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ONE
FAITHFUL
LIFE

A HARMONY OF THE LIFE
AND WRITINGS *of the* APOSTLE PAUL



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ONE
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AND LETTERS *of the* APOSTLE PAUL

JOHN MACARTHUR
General Editor



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

PART I



FROM PHARISEE
TO PASTOR

ca. A.D. 30–47

I. THE HYPOCRISY OF THE PHARISEES

Matthew 23:1–22

NOTE: *As a young man, Saul of Tarsus (whose Greek name is Paul) was trained as a Pharisee. In Acts 26:3–4, he explained, “My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.” His testimony in Philippians 3:3–5 reveals his unwavering dedication to keeping their legalistic traditions. Yet, his zeal for God was devoid of true salvation. He was a prime example of a religious hypocrite. Though Saul was probably not in the crowd on the occasion recorded in Matthew 23, the rebuke Jesus issued to the Pharisees in this chapter would have described the spiritual condition of the unconverted Saul.*

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in ^aMoses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that ^bobserve and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their ^cphylacteries broad and enlarge the ^dborders of their garments. They

a. **Moses’ seat.** The expression is equivalent to a university’s “chair of philosophy.” To “sit in Moses’ seat” was to have the highest authority to instruct people in the law. The expression here may be translated, “[they] have seated themselves in Moses’ seat”—stressing the fact that this was an imaginary authority they claimed for themselves. There was a legitimate sense in which the priests and Levites had authority to decide matters of the law (Deut. 17:9), but the scribes and Pharisees had gone beyond any legitimate authority and were adding human tradition to the Word of God (Matt. 15:3–9). For that Jesus condemned them.

b. **observe and do.** I.e., insofar as it accords with the Word of God. The Pharisees were prone to bind “heavy burdens” of extrabiblical traditions and put them on others’ shoulders. Jesus explicitly condemned that sort of legalism.

c. **phylacteries.** Leather boxes containing a parchment on which is written in 4 columns Ex. 13:1–10; 11–16; Deut. 6:4–9; 11:13–21. These are worn by men during prayer—one on the middle of the forehead and one on the left arm just above the elbow. The use of phylacteries was based on an overly literal interpretation of passages like Ex. 13:9, 10; Deut. 6:8. Evidently the Pharisees would broaden the leather straps by which the phylacteries were bound to their arms and foreheads, in order to make the phylacteries more prominent.

d. **the borders of their garments.** I.e., the tassels. Jesus Himself wore them (see Matt. 9:20), so it was not the tassels themselves that He condemned, only the mentality that would lengthen the tassels to make it appear that one was especially spiritual.

love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’ But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, ^bnor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one ^cproselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much ^da son of hell as yourselves.

“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’ Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.’ Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.

a. **Rabbi . . . father . . . teachers.** Here Jesus condemns pride and pretense, not titles per se. Paul repeatedly speaks of “teachers” in the church, and even refers to himself as the Corinthians’ “father” (1 Cor. 4:15). Obviously, this does not forbid the showing of respect, either (cf. 1 Thess. 5:11, 12; 1 Tim. 5:1). Christ is merely forbidding the use of such names as spiritual titles, or in an ostentatious sense that accords undue spiritual authority to a human being, as if he were the source of truth rather than God.

b. **nor do you allow.** The Pharisees, having shunned God’s righteousness, were seeking to establish a righteousness of their own (Rom. 10:3)—and teaching others to do so as well. Their legalism and self-righteousness effectively obscured the narrow gate by which the kingdom must be entered.

c. **proselyte.** A Gentile convert to Judaism.

d. **a son of hell.** I.e., someone whose eternal destination is hell.

e. **it is nothing.** This was an arbitrary distinction the Pharisees had made, which gave them a sanctimonious justification for lying with impunity. If someone swore “by the temple” (or the altar, Matt. 23:18; or heaven, Matt. 23:22), his oath was not considered binding, but if he swore “by the gold of the temple,” he could not break his word without being subject to the penalties of Jewish law. Our Lord makes it clear that swearing by those things is tantamount to swearing by God Himself.

