

**The United Benefice of St Michael on Greenhill, Lichfield
with St John, Wall**

Bible Study August 23rd September 2020

The Book of Acts

Session 1: Introduction and election of Matthias

Opening prayer

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace
and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Acts Chapter 1

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning ²until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. 'This', he said, 'is what you have heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' ⁷He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. ¹³When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred and twenty people) and said, ¹⁶'Friends, the scripture had to be

fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus—¹⁷for 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.¹⁹This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)²⁰For it is written in the book of Psalms,

“Let his homestead become desolate,
and let there be no one to live in it”;
and

“Let another take his position of overseer.”

²¹So one of the men who have accompanied us throughout the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,²²beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.’²³So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias.²⁴Then they prayed and said, ‘Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen²⁵to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.’²⁶And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Things to think about

Q1 The purpose of Acts is to bid its readers continue in their own time what Christ has begun. In what ways do we continue the work of Jesus today?

Q2 In the first part of chapter 1 the apostles and other disciples spend time together – to be instructed – to wait upon God and to pray. How important is it for Christians to be together? How is this being shaped by current circumstances? What would you say to someone who claimed – “I am a Christian, but I don’t go to church”?

Q3 The church is a form of institution and it has its particular practices. Matthias election follows a particular process which includes casting lots. What do we think about the ways in which the church today chooses its leaders both individual and collective (eg. Synods)?

Closing prayer

God, who in generous mercy
sent the Holy Spirit upon your Church in the burning fire of your love:
grant that your people may be fervent
in the fellowship of the gospel
that, always abiding in you,
they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen