

The Twelve Apostles

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 0 0] We live nowadays in a designer society where people like everything customized to their personal preferences and needs, and increasingly people apply that approach to religion as well.

Many people in the U.S. still claim to be Christians, but are completely untethered from traditional beliefs and practices of Christians.

For example, one woman named Carol from Illinois, and this is a result from a survey, says that she drifted through a few mainline Protestant denominations in her youth, then experimented with the Baha'i faith for several years, but now finds herself enmeshed in Native American traditional healing practices, but she still identifies as Christian.

This isn't happening to Christianity only. Nadine Epstein of the Jewish magazine Moment writes that most Jewish people nowadays believe that there can be Judaism without God.

Their approach, she summarizes, is, quote, you pick and choose the part of religion that makes sense to you, end quote. Identifying these trends, religion statistics expert George Barna exaggerates to drive home a point when he says that the U.S. is headed for 310 million people with 310 million religions.

[1 : 3 4] That kind of buffet approach to religion, well, that kind of buffet approach in general, it works with things like diets. You can take a paleo diet or a keto diet and modify them to suit your preferences and needs, but you can't do that with historic Christianity.

Because historic Christianity teaches what we call the apostolic faith. It's what the apostles taught, and it's what the apostles transmitted, handed down to us.

This is why the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ play such a foundational role in the history of Christianity. And the main point of this passage is that God appointed the 12 apostles to be vice-regents of the kingdom of God who bear witness to Christ the King.

So let me pray before we read this text and I preach it. God, we ask for your help. You place this account of the appointment of the 12th apostle, Matthias, here for a reason.

Amen. To edify us, to teach us. To impart to us the importance of the gospel, the sacred trust that you have given us.

[2 : 5 9] So please, speak to us now. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Acts 1, 15 to 26.

In those days, Peter stood up among the brothers. The company of persons was in all about 120. And said, Brothers, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry. Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness. And falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.

And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language, a keldama, that is, field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, may his camp become desolate and let there be no one else, no one to dwell in it.

And let another take his office. So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 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.

[4 : 18] And they put forward two, Joseph, called Barsabbas, who was also called Justice, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.

And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell in Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles. Last week we saw that Jesus gave special parting instructions to the apostles whom he had chosen.

And in verse 13, Luke listed the names of these apostles. Conspicuously, there were only eleven apostles in that list, as we noted last week, because Judas Iscariot, who had betrayed Jesus to his death, had been omitted from the list.

And this betrayal and Judas' kind of departure from the apostles was a sore point for the remaining eleven apostles. And it raised a host of questions.

You know, how could Judas do this? Why did it happen? Was it supposed to happen? Was that part of God's plan? What happened to Judas afterward anyway?

[5 : 37] And also because Jesus chose the twelve apostles in Luke 6 intentionally to show that he is reconstituting the people of God, because in the Old Testament, the people of God were made up for the twelve tribes of Israel, descended from the twelve sons of Jacob.

And in Luke 22, verses 28 to 30, Jesus had said to his apostles, You are those who have stayed with me in my trials. And I assigned to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The twelve apostles were appointed to sit on thrones in the kingdom of God to judge the people of God, the twelve tribes of Israel.

This is most likely why in Revelation chapter 4, around the throne of God, there are twenty-four elders seated on twenty-four thrones, signifying the unity of God's people represented by the twelve tribes of Israel from the Old Testament and the twelve apostles of the New Testament church.

So the betrayal of Judas naturally raised the question, Who will be the twelfth apostle? Because there's only eleven now. And so starting in verse 15, Luke answers all of these questions.

[7 : 02] He's really addressing the elephant in the room as the early disciples are gathered together. He says in verse 15, In those days, Peter stood up among the brothers. The company of persons was in all about hundred and twenty.

So in those days refers to the period between Jesus' ascent to heaven in chapter 1, verse 9, and the Holy Spirit's descent in chapter 2, which we'll see shortly next week.

And Peter, as the leader of the twelve apostles, stands up to address the early believers. It says that there were about 120 people, so this is a larger crowd than the group of apostles along with the other disciples and the woman and the Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers, who are praying together in the upper room in chapter 1, verses 13 to 14.

And the word brothers here stands collectively, so it represents both brothers and sisters that are gathered among them. And we know that Peter was the leader among the twelve because he is always listed first in the list of the twelve apostles.

Matthew 10, verse 2, Mark 3, verse 16. And he always speaks first on behalf of the twelve. You see that all throughout the Gospels as well.