2. CHRIST CONTINUES TO CONFRONT

Matthew 23:23–39

NOTE: *Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees continued with these words:*

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay ^atithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who ^bstrain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ^cyou cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like ^dwhitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, ^ewe would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’

a. **tithe of mint and anise and cummin.** Garden herbs, not really the kind of farm produce that the tithe was designed to cover (Lev. 27:30). But the Pharisees fastidiously weighed out a tenth of every herb, perhaps even counting individual anise seeds. Jesus' point, however, was not to condemn their observance of the law's fine points. The problem was that they “neglected the weightier matters” of justice and mercy and faith—the moral principles underlying all the laws. They were satisfied with their focus on the incidentals and externals but willfully resisted the spiritual meaning of the law. He told them they should have concentrated on those larger issues “without leaving the others undone.”

b. **strain out a gnat and swallow a camel.** Some Pharisees would strain their beverages through a fine cloth to make sure they did not inadvertently swallow a gnat—the smallest of unclean animals (Lev. 11:23). The camel was the largest of all the unclean animals (Lev. 11:4).

c. **you cleanse the outside.** The Pharisees' focus on external issues lay at the heart of their error. Who would want to drink from a cup that had been washed on the outside but was still filthy inside? Yet the Pharisees lived their lives as if external appearance were more important than internal reality. That was the very essence of their hypocrisy, and Jesus rebuked them for it repeatedly.

d. **whitewashed tombs.** Tombs were regularly whitewashed to make them stand out. Accidentally touching or stepping on a grave caused ceremonial uncleanness (Num. 19:16). A freshly whitewashed tomb would be brilliantly white and clean-looking—and sometimes spectacularly ornate. But the inside was full of defilement and decay. Contrast Jesus' words here and in Luke 11:44.

e. **we would not have been partakers.** A ridiculous claim to self-righteousness when they were already plotting the murder of the Messiah (cf. John 11:47–53).

“Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you ^aprophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous ^bAbel to the blood of Zechariah, ^cson of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon ^dthis generation.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often ^eI wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! ^fYour

a. **prophets, wise men, and scribes.** I.e., the disciples, as well as the prophets, evangelists, and pastors who followed them (cf. Eph. 4:11).

b. Abel . . . Zechariah. The first and last OT martyrs, respectively.

c. son of Berechiah. (Zech. 1:1). The OT does not record how he died. However, the death of another Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, is recorded in 2 Chr. 24:20, 21. He was stoned in the court of the temple, exactly as Jesus describes here. All the best manuscripts of Matthew contain the phrase “Zechariah, son of Berechiah” (though it does not appear in Luke 11:51). Some have suggested that the Zechariah in 2 Chr. 24 was actually a grandson of Jehoiada, and that his father’s name was also Berechiah. But there is no difficulty if we simply take Jesus’ words at face value and accept His infallible testimony that Zechariah the prophet was martyred between the temple and the altar, in a way very similar to how the earlier Zechariah was killed.

d. this generation. Historically, this was the generation that experienced the utter destruction of Jerusalem and the burning of the temple in a.d. 70. Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem and His removal of the blessing of God from the temple (Matt. 23:37, 38) strongly suggest that the sacking of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 was the judgment He was speaking about.

e. I wanted . . . but you were not willing! God is utterly sovereign and therefore fully capable of bringing to pass whatever He desires (cf. Is. 46:10)—including the salvation of whomever He chooses (Eph. 1:4, 5). Yet, He sometimes expresses a wish for that which He does not sovereignly bring to pass (cf. Gen. 6:6; Deut. 5:29; Ps. 81:13; Is. 48:18). Such expressions in no way suggest a limitation on the sovereignty of God or imply any actual change in Him (Num. 23:19). But these statements do reveal essential aspects of the divine character: He is full of compassion, sincerely good to all, desirous of good, not evil—and therefore not delighting in the destruction of the wicked (Ezek. 18:32; 33:11). While affirming God’s sovereignty, one must understand His pleas for the repentance of the reprobate as well meant appeals—and His goodness toward the wicked as a genuine mercy designed to provoke them to repentance (Rom. 2:4). The emotion displayed by Christ here (and in all similar passages, such as Luke 19:41) is obviously a deep, sincere passion. All Christ’s feelings must be in perfect harmony with the divine will (cf. John 8:29)—and therefore these lamentations should not be thought of as mere exhibitions of His humanity.

