

WAS MATTHIAS GOD'S CHOICE ?

Was Acts 1:15-26 Of Men or Of God ?

by Elder Bob Allgood

I am a firm believer in the order and succession of the Primitive (original) Baptist Church that Jesus Christ began on the banks of the river Jordan (Matt. 16:18). I am a believer in the succession of John's heaven authorized water baptism (Matt 21:23-27). I firmly believe that Paul the apostle was a "chosen vessel" to bear the name of Christ before Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). I believe Saul (Paul) was baptized with John's authorized baptism when Ananias baptized him in Damascus, approximately 36 AD, some six years after Christ had ascended back to his throne of glory and six years after the day of Pentecost. The facts are clear that Paul (and Barnabas) were "sent forth by the Holy Ghost - for the work whereunto I (Christ) have called them" (Acts 13:1-4). This "laying on of hands and sending them away" took place about 48 AD, some 12 years after his conversion on the Damascus road, about 18 years after the event of Acts 1:15-26.

Much happened between Acts 1:26 and before Acts 9 and Acts 13 that needs to be examined. For me the argument is not "was Paul an Apostle". He was ! Neither is the question necessarily "was Paul one of the twelve apostles". He could have been, although I am convinced there were more than twelve apostles. A careful study of Scripture reveals that after Saul's (Paul's) conversion in Acts 9, (36 AD) he went from Damascus into Arabia for a period of time then returned again to Damascus and remained there "three years" (Judaically reckoned) according to Gal. 1:13-18. He then went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and abode with him for 15 days, but did not see other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother (Gal. 3:18-19). His reference to "three years" places this event at about 38 to 39 AD. Paul then "came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia" but "was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea" (Gal. 3:21-22). Saul (Paul) made Tarsus his home and was there for about six years or until 43 AD when Barnabas went to Tarsus

and brought him to Antioch (Acts 11:25-26). He was there in Antioch for about a year before he and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to relieve the "famine" about 44-45 AD (Acts 11:27-30). We know this date because of what is recorded in Acts 12.

History confirms that Herod, Agrippa I died in 44 AD. About the time Barnabas and Saul (Paul) brought relief to Jerusalem from Antioch (Acts 11:30), Herod (Agrippa I), "stretched forth his hand and vexed certain of the church. And killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also" (Acts 12:1-3). But we know how the Lord delivered Peter from prison. James was one of the twelve apostles. He was "the son of Zebedee, the brother of John" and one of the original twelve apostles (Matt. 10:2-3). Herod (Agrippa I) then exalted himself as "a god" and "immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory". After this "Barnabas and Saul (Paul) returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark" (Acts 12:25).

Barnabas and Saul (Paul) returned to Antioch and ministered there for the next 2 or 3 years or until about 48 AD. It was about four years after the death of James, Barnabas and Saul (Paul) were "sent forth by the Holy Ghost" on their first journey. This was some eighteen years after Matthias was selected to replace Judas. Only after they were sent forth in Acts 13:4 is Saul also called Paul for the first time (Acts 13:9). I believe that Paul was an apostle "born out of due time" and that he "labored more abundantly than they all" - but as He says, "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (I Cor.15:8-10). I believe that when it comes to comparing natural born men we must rank Paul the apostle in the "Top Ten" so to speak. I am not sure God keeps a Top Ten List.

Having said that, I believe that the "business meeting" of the First Primitive Baptist Church of Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 1:15-26 was "orderly and of God". I would be forced to believe that IF it was "disorderly" ALL that followed would be "disorderly" until the disorder was corrected. Since it never was, I believe the selection of Matthias to take the place of Judas was not only that "this scripture must needs have been fulfilled", but that his selection was God's choice and confirmed by the Holy Spirit by what IS later recorded in Scripture, and by Paul the apostle himself. I believe Acts 1:15-26 was "Of God".

I have heard some say that Matthias could not have been the right one to take the place of Judas because after Acts 1:26 we hear no more about him. IF that argument holds water then we must disqualify Andrew, Thomas, Bartholomew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes who are all named in Acts 1:13, but are not referenced anywhere in Scripture after that.

I am aware there are some brethren, whom I love and highly respect, who hold a different view on this matter than I do. I am also aware of many brethren, whom I love and highly respect, who hold the same view as I do. Therefore I do not present my views to be contentious, but rather to try and show what I see taught in the word of God. Should I need more light on this

subject I pray the Lord will enlighten me with the Truth. I welcome your thoughts on the matter.

It seems to me for one to ASSUME that the event recorded in Acts 1:15-26 was a matter done prematurely, in error, or that Matthias was inappropriately chosen to take the place of Judas, one must ASSUME the following:

1. The eleven apostles were NOT following the leadership of the Holy Spirit. There are only two possible choices in this matter, either the eleven WERE following the leadership of the Spirit of God OR they WERE NOT. The so called middle ground of "God's permissive will" CAN NOT apply to this event as will be shown from the very context of their Prayer.