[8 : 12] Throughout the book of Acts also, we see Peter playing a leading role in the life of the church in Jerusalem and in their missionary outreaches until he's forced to leave the city in Acts 12, 17. And it's because Peter was the leader and representative of the twelve that Jesus says specifically to him in Matthew, chapter 16, verses 18 to 19.

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church. And the gates of... It should be Hades. Gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Now, the name Peter means rock.

And so Jesus is here very clearly saying that he will build a church on Peter. But this is not because God intended Peter to be...

Peter and his successor to be some sort of pope who is the head over the entire church. Rather, Jesus is saying this to Peter as a representative of the twelve, the twelve apostles.

[9 : 25] Because later in Matthew 18, 18, he gives the exact same promise that he just gave to Peter to all the apostles. Truly I say to you, that's plural you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

So this is not a promise that's given exclusively to Peter. It's given to all of the apostles. And that's because the apostles, as Ephesians 2.20 says, are the foundation of the church, with Christ Jesus himself being a cornerstone.

So he is building the church on Peter as representative of the apostles. And by extension, then this is the authority given to the apostolic church, the church that holds fast to the apostolic gospel.

All that to say, Peter is the leader of the twelve, which is why he is the one that stands up to dress the company of believers here. And the fact that Peter still holds this position of leadership is itself a testimony of God's mercy.

You were with us when we were going through Luke. And in Luke chapter 22, 31 to 32, when prophesying of Peter's eventual denial of him three times, Jesus said to him, but I pray for you that your faith may not fail.

[10 : 38] And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. And as Jesus predicted, Peter denied the Lord three times and then he wept bitterly, it says, because of his failure. But as Jesus exhorted him, commanded him, now after having turned back, Peter strengthens his brothers.

And Peter says this in verses 16 to 17, brothers, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry. The phrase, scripture had to be fulfilled, answers the question, all the questions really that I raised earlier.

Was Judas' betrayal necessary? Was this part of God's plan? The Holy Spirit, according to Peter, had already spoken beforehand about how Judas would become a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

And Peter proves this by citing Psalm 69, verse 25, and Psalm 109, verse 8, in verse 20. It says in verse 20, for it is written in the book of Psalms, may his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it, and let another take his office.

[11 : 56] If you were to read these Psalms independently, you might have never guessed that they're actually predicting this about Judas and about Jesus. But these, but this, the Bible authors, the biblical writers make the kinds of connections that they make here because they are thinking typologically.

What I mean by that is that they see the figures and the offices and the institutions of the Old Testament as all prefiguring Jesus Christ and all pointing to and foreshadowing and ultimately being fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

And so Israel's 40 days in the wilderness becomes a type of Jesus's 40 days in the wilderness. They're 40 years, Jesus's 40 days. And King David becomes a type of King Jesus who is the ultimate fulfillment from the line of David.

The temple becomes a type of Jesus who describes himself as the new temple of God who makes atonement for sin. So this is typological interpretation of Scripture.

Now, using this, they make some compelling and interesting connections to the Psalms. So Psalm 69 is a Psalm of David where he cries out to God for salvation from his enemies who, according to verse 4, hate him without cause.

[13 : 17] Now, John 15, 25 cites that verse to describe the enemies of Jesus as those who hate him without cause. So this is other biblical writers making the same kinds of connections that Peter is making here.

David also says in Psalm 69, verse 9, for zeal for your house has consumed me and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. And John quotes this verse after Jesus' cleansing of the temple in John 2, 17 to describe Jesus' zeal for the temple of God.

So once again, Jesus fulfilling what was said about David. And then in Psalm 69, verse 21, David says of his enemies, for my thirst they give me sour wine to drink.

And then John recounts its fulfillment in chapter 19, verses 28 to 29. Jesus said to fulfill the scripture, I thirst. And a jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.

Moreover, describing the Jews who rejected Jesus in Romans 11, 9 to 10, Paul quotes Psalm 69, 22 to 23. And David says, let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them.

[14 : 32] Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see and bend their backs forever. So, given all of these connections, it's not surprising to see Peter making a connection between David and the life and ministry of Jesus in Psalm 69.

So he quotes Psalm 69, verse 25, and quotes it here in Acts 1, 20. For it is written in the book of Psalms, may his camp become desolate and let there be no one to dwell in it. The camp is a reference to the plot of land that was purchased by Judas or purchased using the money that Judas had from betraying Jesus.