f. Your house is left to you desolate. A few days earlier, Christ had referred to the temple as His Father’s “house” (Matt. 21:13). But the blessing and glory of God were being removed from Israel (see 1 Sam. 4:21). When Christ “departed from the temple” (Matt. 24:1), the glory of God went with Him. Ezekiel 11:23 described Ezekiel’s vision of the departure of the Shekinah glory in His day. The glory left the temple and stood on the Mt. of Olives, (see Matt. 24:3; Luke 19:29) exactly the same route Christ followed here (cf. Matt. 24:3).

house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall ^asee Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’”

3. THE ASCENSION OF THE RISEN CHRIST

Acts 1:1–11

NOTE: Though Jesus was arrested and crucified by the corrupt religious leaders, His death did not spell defeat. Rising victorious from the grave, He appeared to His disciples over a period of forty days. It is at this point that Luke begins his historical account in the book of Acts, chronicling the birth and growth of the church. Luke likely wrote this book during Paul’s house arrest in Rome, more than three decades after the Lord’s resurrection. Because he wrote under Paul’s apostolic authority, Luke’s account of the early church in the book of Acts undoubtedly reflects Paul’s influence and perspective.

The former account I made, O ^bTheophilus, of ^call that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was ^dtaken up, after He ^ethrough the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom ^fHe had chosen, to whom He also ^gpresented Himself alive after His suffering by many

a. **you shall see Me no more.** Christ’s public teaching ministry was over. He withdrew from national Israel until the time yet future when they will recognize Him as Messiah (Rom. 11:23–26). Then Christ quoted from Ps. 118:26.

b. **Theophilus.** The original recipient of this book.

c. **all that Jesus began both to do and teach.** Jesus taught the disciples by word and deed the truth necessary to carry on His work. On the cross, He finished the work of redemption, but He had only started the proclamation of its glories

d. **taken up.** Christ’s ascension to the Father (cf. Luke 24:51). Luke uses this term 3 other times (Acts 1:9, 11, 22) to describe the end of the Lord’s earthly ministry (cf. John 6:62; 13:1, 3; 16:28; 17:13; 20:17)

e. **through the Holy Spirit had given commandments.** The Spirit was the source and power of Jesus’ earthly ministry (cf. Matt. 4:1; 12:18; Mark 1:12; Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14, 18) and of the apostles’ service (cf. Luke 24:49; John 14:16, 17; 16:7). “Commandments” are authoritative NT truths, revealed to the apostles (cf. John 14:26; 16:13–15).

f. **He had chosen.** The Lord sovereignly chose the apostles for salvation and service (cf. John 6:70; 15:16).

g. **presented Himself . . . by many infallible proofs.** Cf. John 20:30; 1 Cor. 15:5–8. To give the apostles confidence to present His message, Jesus entered a locked room (John 20:19), showed His crucifixion wounds (Luke 24:39), and ate and drank with the disciples (Luke 24:41–43).

infallible proofs, being seen by them during ^aforty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the ^bkingdom of God.

And ^cbeing assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to ^dwait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be ^ebaptized with the Holy Spirit ^fnot many days from now.” Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time ^grestore the kingdom to Israel?” And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. ^hBut you shall ⁱreceive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be ^jwitnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all ^kJudea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was ^ltaken up, and ^ma cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked

a. **forty days.** The time period between Jesus’ death and ascension during which He appeared at intervals to the apostles and others (1 Cor. 15:5–8) and provided convincing evidence of His resurrection.

b. **kingdom of God.** Cf. Acts 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31. Here this expression refers to the sphere of salvation, the gracious domain of divine rule over believers’ hearts (cf. Acts 17:7; Col. 1:13, 14; Rev. 11:15; 12:10). This was the dominant theme during Christ’s earthly ministry (cf. Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:43; 9:2; John 3:3–21).

c. **being assembled together with them.** An alternative reading, “eating with them,” is preferred (see Acts 10:41; cf. Luke 24:42, 43). The fact that Jesus ate provides additional proof of His bodily resurrection.