My response to this first assumption starts in Acts 1:1-4 where we read, "of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he (Christ) was taken up, after that he (Christ) through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen -". Luke probably wrote the book of Acts about 63 AD because it includes Paul's first trip to Rome which is documented to be about that time. Unless I misunderstand this passage, it says that "Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up" AND then AFTER Jesus was taken up, he "through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles." We know that some of those commandments were given during the forty days Christ "was seen" of his disciples after his resurrection until the "day he was taken up". They are recorded in part in John 20:21-23, Matt. 28:16-20, Mark 16:15-18, Luke 24:44-49. However, we find in John 20:22-23, Jesus breathed on them and said unto them "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained". This was during the "forty days" he was seen of the apostles, and spoke to them of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God -". This was before he "was taken up from them". This was before the day of Pentecost when they were "all filled with the Holy Ghost". It seems to me we must conclude from John 20:21 the Apostles had "received the Holy Spirit" prior to the day of Pentecost.

We know that Christ was crucified on the Passover Day and his Resurrection was three days after Passover. Pentecost took place 50 days after Passover. Knowing these facts we can determine that there was a period of seven days from the "day he was taken up" and the day of Pentecost when they were "all filled with the Holy Ghost". Are we to believe that the Church of Jesus Christ was left without the presence of the Holy Spirit and without direction for a period of seven days between the time Christ ascended back to his throne of glory and the day of Pentecost? Granted they were to "tarry in Jerusalem until they be endued with power" but does that mean they were void of the Spirit of God until that time? We know that every elect child of God receives the Holy Spirit in regeneration, for "so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Paul said, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9).

Therefore we must conclude that the apostles HAD the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them while waiting "for the promise of the Father" - while waiting to be "baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 1:4-5). IF not, how did they all continue "with one accord in prayer and supplication" ? If not, we would have to disregard all the passages given above that clearly show differently. But if we believe these passages, it seems to me we must believe the apostles were following the leadership of the Spirit of God. If they were following the leadership of the Holy Spirit the event recorded in Acts 1:15-26 must be "Of God". If they were not following the leadership of the Spirit, then it seems to me we have a problem knowing WHEN they were and WHEN they were not, because after they were "filled with the Holy Ghost" on the day of Pentecost – they DID NOT correct the action they took in Acts 1:15-26.

2. IF we assume this event is "of men" the qualifications set forth in Acts 1:21-22 for a replacement for Judas must have been the preconceived, self willed ideas of Peter. Peter said very specifically "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning at the baptism, of John, until the day he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection". These are specific qualifications. They were either "of God" or they were made up by Peter. They were either divinely inspired of God or they were a "man made requirement" not to be relied on. IF we decide these qualifications were NOT of God – then it seems to me that we can go through the Scriptures picking and choosing WHAT is of God and WHAT is not of God. IF we decide these qualifications are "OF GOD" and Paul was to be the replacement for Judas, he did not meet those qualifications. His own testimony in Acts 22 and 26 and I Corinthians 15:5-10 confirms this.

3. IF we assume this event in Acts 1:15-26 was "of men", the prayer offered in Acts 1:24 must be self righteous and hypocritical since they were not looking to God for HIS CHOICE - but rather casting lots as a matter of chance, to elect someone of their own choice as in a political election. The prayer was, "THOU, Lord which knowest the hearts of all men, SHEW whether of these two THOU hast chosen". For anyone to pray such a prayer, not under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and not looking to God for His choice, would be, IMO, comparable to the Pharisees prayer in Luke 18.

4. IF assume this event was "of men and NOT of God" we must assume the Prayer was not answered and they cast "their lots" as a matter of chance and the "lot" as the whole result was 11 to 0 for Matthias. That would be similar to taking all the parts of a watch and casting them into the air, and having a completed time piece falling to the earth. Here I will insert a few words about the use of "Lots".

Solomon in his wisdom wrote in Prov 16:33, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is OF THE LORD" (caps mine). To this I will make the following observations for your consideration.