And this was the prophecy that was fulfilled when after Judas' death, the plot of land was used as a burying ground, unclean cemetery. So it became a desolate place and no one would dwell in it.

And using that same method, Peter also applies Psalm 109, verse 8 to what happened to Jesus. Psalm 109 is also a Davidic psalm. There he describes his enemies who in return for his love accuse him and reward him evil for good and hatred for his love.

And then, very interestingly in the psalm, after describing his enemies in the plural, all of a sudden he takes a turn and starts describing this singular enemy as if he has a particular individual in mind.

[15 : 50] And he says, may his days be few. May another take his office. So Peter takes that unusual turn in the Psalm 109 and interprets it as a specific prophecy concerning Judas who, like the enemies who opposed King David, opposed King Jesus.

In particular, Judas who would betray him. and using this as his basis, he argues that the scripture had to be fulfilled and the office of apostle now must be filled.

Someone must take his office. Verses 18 to 19 are placed inside a parenthesis because the translators concluded that that's a narrator's commentary, Luke's commentary, rather than part of Peter's speech.

In, if we're honest, it's actually impossible to be certain of that because ancient Greek doesn't use quotation marks and it doesn't use parentheses and so they're just guessing that this is Luke's commentary.

It could just as well be part of Peter's actual speech. But regardless, what it tells us is important, verses 18 to 19, it says, Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out and he became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the field was called in their own language that is filled of blood.

[17 : 15] The fuller account in Matthew chapter 27 provides more details. It says that when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders saying, I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.

They said, What is that to us? See to it yourself. And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, Judas departed and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests taking the pieces of silver said, It is not lawful to put them into the treasury since it is blood money.

It's ironic that people who killed Jesus are now not wanting money that's been tainted with blood. So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers.

Therefore, that field has been called a field of blood to this day. So Matthew and Luke's seemingly divergent accounts of Judas' death have raised some questions. Did Judas die by hanging, as Matthew says, or did he die by falling headlong and bursting open in the middle and all his bowels gushing out, as Luke says?

Did Judas buy the field or did the chief priests buy the field? The most likely scenario appears to be that Judas hanged himself and that as the body was decomposing the branch that it was hanging from or whatever it was, that something snapped and fell and the body dropped onto the ground and as it hit the ground it burst open so that his entrails spilled out.

[18 : 45] That would make sense because a normal body when it falls to the ground wouldn't burst like that. Only a decomposing body would do that. And so then Matthew is describing how Judas died and Luke is describing the gruesome aftermath to show the severe consequence of the one who betrayed the innocent, righteous, Son of God.

And then since the high priest could not take back Judas' money because it was considered blood money, they used it to buy a field in Judas' stead because they can't actually accept it into the treasury as his executor of sorts with Judas' money.

So then a ritually unclean cemetery is purchased with ritually unclean money so that it's appropriate both to say that Judas bought the field and the high priests bought the field and that field came to be known as a keldama, a field of blood because it's not really what this passage is about but because of its association with Judas Iscariot, it's been taught among some Christian circles that suicide is an unforgivable sin.

It is a terrible sin. It's an attack on God who is the author of life. It's a brazen act of trying to take one's life into one's own hands but with all of that said, the Bible never describes suicide as an unforgivable sin.

Judas Iscariot's case is unique. Prophesying of his betrayal, Jesus said in Matthew 26, 24, woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.

[20 : 25] So Judas is condemned. He perishes. His situation is irredeemable and there was no true repentance from him, only remorse.

But Luke is not commenting here on the theological implications of suicide as such. He's simply interested in the fact that the scriptures were fulfilled in Judas' betrayal and death.

Judas' camp became desolate. Judas' life was cut short. The plot of land he purchased became a field of blood and now all that remained to be fulfilled is that prophecy of another taking his office.

So this is Peter's rationale for the necessity of the 12th apostle appointing the 12th apostle. Then in verses 21 to 26, we see the actual selection process.

It says in verses 21 to 22, so one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 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.

[21 : 35] These verses outline specifically the criteria that need to be met for inclusion among the 12 apostles. First, Judas' replacement had to be a man who had been among Jesus' disciples during his earthly ministry.

We know from Luke 6, 13 that in addition to the 12 apostles, Jesus had a number of other disciples that a larger group that followed him. Second criterion is this.

The candidates for the 12th spot had to have been a witness of Jesus' physical resurrection. He had to have seen the risen Christ.