d. **wait for the Promise of the Father.** Jesus repeatedly promised that God would send them His Spirit (Luke 11:13; 24:49; John 7:39; 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).

e. **baptized with the Holy Spirit.** The apostles had to wait until the Day of Pentecost, but since then all believers are baptized with the Holy Spirit at salvation (cf. Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 12:13; Titus 3:5, 6).

f. **not many days from now.** God’s promise was fulfilled just 10 days later.

g. **restore the kingdom to Israel.** The apostles still believed the earthly form of the kingdom of Messiah would soon be re-established (cf. Luke 19:11; 24:21). They also knew that Ezek. 36 and Joel 2 connected the coming of the kingdom with the outpouring of the Spirit whom Jesus had promised.

h. **times or seasons.** These two words refer to features, eras, and events that will be part of His earthly kingdom reign, which will begin at the second coming (Matt. 25:21–34). The exact time of His return, however, remains unrevealed (Mark 13:32; cf. Deut. 29:29). This verse shows that the apostles’ expectation of a literal, earthly kingdom mirrored what Christ taught and what the OT predicted. Otherwise, He would have corrected them about such a crucial aspect of His teaching.

i. **receive power.** The apostles had already experienced the Holy Spirit’s saving, guiding, teaching, and miracle-working power. Soon they would receive His indwelling presence and a new dimension of power for witness (see Acts 2:4; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Eph. 3:16, 20).

j. **witnesses.** People who tell the truth about Jesus Christ (cf. John 14:26; 1 Pet. 3:15). The Gr. word means “one who dies for his faith” because that was commonly the price of witnessing.

k. **Judea.** The region in which Jerusalem was located. The apostles’ mission of spreading the gospel was the major reason the Holy Spirit empowered them. This event dramatically altered world history, and the gospel message eventually reached all parts of the earth.

l. **taken up.** God the Father took Jesus, in His resurrection body, from this world to His rightful place at the Father’s right hand (Luke 24:51; cf. 2:33; John 17:1–6).

m. **a cloud.** A visible reminder that God’s glory was present as the apostles watched the ascension. For some of them, this was not the first time they had witnessed divine glory (Mark 9:26); neither will it be the last time clouds accompany Jesus (Mark 13:26; 14:62; Rev. 1:7).

steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, ^atwo men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ^b“Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come ^cin like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

4. THE DISCIPLES WAIT IN THE UPPER ROOM

Acts 1:12–26

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the ^dmount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a ^eSabbath day’s journey. And when they had entered, they went up into the ^fupper room where they were staying; Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; ^gBartholomew and Matthew; ^hJames the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and ⁱJudas the son of James. These all ^jcontinued with one accord in prayer and supplication, ^kwith the women and ^lMary the mother of Jesus, and with His ^mbrothers.

a. **two men . . . in white apparel.** Two angels in the form of men (cf. Gen. 18:2; Josh. 5:13–15; Mark 16:5).

b. **Men of Galilee.** All the apostles were from Galilee except for Judas, who had killed himself by this time.

c. **in like manner.** Christ one day will return to earth (to the Mt. of Olives), in the same way He ascended (with clouds), to set up His kingdom (cf. Dan. 7:13; Zech. 14:4; Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Rev. 1:7; 14:14).

d. **mount called Olivet.** Located across the Kidron Valley, E of Jerusalem, this large hill rising about 200 ft. higher in elevation than the city, was the site from which Jesus ascended into heaven (Luke 24:50, 51).

e. **Sabbath day’s journey.** One-half of a mi. (about 2,000 cubits), the farthest distance a faithful Jew could travel on the Sabbath to accommodate the prohibition of Ex. 16:29. This measurement was derived from tradition based on Israel’s encampments in the wilderness. The tents farthest out on the camp’s perimeter were 2,000 cubits from the center tabernacle—the longest distance anyone had to walk to reach the tabernacle on the Sabbath (Josh. 3:4; cf. Num. 35:5).

f. **upper room.** Where the Last Supper may have been celebrated (Mark 14:15) and where Jesus had appeared to the apostles after His resurrection.

