

²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.”

beginning from the baptism of John- At the age of 30, Jesus began His public ministry by going to His cousin John at the Jordan River. Although Jesus did not need the forgiveness that the baptism offered, Jesus did it to fulfill all righteousness. At Jesus' baptism, He was proclaimed to be the Lamb of God and the beloved Son of God. Several disciples who were following John later came to follow Jesus, including Andrew and another unnamed disciple. Many speculate the unnamed disciple to be John, the beloved disciple. There were also many others there who saw what happened.

until the day when he was taken up from us- Refers to Jesus' ascension. Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus had given His followers a Great Commission: Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. This new apostle would help their cause by being an example of faith to the whole multitude of believers.

one of these men must become with us a witness- We might think of being a witness as something accidental or something that happens by chance, but this verse says the new apostle would “become with us” a witness. They didn't mean that Jesus would have to die and rise again in front of this new apostle. Perhaps they had already seen Jesus appear. Instead, this shows us that this kind of a witness was very intentional. In a sense, the apostles were the chief witnesses from which all other witnesses came. Being a witness their most important function and the new apostle could not fall short in this area.

To his resurrection- We might wonder why Peter is specifically highlighting the resurrection of Jesus. Why not mention the cross or His miracles or His teachings? The resurrection is the doctrine upon which Christianity stands or falls. If Jesus has not risen, nothing else about our faith matters. Without Jesus' victory over the grave, Christianity would be null and void.

²³ And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias.

And they put forward two- There were probably many deserving candidates to be the apostle who replaced Judas Iscariot as one of the twelve. It is unknown what process they might have used to arrive at the final two people, but it seems to have been the mutual consensus of the Church and the current apostles. Although people were talking and discussing, it did not delegitimize the result. God works through many processes to raise up leaders for the Church, even if it was not a voice from heaven. Once they got down to two, they changed their method of deciding on the next apostle.

Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus- Considerable detail for somebody who is only mentioned once in the Bible. Joseph might have played an important role in the early Church. Joseph was a common Jewish first name, going back to Jacob's son who became vizier

of Egypt after being sold into slavery. Barsabbas seems to be a last name or a nickname that literally translates to "Son of the Sabbath" or "Son of Sabbas." Might have indicated a person or family who was thought of as righteous. Justus was an alternate Greek name, which would have been common in that day and age.

and Matthias- Matthias was also a common name, short for Mattathias, who was a key figure during the Maccabean Revolt in the Intertestamental Period. Antiochus IV, a Greek Hellenistic king, persecuted the Jews by sacrificing a pig in the temple and making the High Priests eat the flesh. He was later overthrown and the Jews gained their independence for 50 years, until Rome took over. Jerusalem also gained a reputation as a place of rebellion.

²⁴ And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen

And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all- The believers start the prayer in typical fashion, by acknowledging Who God is and what He can do. There are many ways in which they could do this, since God has many attributes and qualities, but they choose to highlight God's ability to know hearts. Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. Knowing hearts is simply something that we cannot do, but yet, it is so valuable. In the wake of Judas' betrayal and their inability to see into Judas' heart, they know that God alone can provide an apostle who has good intentions.

show which one of these two you have chosen- Unfortunately, very few people today ask the Lord to show them the correct choices in life. Sometimes, people may confuse the lack of a visible sign for God not answering them. But more often, people are so secular that they do not see God as being involved in their lives consistently. The disciples, however, were completely convinced that God cared and that God would give them an answer.

²⁵ to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."

to take the place in this ministry and apostleship- As we have repeatedly said, the amazing things that the apostles would do really had nothing to do with them. It was God acting through them. And if God was acting through them, then they could be replaced without an issue. Although there are many televangelists today who foster a cult of personality, the authentic Church keeps moving forward even after her earthly leaders enter into their rest.

from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place- Throughout the Old Testament, God implores His people to turn back to Him. In spite of His warnings, many continued to turn aside and fell off of the straight and narrow path. Judas was one that turned aside, seemingly due to his own selfishness and greed.

²⁶ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

And they cast lots for them- We recognize the practice of casting lots from when the Roman soldiers divided up Jesus' clothing as He was being crucified. We might wonder why Christians would be engaging in such a practice. Today, drawing straws, flipping a coin, or rolling dice has connotations with gambling and Unchristian practices. However, casting lots was a common practice in the Old Testament and among the Jews. They would often divide up land by casting lots and there were special items called the Urim and Thummim which were most possibly used to determine innocence or guilt. The people prayed that God would reveal His will through the casting of these lots, so it was not seen as random. This also helped them avoid the appearance of favoritism when deciding on the next apostle.

and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles- We don't really know what was involved in casting lots or what the lots themselves looked like. They could have been sticks of various lengths, flat stones like coins, or some kind of dice. Before something was to be decided by casting lots, all of the options would need to be morally right or at least neutral. God would not tell anyone to sin. At the end of the process, Matthias was deemed to be the one whom God had chosen.