 Apostles, had betrayed Jesus.

**For 30 pieces of silver, Judas came with the arresting officers and identified Jesus.**

As Judas later saw Jesus sentenced to die, his conscience overtook him and he tried to give back the money.

When the religious leaders refused to accept it, Judas threw the coins into the Temple, then went to a field and hanged himself in remorse.

Officials used that blood money to buy the field where Judas died and put the deed in his name.

Matthew's Gospel explains how this fulfilled a prophecy Jeremiah gave 600 years before:

"So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. <sup>8</sup> That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. <sup>9</sup> Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, <sup>10</sup> and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

With what intricacy God weaves his plans.

## 3. The 3rd vista in our text begins in verse 20.



Peter explained why they needed to replace the Apostle Judas.

**Giving more examples of divine planning, Peter quoted psalms of David (circa 1000 BC). We've been speaking of disciples and also apostles.**

**Is there a difference?**

**Yes, an important one.**

Luke's Gospel helps clarify the distinction. "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. <sup>13</sup> When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles:"<sup>4</sup>

**The word *disciple* describes someone who "follows to learn."**

**Every Christian should be a disciple.**

**Unfortunately, many church-goers are not interested in learning about the Lord.**

They only want someone to help them with their problems, many of which would go away if they just followed Jesus' word.

Jesus spent the majority of his time teaching, but often emphasized:

**"The ones having ears to hear, let them hear!"**

**To what or whom do you seriously listen?**

<sup>4</sup> Luke 6:12, 13 NIV

## Whose way do you follow?

Jesus' disciples follow him and learn God's will.

## What is an Apostle?

From his many followers, Jesus chose twelve he designated Apostles for a special assignment.

Matthew described it this way:

"Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. <sup>2</sup> Now the names of the twelve apostles are these:" Peter, Andrew, James, John, etc. <sup>5</sup>

**Apostles were given special abilities and sent on a mission with a specific message.**

## What mission and what made the man eligible?

Here's what Peter clearly stated in our text:

"Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, <sup>22</sup> beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."

**Jesus' defeat of death was the heart of the message: "One of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."**

Jesus took care of two of our greatest adversaries:

**He paid the debt of guilt that plagues all of us;**

**Jesus overcame death that lurks and haunts us.**

Beyond question, Jesus successfully carried out history's greatest rescue effort.

The 12 witnessed his resurrection everywhere.

Eleven of the 12 paid the ultimate price and the last one suffered exile likely at age 90 or older.

**They never quit attesting that they saw Jesus alive.**

## But why did they need twelve Apostles?

"Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits."<sup>6</sup> Jesus sent the Apostles in pairs so they could encourage and support each other.

**Jesus defeated death, which so spooks us all,**

**Panicky, scared people talk mostly of masks, vaccines, mandates, and more pandemics.**

**Jesus' disciples boldly witnessed:**

**Jesus died to save us from our sins and was raised three days later.**

**The Son of God completed the**

**greatest rescue mission ever—he killed death.**

**Praise God! Pray that we'll bravely witness, too!**

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew 10:1,2 NIV

<sup>6</sup> Mark 6:7 NIV