g. **Bartholomew.** See Matt. 10:3. This disciple is also called Nathanael (John 1:45–49; 21:2).

h. **James the son of Alphaeus.** See Matt. 10:2. The same person as James the younger, also called “the Less” to distinguish him from James, the brother of John (Mark 15:40).

i. **Judas the son of James.** The preferred rendering is “the brother of.” See Matt. 10:3. He was also known as Thaddaeus (Mark 3:18).

j. **continued . . . in prayer.** The pattern of praying in the name of Jesus started at this time (cf. John 14:13, 14).

k. **with the women.** Doubtless they included Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Clopas, the sisters Mary and Martha, and Salome. Some of the apostles’ wives also may have been present (cf. 1 Cor. 9:5).

l. **Mary the mother of Jesus.** See Luke 1:27, 28. Mary’s name does not appear again in the NT.

m. **brothers.** Jesus’ half-brothers, named in Mark 6:3 as James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. James was the leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 15:13–22) and author of the epistle that bears his name.

And ^ain those days ^bPeter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, ^c“Men and brethren, ^dthis Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the ^eHoly Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; for he was numbered with us and ^fobtained a part in this ministry.”

(Now this man ^gpurchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, ^hAkel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)

“For ⁱit is written in the Book of Psalms:

‘Let his dwelling place be desolate,
And let no one live in it’;

and,

‘Let another take his office.’

Judas (Jude) wrote the epistle of Jude. At this time they were new believers in Jesus as God, Savior, and Lord, whereas only 8 months earlier John had mentioned their unbelief (John 7:5). Their conversions are not recorded in the NT, but James may have been saved following a post-resurrection appearance by Jesus (1 Cor. 15:7).

a. **in those days.** Some unspecified time during the believers’ 10 days of prayer and fellowship between the ascension and Pentecost.

b. **Peter.** See Matt. 10:2. The acknowledged leader of the apostles took charge.

c. **Men and brethren.** The 120 believers who were gathered (Acts 1:15).

d. **this Scripture had to be fulfilled.** The two OT passages Peter quotes in Acts 1:20 are Pss. 69:25; 109:8. When God gives prophecies, they will come to pass (cf. Ps. 115:3; Is. 46:10; 55:11).

e. **Holy Spirit . . . by the mouth of David.** Scripture contains no clearer description of divine inspiration. God spoke through David’s mouth, actually referring to his writing (see 2 Pet. 1:21).

f. **obtained a part in this ministry.** Judas Iscariot was a member of the 12, but was never truly saved which is why he was called “the son of perdition” (John 17:12). See Matt. 26:24; John 6:64, 70, 71; cf. 2:23; Luke 22:22.

g. **this man purchased a field.** Because the field was bought with the money the Jewish leaders paid Judas to betray Jesus, which he returned to them (Matt. 27:3–10), Luke refers to Judas as if he was the buyer (cf. Zech. 11:12, 13). wages of iniquity. The 30 pieces of silver paid to Judas. falling headlong. Apparently the tree on which Judas chose to hang himself (Matt. 27:5) overlooked a cliff. Likely, the rope or branch broke (or the knot slipped) and his body was shattered on the rocks below.

h. **Akel Dama . . . Field of Blood.** This is the Aram. name of the field bought by the Jewish leaders. Traditionally, the field is located S of Jerusalem in the Valley of Hinnom, where that valley crosses the Kidron Valley. The soil there was good for making pottery, thus Matthew identifies it as “the potter’s field” (Matt. 27:7, 10).

i. **it is written.** Peter used the most compelling proof, Scripture, to reassure the believers that Judas’ defection and the choice of his replacement were both in God’s purpose (cf. Ps. 55:12–15).

“Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus ^awent in and out among us, beginning from the ^bbaptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

And they proposed two: Joseph called ^cBarsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to ^dhis own place.” And they ^ecast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

5. THE CHURCH IS BORN

Acts 2:1–13

When the ^fDay of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came ^ga sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided ^htongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

a. **went in and out among us.** The first requirement for Judas’ successor was that he had participated in Jesus’ earthly ministry.

b. **baptism of John.** Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–23). a witness with us of His resurrection. A second requirement for Judas’ successor was that he had to have seen the resurrected Christ. The resurrection was central to apostolic preaching (cf. Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30–37).

c. **Barsabas . . . Justus.** Barsabas means “son of the Sabbath.” Justus (“the righteous”) was Joseph’s Lat. name. Many Jews in the Roman Empire had equivalent Gentile names. Matthias. The name means “gift of God.” The ancient historian Eusebius claims Matthias was among the 70 of Luke 10:1.

d. **his own place.** Judas chose his own fate of hell by rejecting Christ. It is not unfair to say that Judas and all others who go to hell belong there (cf. John 6:70).

e. **cast their lots.** A common OT method of determining God’s will (cf. Lev. 16:8–10; Josh. 7:14; Prov. 18:18; see Prov. 16:33). This is the last biblical mention of lots—the coming of the Spirit made them unnecessary.

f. **Day of Pentecost.** “Pentecost” means “fiftieth” and refers to the Feast of Weeks (Ex. 34:22, 23) or Harvest (Lev. 23:16), which was celebrated 50 days after Passover in May/June (Lev. 23:15–22). It was one of 3 annual feasts for which the nation was to come to Jerusalem (see Ex. 23:14–19). At Pentecost, an offering of firstfruits was made (Lev. 23:20). The Holy Spirit came on this day as the firstfruits of the believer’s inheritance (cf. 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:11, 14). Those gathered into the church then were also the firstfruits of the full harvest of all believers to come after. **in one place.** The upper room mentioned in Acts 1:13.

g. **a sound . . . as . . . mighty wind.** Luke’s simile described God’s action of sending the Holy Spirit. Wind is frequently used in Scripture as a picture of the Spirit (cf. Ezek. 37:9, 10; John 3:8).

h. **tongues, as of fire.** Just as the sound, like wind, was symbolic, these were not literal flames

And they were ^aall ^bfilled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak ^cwith other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And there were dwelling in Jerusalem ^dJews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when ^ethis sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them ^fspeak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak ^gGalileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own ^hlanguage in which we were born? ⁱParthians and ^jMedes and ^kElamites, those dwelling in ^lMesopotamia, ^mJudea and ⁿCappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, ^oEgypt and the parts of ^pLibya

of fire but supernatural indicators, like fire, that God had sent the Holy Spirit upon each believer. In Scripture, fire often denoted the divine presence (cf. Ex. 3:2–6). God’s use of a fire-like appearance here parallels what He did with the dove when Jesus was baptized (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16).

a. **all.** The apostles and the 120. Cf. Joel 2:28–32.

b. **filled with the Holy Spirit.** In contrast to the baptism with the Spirit, which is the one-time act by which God places believers into His body (see 1 Cor. 12:13), the filling is a repeated reality of Spirit-controlled behavior that God commands believers to maintain (see Eph. 5:18). Peter and many others in Acts 2 were filled with the Spirit again (e.g., Acts 4:8, 31; 6:5; 7:55) and so spoke boldly the Word of God. The fullness of the Spirit affects all areas of life, not just speaking boldly (cf. Eph. 5:19–33).

c. **with other tongues.** Known languages (1 Cor. 14:1–25), not ecstatic utterances. These languages given by the Spirit were a sign of judgment to unbelieving Israel (see 1 Cor. 14:21, 22). They also showed that from then on God’s people would come from all nations, and marked the transition from Israel to the church. Tongues speaking occurs only twice more in Acts (10:46; 19:6).

d. **Jews, devout men.** Hebrew males who made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They were expected to celebrate Pentecost (see v. 1) in Jerusalem, as part of observing the Jewish religious calendar. See Ex. 23:14–19.

e. **this sound.** The noise like gusty wind, not the sound of the various languages.

f. **speak in his own language.** As the believers were speaking, each pilgrim in the crowd recognized the language or dialect from his own country.

g. **Galileans.** Inhabitants of the mostly rural area of northern Israel around the Sea of Galilee. Galilean Jews spoke with a distinct regional accent and were considered to be unsophisticated and uneducated by the southern Judean Jews. When Galileans were seen to be speaking so many different languages, the Judean Jews were astonished.