These are the criteria of the apostolic office. I'm going to digress here for a few minutes just to explain the term apostle and the way it's used variously throughout Scripture for the sake of clarity.

In the same way that the word president has the underlying meaning of leader or executive in modern usage, but it can still be used variously in different contexts.

[22 : 37] It could refer to the president of our country. It could refer to the president of a college. It could refer to the president of the local Boys and Girls Club. Right? But they're all presidents. In a similar way, the word apostle has the common underlying meaning of being someone who has been commissioned, sent out, a missionary.

But the word apostle is still used throughout Scripture in different ways. So we need to pay close attention to the context to see what kind of apostle it's speaking of. The first way it is used is to refer to the twelve apostles.

They are the ones from Jesus personally appointed in Luke 22 as 12, which I read to you earlier, 28 to 30 rather, that I read to you earlier, to sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

They're the ones described in Revelation 21 verse 14 as the twelve foundations of the new Jerusalem. There's only twelve of these kinds of apostles in all of human history.

And they are Simon, known as Peter, Andrew, his brother, James and John, sons of Zebedee, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, the son of Alphaeus, Simon, the zealot, and Judas, the son of James, and finally, as we see in our text, Matthias, who replaces Judas Iscariot.

[23 : 49] That's it. That's the twelve. No one else can ever be added to that list. That's why once Judas Iscariot, the traitor is replaced.

The list is fixed and never changed. Even after James, one of the twelve, is killed in Acts chapter 12 verses 1 to 2, there is no mention ever of replacing him because that list is done.

It's complete. It's fixed. The second way the word apostle is used is what I call capital A apostles. These are people who occupy the first century office of apostle.

They meet the apostolic criteria of having accompanied Jesus in his earthly ministry and having witnessed Jesus' resurrection. These are the capital A apostles who have been commissioned by the risen Christ as eyewitnesses of his resurrection.

They're the ones that are described in Ephesians 2:20 along with the twelve as the foundation of the church. We know that this additional category of the apostolic office exists because in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 5 to 8 it talks about how Jesus after his resurrection appeared to all the apostles I mean appeared to the twelve and then distinctly later on it says he appeared later to all the apostles so it distinguishes clearly the twelve from the rest of the apostles all the apostles so this second category is the category that Paul includes himself in and but because Paul himself wasn't a disciple of Jesus during his earthly ministry and because he didn't see the risen Christ in the flesh but only saw the vision of the risen Christ after his ascension that's why Peter I mean Paul is very apologetic about his apostleship and he says in 1 Corinthians 15:8 he describes himself as an untimely born apostle he knew that he was a capital

[25 : 50] A apostle but he knew that he was an exception not the rule so the office of apostle the second category also no longer exists an office is an officially recognized and authorized position a trust a responsibility within the community and the function of the apostolate is already complete because they have borne witness to Jesus' resurrection and the foundation of the church has already been laid and because there are no more eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection so that office has been fulfilled it's complete this is why when the offices of the church are mentioned in the rest of the New Testament there are only two offices that are mentioned Philippians 1:1 Timothy 3:1 Titus 1: there is no mention of the office of apostles there is no mention of any other office for that matter only two are mentioned the office of elder and the office of deacon but there's still a third way that the word apostle is used in scripture and this is what I call lowercase a apostles these do not occupy the first century office of apostles but they possess the gift of apostleship which is mentioned in Ephesians chapter 4 verses 11 to 12 it says that God gives gifts these are not offices but they're gifts

God gives gifts of apostles prophets evangelists shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ these are five essential ministries for the building up of the church today and apostles are one of them so I would put modern day frontier missionaries who are sent out to preach the gospel to bear witness to Jesus in new places I would place them in that category of having the gift of apostles Barnabas and Apollos were such people they are described as apostles in the New Testament and yet they are unlikely to have been witnesses to Jesus resurrection for example Apollos is described in Acts 18:24 to 26 as knowing only the baptism of John until he is instructed further by Priscilla and Aquila and then he was definitely not so that means he was definitely not directly appointed and commissioned by the risen

Christ and yet he is called an apostle in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verses 6 to 9 similarly Barnabas is called a prophet and a teacher of the church at Antioch in Acts 13:1 but only after he is sent out later in that same chapter as a missionary he begins to be called an apostle in Acts chapter 14 so this is the third category of apostles that now continues today that's the gift and it describes the function rather than an office all that to say scripture itself gives evidence of three different tiers of apostles and what we're dealing with here in Acts chapter 1 is the highest level the twelve those who will sit on throne to judge the twelve tribes of Israel and Luke continues his description of the selection of the twelfth apostle in verses 23 to 26 and they put forward to Joseph called Barsabbas who was also called