God is not an abstract God. He is not Un-involved with his people. God is actively Involved with his people. "In him we live and move and have our being". Many passages could be given to prove the involvement of God with

the affairs of man. He says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. 45:22). The providence and leadership of God in the lives of his people is a vital part of our gospel salvation, "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

God is sovereign and in control of all things - but God does not cause all things to happen. God is not the cause of sin. God does not cause men to sin. There are some horrible things men have done to which God says, "I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart" (Jere. 7:31). There are some things God has set in motion by Nature (Eccles. 3). Some things men have devised in their own hearts: but the Lord directs his steps (Prov. 16:9). Some things God specifically determines (Dan. 4:28-35, Acts 17:24-28). God knows all about us (Jere. 17:9-10, Psalms 139:1-10, 23-24). [1]. The very hairs on our head are numbered (Matt. 10:29-31) [2]. Our stature can not be changed (Matt. 6:27) [3]. The Lord knows our every need in every situation (Matt. 6:24-27)

The word LOTS are used several ways in Scripture. Sometimes they speak of "Chance" as in a "Lottery" (Matt. 27:35). But "chance" is not under consideration in Prov. 16:33 -- nor in Acts 1:21-26.

LOTS are mostly used to determine the will and purpose of God according to Providence. The land of Canaan was divided according to Lots -- or "By Lot" (Num. 26:52-56) -- But God determined the Boundaries and The Dividers (Num. 34). Prior claims were honored (Jos. 14:1-3, 7-12) and Lots were adjusted (Jos. 19:1, 9).

The LOT that fell on the scapegoat (Lev. 16:8-10) was THE LORDS LOT - and not one of Chance - typifying how Christ was foreordained before the foundation of the world (I Peter 1:18-21). That was not by Chance.

Timely LOTS are often cast into the lap -- but not by chance - the whole disposing thereof, is OF THE LORD. Some LOTS are cast into the Lap before Birth: as with Jeremiah (Jere. 1:4-5), and as with John the Baptist (Luke 1:13-15). Some are cast into the lap at Birth: as with Moses (Ex. 2:1-10, Heb. 11:24-26), and Samuel (I Sam. 1:9-11), and the man born blind for the glory of God in John 9. Some lots are cast into our laps in our Youth as was the case with Joseph, David and Timothy. Some at old age as was the case with Abraham and Sarah - Yea, even Caleb who was 85. Some are cast into our laps in an unexpected time - as was the case of Jonah. "THE LOT" fell on Jonah - and that was not by Chance (Jonah 1:7-17), The Lord was directing the "casting of the lot". The Lord was disposing of the whole matter. The lot was cast into the lap of Paul on the Damascus road. But that does not change the fact that Matthias met the qualifications as prescribed in Acts 1:21-22 and "the lot was cast into his lap".

5. IF Acts 1:15-26 was not "of God" then we must ASSUME the entire event was "of men" and not according to the will of God. Which would put the eleven in a state of "self will and disobedience" to God. The prayer itself eliminates any possibility of this even falling into what we call "the

permissive will of God" – for they asked for God's specific will. To this I make the following observations:

A. These same "self willed and disobedient" men would have been FILLED with the Holy Ghost just a few days later on Pentecost – BUT they had never corrected their "self willed and disobedient action". If the "not of God" idea stands, that causes me a great deal of concern about WHO can be "filled with the Spirit".

B. I find no place in the Scripture where God ever condemns the action taken in Acts 1:15-26. IF God does not condemn an action by his church - on what basis can we condemn such action. If we can "pick and choose" what we assume is right and what we assume is wrong - where does that leave us ?

C. As pointed out this action was NEVER CORRECTED ! Matthias was numbered with the eleven; (Acts 1:26). He stood with the eleven to preach on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14). He spoke "with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" as did the other apostles, and was asked by the multitude "What shall we do" (Acts 2:37). He had part in "the apostles doctrine" (Acts 2:42), and with great power gave witness with the apostles of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 4:33). He was with the other apostles as they received a common treasury (Acts 4:35), and wrought many signs and wonders with the (Acts 5:12). Matthias was arrested with the apostles (Acts 5:18, 20), and was beaten with the apostles (Acts 5:40). He laid hands on the seven Deacons with all the other apostles (Acts 6:6). He remained in Jerusalem with the apostles (Acts 8:1, 14). Matthias was numbered with the apostles when Barnabas brought Paul to "the apostles" (Acts 9:27). Matthias was present with the apostles in the Council when Paul was sent to Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-2, 6), and was numbered with the apostles who sent Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch, (Acts 15:22).

Furthermore, and finally, Paul himself acknowledged the TWELVE had seen the resurrected Christ before he had. He acknowledged that Christ had been seen of above 500 brethren, and "ALL the apostles" - before he had seen him. (I Cor. 15:5-9). Paul was an apostle - he labored more abundantly than all the rest – But IMO, he was not the apostle chosen by God to take the place of Matthias. Finally, if we will study the Scriptures, we will find that there were MORE than 12 Apostles. Both Barnabas and Paul were chosen APOSTLES which means "delegates, sent ones, ambassadors" (Acts 13:1-4, Acts 14:14). Some apostles we hear little or nothing about. Paul was a chosen vessel and we owe much to his labors, for which we thank God. But that, IMHO, does not give grounds for disregarding the Truth.