h. **language.** The listing of specific countries and ethnic groups proves again that these utterances were known human languages.

i. **Parthians.** They lived in what is modern Iran.

j. **Medes.** In Daniel’s time, they ruled with the Persians, but had settled in Parthia.

k. **Elamites.** They were from the southwestern part of the Parthian Empire.

l. **Mesopotamia.** This means “between the rivers” (the Tigris and Euphrates). Many Jews still lived there, descendants of those who were in captivity and who never returned to Palestine (cf. 2 Chr. 36:22, 23).

m. **Judea.** All the region once controlled by David and Solomon, including Syria.

n. **Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia.** All were districts in Asia Minor, in what is now Turkey.

o. **Egypt.** Many Jews lived there, especially in the city of Alexandria. The nation then covered the same general area as modern Egypt.

p. **Libya adjoining Cyrene.** These districts were W of Egypt, along the North African coast

adjoining Cyrene, visitors from ^aRome, both Jews and proselytes, ^bCretans and ^cArabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the ^dwonderful works of God.” So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?”

Others mocking said, “They are full of ^enew wine.”

6. PETER PREACHES THE GOSPEL IN JERUSALEM

Acts 2:14–36

But Peter, standing up ^fwith the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only ^gthe third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by ^hthe prophet Joel:

‘And it shall come to pass in the ⁱlast days, says God,
That I will pour out of My Spirit on ^jall flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall ^kprophesy,
Your young men shall see ^lvisions,

a. **Rome.** The capital of the Empire had a sizeable Jewish population, dating from the second century b.c. **proselytes.** Gentile converts to Judaism. Jews in Rome were especially active in seeking such converts.

b. **Cretans.** Residents of the island of Crete, off the southern coast of Greece.

c. **Arabs.** Jews who lived S of Damascus, among the Nabatean Arabs (cf. Gal. 1:17).

d. **wonderful works of God.** The Christians were quoting from the OT what God had done for His people (cf. Ex. 15:11; Pss. 40:5; 77:11; 96:3; 107:21). Such praises were often heard in Jerusalem during festival times.

e. **new wine.** A drink that could have made one drunk.

f. **with the eleven.** This number of the apostles included the newly-appointed Matthias, who replaced Judas Iscariot (see Acts 1:23, 24).

g. **the third hour.** Calculated in Jewish fashion from sunrise, this was 9:00 a.m.

h. **the prophet Joel.** Joel’s prophecy will not be completely fulfilled until the millennial kingdom and the final judgment. But Peter, by using it, shows that Pentecost was a pre-fulfillment, a taste of what will happen in the millennial kingdom when the Spirit is poured out on all flesh (cf. Acts 10:45).

i. **last days.** This phrase refers to the present era of redemptive history from the first coming of Christ (Heb. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:20; 1 John 2:18) to His return.

j. **all flesh.** This indicates all people will receive the Holy Spirit, because everyone who enters the millennial kingdom will be redeemed (cf. Matt. 24:29–25:46; Rev. 20:4–6).

k. **prophesy.** The proclamation of God’s truth will be pervasive in the millennial kingdom.

l. **visions . . . dreams.** Dreams (Gen. 20:3; Dan. 7:1) and visions (Gen. 15:1; Rev. 9:17) were some of God’s most memorable means of revelation since they were pictorial in nature. While they were not limited to believers (e.g., Abimelech, Gen. 20:3 and Pharaoh, Gen. 41:1–8), they were primarily reserved

Your old men shall dream dreams.
And on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days;
And they shall prophesy. I will show ^awonders in heaven above
And signs in the earth beneath:
Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.
The ^bsun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the coming of the great and awesome ^cday of the Lord.
And it shall come to pass
That ^dwhoever calls on the name of the Lord
Shall be saved.^e

