

- ² My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth!
- ³ He will not let you stumble;
the one who watches over you will not slumber.
- ⁴ Indeed, he who watches over Israel
never slumbers or sleeps.
- ⁵ The LORD himself watches over you!
The LORD stands beside you as your protective shade.
- ⁶ The sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon at night.
- ⁷ The LORD keeps you from all harm
and watches over your life.
- ⁸ The LORD keeps watch over you as you come and go,
both now and forever.

JUSTICE AND JUDGMENT

2 SAMUEL 20:14—21:14

Sheba, who came from Saul's tribe, resented the transfer of power from Benjamin to Judah, and stirred up the other tribes to revolt against David. David sent troops to Abel-beth-maacah where Sheba had holed up. Rather than have their city attacked, they executed Sheba, throwing his head over the wall, leading Joab to withdraw.

Tribalism also played its part in the second incident, rooted in Saul's former massacre of the Gibeonites, despite Joshua's covenant with them. David asked how he could make restitution, and they demanded the lives of seven of Saul's sons.

These are uncomfortable stories to modern ears; but they highlight a clear element of Scripture's teaching—that the God of justice eventually brings judgment on all those who oppose him and his purposes. But thankfully, no matter what we have been or done, that same justice saves us when we put our trust in Christ.

ACTS 1:1-26

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

¹ In my first book* I told you, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began to do and teach ²until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving his chosen apostles further instructions through the Holy Spirit. ³During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

⁴Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. ⁵John baptized with* water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

The Ascension of Jesus

⁶So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?"

⁷He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

1:1 The reference is to the Gospel of Luke. 1:5 Or in; also in 1:5b.

⁹After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. ¹⁰As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ¹¹"Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"

Matthias Replaces Judas

¹²Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance of half a mile. ¹³When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying.

Here are the names of those who were present: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the zealot), and Judas (son of James). ¹⁴They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

¹⁵During this time, when about 120 believers* were together in one place, Peter stood up and addressed them. ¹⁶"Brothers," he said, "the Scriptures had to be fulfilled concerning Judas, who guided those who arrested Jesus. This was predicted long ago by the Holy Spirit, speaking through King David. ¹⁷Judas was one of us and shared in the ministry with us."

¹⁸(Judas had bought a field with the money he received for his treachery. Falling headfirst there, his body split open, spilling out all his intestines. ¹⁹The news of his death spread to all the people of Jerusalem, and they gave the place the Aramaic name *Akeldama*, which means "Field of Blood.")

²⁰Peter continued, "This was written in the book of Psalms, where it says, 'Let his home become desolate, with no one living in it.' It also says, 'Let someone else take his position.'"

²¹"So now we must choose a replacement for Judas from among the men who were with us the entire time we were traveling with the Lord Jesus—²²from the time he was baptized by John until the day he was taken from us. Whoever is chosen will join us as a witness of Jesus' resurrection."

²³So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴Then they all prayed, "O Lord, you know every heart. Show us which of these men you have chosen ²⁵as an apostle to replace Judas in this ministry, for he has deserted us and gone where he belongs." ²⁶Then they cast lots, and Matthias was selected to become an apostle with the other eleven.

1:12 Greek a Sabbath day's journey. 1:15 Greek brothers. 1:20 Pss 69:25; 109:8.

PROVERBS 16:18

¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction,
and haughtiness before a fall.

WHAT TO DO WHILE WAITING

ACTS 1:4-14

Jesus had spent forty days convincing his disciples that the resurrection had really happened. But his final hours on earth simply left them confused. He promised they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit, which they assumed meant that God's Kingdom was about to come; but Jesus said that the timing of that was none of their business. Then he promised they would receive power to be his witnesses, only for him to ascend to heaven in a cloud. Life had suddenly got very confusing.

So, what's the best thing to do when life is confusing? Pray! Which is exactly what they did. They spent ten days praying and each day they probably thought, "Will it be today?"—whatever "it" was. Each day, they waited, and prayed. And while they were doing so, God was preparing to let heaven loose. That's what always happens when we wait and pray.