



Compare Yourself With the Early Church

Saturday, 5/23 at 4:00 | Sunday, 5/24 at 9:00

Seventh Sunday of Easter – 2020

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Today we are in **Acts chapter 1**; Jesus has ✦lived, ✦died, ✦risen, and ✦ascended. In today's text the believers will gather to restore the number of the apostles back to 12 for two reasons: **(1)** Judas Iscariot, *who betrayed Jesus*, ended his life and **(2)** the OT Scriptures indicate that another person should take his place.

As we move through the text, I think you know the general story, so, today, I'm going to focus on some key ✦events, ✦people, and ✦statements embedded within the story.

- Devoted:** ¹² **Then [the eleven apostles] returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet** *[the place from which Jesus ascended]*, **which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away** *[which was 2,000 paces]*. ¹³ **And when they had entered [Jerusalem], they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.** ¹⁴ **All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his**

brothers. // For three years Jesus had been at the center of everything, *but now He was risen and ascended!*

a. **Who were some of Jesus' followers?**

- i. **Various women:** During Jesus' ministry, at least fourteen (vv. 21-22) men were with Him, as well as "Mary, called Magdalene... and Joanna... and Susanna, and many others, who provided [for Jesus and the men] *out of their means*" (Luke 8:2-3 ESV).
- ii. **Jesus' mother:** Even though she provided the flesh for the Son of God, *she also needed Him and His saving work* (Romans 3:10, 23; Hebrews 4:15)!
- iii. **Jesus' brothers:** During Jesus' ministry, *they did not believe in Him*; however, after Jesus rose and ascended, *they received God-given faith in Jesus!*

b. **What were they doing?** They knew the past AND what Jesus had told them about the future, but, at that time, *they were IN BETWEEN the past and the future*. So they ✦gathered together, ✦worshiped, ✦prayed, and ✦waited for the promised Holy Spirit!

c. **Compare:** Are you a follower of Jesus? If yes, are you a halfhearted follower – *following only when it's convenient, or are you putting Jesus first in your life and holding fast to Him?*

2. **Certain:** ¹⁵ **In those days Peter stood up among the brothers** [the men who believed in Jesus] **(the company of persons was in all about 120) and said,** ¹⁶ **"Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.** ¹⁷ **For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry."** ¹⁸ **(Now this man acquired a field with the**

reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.¹⁹ And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)²⁰ “For it is written in the Book of Psalms, “May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it”; and “Let another take his office.’

- a. **Why must the Scriptures be fulfilled?** No matter what the Holy Scriptures say, *or how unlikely it seems that they will come to pass*, we should believe them because **(1)** God is almighty, *so He CAN do anything*, and **(2)** God is holy, *so He MUST do all that is contained within the Holy Bible, which is His Holy Word to us!*
 - b. **Did Judas have to betray Jesus?** There is a difference between God *knowing something* and God *causing something*. Because God is timeless, *He knows all things now* (Isaiah 46:10). However, the Bible makes it clear that *God tempts no one* (James 1:13-15). So God knew Judas would do, *but God did not make him do it!*
 - c. **Compare: Are you certain about the Scriptures?** If not, let's talk – *so that you STOP wavering on what is true! And what about our sins?* God does not tempt us, but *He does provide our way to escape the temptation!* So what are we doing, *taking the way or ignoring it!*
3. **Obedient:**²¹ **So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,**²² **beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us-- one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.”**²³ **And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias.**²⁴ **And they**

prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” ²⁶ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

- a. What is a key event in Jesus’ life; why? *His resurrection!* Throughout time, many people have been worshiped, but ONLY JESUS was ✦raised, ✦given all authority, and ✦will return to judge all people – to declare them *innocent through faith in Him or guilty because they rejected Him!* Shockingly, 25% of so-called Christians in the UK deny the resurrection!¹
- b. Are we choosing, or seeking God’s choice? When Matthias was chosen to replace Judas, the people did not choose, *but cast lots to reveal the Lord’s choice!*
- c. Compare: Do you believe in the resurrection? I hope so, *believing it is essential for salvation!* And what about our choices – are we seeking God’s choices for us or making our own? When we make our own, *we may also turn aside from Jesus to go to our own place!*

This Week’s Challenge: Having been forgiven in Christ, are we then devoted, certain, and obedient? Let us compare and, where necessary, repent!

Let Us Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, for us and for all who hear or read this sermon, ✦help us to compare, ✦show us our sins, ✦move us to repent, and ✦keep us focused on Jesus!

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¹ <https://www.premierchristianity.com/Blog/Why-the-25-of-Christians-who-deny-the-resurrection-aren-t-true-believers>