“Men of Israel, hear these words: ^eJesus of Nazareth, a Man ^fattested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered ^gby the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by ^hlawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed

for prophets and apostles (cf. Num. 12:6). While frequent in the OT, they were rare in the NT. In Acts, all of God’s visions were given to either Peter (chaps. 10, 11) or Paul (chaps. 9, 18; cf. 2 Cor. 12:1). Most frequently they were used to reveal apocalyptic imagery (cf. Ezek., Dan., Zech., Rev.). They were not considered normal in biblical times, nor should they be so now. The time will come, however, when God will use visions and dreams during the Tribulation period as predicted by Joel 2:28–32

a. **wonders . . . signs.** Cf. Acts 4:30; 5:12; 14:3; 15:12. “Wonders” is the amazement people experience when witnessing supernatural works (miracles). “Signs” point to the power of God behind miracles—marvels have no value unless they point to God and His truth. Such works were often done by the Holy Spirit through the apostles (Acts 5:12–16) and their associates (Acts 6:8) to authenticate them as the messengers of God’s truth. Cf. 2 Cor. 12:12.

b. **sun . . . darkness . . . moon into blood.** Cf. Matt. 24:29, 30; see Rev. 6:12.

c. **day of the Lord.** see 1 Thess. 5:2. This Day of the Lord will come with the return of Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Thess. 2:2; Rev. 19:11–15).

d. **whoever calls.** Up to that hour of judgment and wrath, any who turn to Christ as Lord and Savior will be saved (see Rom. 10:10–13).

e. **Jesus of Nazareth.** The humble name that often identified the Lord during His earthly ministry (Matt. 21:11; Mark 10:47; Luke 24:19; John 18:5).

f. **attested . . . by miracles, wonders, and signs.** By a variety of supernatural means and works, God validated Jesus as the Messiah (cf. Matt. 11:1–6; Luke 7:20–23; John 3:2; 5:17–20; 8:28; Phil. 2:9; see 1:3; 2:19).

g. **by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God.** From eternity past (2 Tim. 1:9; Rev. 13:8) God predetermined that Jesus would die an atoning death as part of the His pre-ordained plan (Acts 4:27, 28; 13:27–29).

h. **lawless hands, have crucified.** An indictment against “men of Israel” (v. 22), those unbelieving Jews who instigated Jesus’ death, which was carried out by the Romans. That the crucifixion was predetermined by God does not absolve the guilt of those who caused it.

the pains of death, because it was ^anot possible that He should be held by it. For ^bDavid says concerning Him:

'I foresaw the Lord always before my face,
For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.
Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad;
Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.
For You will not leave my soul in ^cHades,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
You have made known to me the ways of life;
You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'

“Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and ^dhis tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, ^ebeing a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, ^fspoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus ^gGod has raised up, of which ^hwe are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the ⁱpromise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

“For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself:

a. **not possible.** Because of His divine power (John 11:25; Heb. 2:14) and God's promise and purpose (Luke 24:46; John 2:18–22; 1 Cor. 15:16–26), death could not keep Jesus in the grave.

b. **David says.** The Lord was speaking of His resurrection prophetically through David (see Ps. 16:8–11).

c. **Hades.** Cf. Acts 2:31; see Luke 16:23. The NT equivalent of the OT grave or “sheol.” Though sometimes it identifies hell (Matt. 11:23), here it refers to the general place of the dead.

d. **his tomb is with us.** A reminder to the Jews that David's body had never been raised, so he could not be the fulfillment of the prophecy of Ps. 16.

e. **being a prophet.** Peter quoted Ps. 132:11. As God's spokesman, David knew that God would keep His oath (2 Sam. 7:11–16) and Christ would come.

f. **spoke.** Peter is referring to David's words in Ps. 16:10. Peter expounds the meaning of Ps. 16 as referring not to David, but to Jesus Christ. He would be raised to reign (cf. Pss. 2:1–9; 89:3; 138:1–8).

g. **God has raised up.** Cf. Acts 2:24; 10:40; 17:31; 1 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 1:20. That He did so attests to His approval of Christ's work on the cross.

h. **we are all witnesses.** The early preachers preached the resurrection (Acts 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33, 34, 37; 17:31).

i. **promise of the Holy Spirit.** After Jesus was risen and ascended, God's promise to send the Holy Spirit was fulfilled (cf. John 7:39; Gal. 3:14) and manifest that day.

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‘The LORD said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”‘

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

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