

WHAT'S AN APOSTLE? (ACTS 1:15-26)

why it matters

- New Apostolic Reformation all the rage in American Christianity last few years
 - whole denominations that identify themselves with the word Apostolic
 - modern day church leaders using the title “apostle”
- every kind of Christianity that has ever existed in the last 2000 years has identified itself as a modern successor of the original apostles of Jesus
 - Jesus’ 12 closest disciples during his earthly ministry,
 - the 12 that followed him from town to town across ancient Galilee, Judea, Samaria
 - the 12 with whom he shared the Last Supper on the night before his crucifixion

where it fits

- this is the story of how the 11 surviving apostles chose a 12th
 - right after the Ascension, right before baptism in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost

S&R Acts 1:15-26

what they need to listen for

- 3 pairs of questions
 - the first two pairs of questions are questions that curious people, serious people usually can't avoid asking if they pay attention to this passage at all
 - they're really important questions, and we'll try to answer them with clear, succinct answers
 - the answers will be succinct because, although the questions really do matter, they don't matter nearly as much as the final pair of questions
 - so the beginning of this sermon might serve to satisfy some curiosity, but they're not crucially important to how you live your life
 - on the other hand, the third pair of questions absolutely impact the life of every Christian in the world today
- so let's dive into this together

the first pair of questions

Two questions about Judas

- apostle who betrayed Jesus... everything about Judas makes us uncomfortable

1. How did he die?

- a classic example of what some people claim is a contradiction in the Bible
 - Matthew 27:3-10 tell us that Judas hanged himself **look it up later**

- Acts 1:18-19 tell us that he fell headlong, his body split open, and his guts came gushing out **look it up later**

- sure sounds like a contradiction to me
- actually it is only an apparent contradiction... there are several different possibilities for how to explain the issue and reconcile the two sides of the problem
- the easiest and most disgusting way to see how both can be true is to just realize that he did hang himself, his dead body remained hanging from the tree for a couple of days until it became bloated and disgusting, someone cut it down, and when it hit the ground, well...
 - the Bible has some truly disturbing and disgusting things in it... This is one of them

2. Where did he go?

- a perpetually perplexing problem
 - Acts 1:25b **T&R**
- what is Peter talking about when he says that Judas went to his place?
 - the simplest, most obvious answer is that his place was just the spot of his burial in the field mentioned right here in Acts chapter one and also the passage in Matthew 27... and I hope that's all it means
 - but there are at least half a dozen passages spread out across all four gospels that strongly suggests at the place Peter was talking about was Judas' spot in hell
 - and it's not just me who sees these passages in the Bible
 - people have been wrestling with these texts for 2000 years
 - the reality of hell itself is a perpetually, powerfully, painfully perplexing problem
 - please come talk to me... Judas in hell
- if you want to be sure that there is no place waiting for you in hell, run to Jesus right now

the second pair of questions

Two questions about lots

- casting lots = ancient game of chance, like rolling dice or flipping a coin today

1. Why did they use this method to make a decision?

- many places in both OT & NT
- same basic reasons people make a decision by flipping a coin today
 - a. they're too lazy to think about it
 - b. they're in too much of a rush to work it out carefully
 - c. they want God or fate or chance or whatever to make the decision, just so long as it isn't an actual human being deciding
 - d. they've spent hours or days carefully researching the matter, and just can't seem to come to a decision... but a decision still has to be made... so they just flip a coin

- this passage tells us that Peter laid out for them a very clear set of qualifications
 - it seems unlikely to me that there were very many of them that could have possibly met those qualifications
 - of the ones who did, apparently they just couldn't find any way to choose between the final two contestants

2. Should we be using this method to make decisions?

- almost never
- but you and your church family have spent hours or days carefully researching the matter biblically, logically, and theologically, but just can't seem to come to a decision... yet a decision still has to be made... cast lots
 - but that almost never happens... beware of surrendering too easily

the third pair of questions

Two questions about apostles

- 1. What were they for then?
 - foundation for the Christian faith
 - Eph 2:19-21 **T&R**
 - the apostolic mission
 - ἀποστέλλω Mark 3:13-19 **T&R**
 - the apostolic witness
 - here in Acts 1 **T&R**
 - the apostolic transmission
 - John 14:15-26 **T&R**
 - the apostolic writings
 - Paul (1Co 14:36-38), Peter (2Pe 1:16-21 and 3:15-16) **T&R**
 2. What are they for now?
 - foundation for the Christian life
 - Psalm 1:1-6 **T&R**
 - Matthew 7:24-27 **T&R**

conclusion

- authentic apostolic Christianity

- a modern-day New Testament church