Justice and Matthias and they prayed and said you lord who know the hearts of all show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned assigned to go to his own place and they cast lots for them and the lot fell on Matthias and he was numbered with the eleven apostles so this passage is not a manual for how to select church leaders because it's about the selection of the twelfth apostle which is unique we never have to do this again it's nonetheless instructive for us we can use it tells us our common sense and rule out people who are not qualified the apostles and the rest of the early disciples put forward only two they don't put all the names in the lot they put two people in the lot right and Joseph called Barsabbas who was also called Justice and Matthias these two men were in their estimation already qualified they met all the criteria for apostleship and then they prayed you

Lord know the hearts of all show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship they pray that God would reveal whom he has chosen just as Jesus chose the original twelve apostles as we saw in Acts 1 2 so he must now complete the twelve by appointing Judas his replacement the word Lord is most likely referenced to the Lord Jesus already mentioned in verse 21 and so to dispel all suspicion of human meddling they cast lots that's because these men knew their Old Testament scriptures Proverbs 16 verse 33 says the lot is cast into the lap but its every decision is from the Lord even something that seems completely out of control like a lot is under God's sovereign superintendence it's ultimately decided by the Lord and Proverbs 18 18 says the lot puts an end to quarrels and decides between powerful contenders in some situations when there is a stalemate in a conflict or a debate or when you're faced with a decision among

[31 : 34] I guess between two equally good options a lot can end the debate because it's considered seen as impartial some Bible scholars make much of the fact that this is the last instance in scripture where the casting of lots happen to make a decision they note that after Pentecost when the spirit of God comes in his fullness upon God's people that there's no more mention of casting lots it's especially interesting that in Acts chapter 6 when the apostles appoint the seven who will assist them in the administration of food for the Greek widows that they don't cast lots in that situation with all of that said however because Luke himself never tells us that we no longer need lots because we have the Holy Spirit and because he doesn't seem to paint the selection of Matthias by lot as or embarrassing

I think this is at best a suggestive but inconclusive inference from the text the fact that we now have the Holy Spirit in fullness does not mean that believers never disagree anymore as we see in the disagreement and split between Paul and Barnabas later in Acts 15 nor does it mean that decision making is now easy and fail safe because we have the Holy Spirit when faced with a consequential decision that can be contentious some impartial means of deciding could be an effective means of ruling out controversy of course after taking the necessary steps of eliminating bad options and spending much time in prayer to God seeking his guidance but as I said before Luke's not trying to teach us how churches should make decisions here he's primarily concerned with demonstrating that the choice of Matthias as the 12th apostle was not made by men but made by

God the 12 are divinely appointed for their unique foundational role in the church and here's why this is important and I apologize so much of what I've talked about so far have seemed technical like teaching and not preaching here's why this is important these 12 apostles are leaders of the reconstituted people of God the Old Testament people of God came from the 12 sons of Jacob and the New Testament people of God the church descend from these 12 apostles of Jesus Christ this reality hides both the continuity with the Old Testament and discontinuity from the Old Testament on the one hand if you want to know God if you want to be saved you no longer need to become a Jew you now need to become a Christian a follower of Christ and devote yourself not to the teachings of

Moses only but to the teachings of the 12 apostles

Hermes and generals and imagine and following the Christians and will turn on the mean to prime old and according to third century pastor and theologian origin and church historian and Eusebius, all 12 apostles except for John were martyred for bearing witness to Jesus.

- [36 : 26] Christianity is not a matter of cultural or personal preference. It's either true or it's not. Peter bore witness to Jesus from Jerusalem all the way to modern-day Turkey and then was crucified by Emperor Nero after bearing witness in Rome.

James bore witness to Christ throughout Judea and was killed by King Herod Agrippa I, as noted in Acts chapter 12. John bore witness to Jesus throughout Asia until he was exiled into the island of Patmos under the persecutions of Emperor Domitian. He was the only one of the twelve to die by natural causes.

Andrew bore witness to Jesus as far as modern-day Ukraine, southern Russia, and Kazakhstan. And then he was crucified in Patras, Greece. Bartholomew bore witness to Jesus as far as modern-day India, Armenia, where he was flayed to death for his faith.

James, the son of Alphaeus, bore witness to Jesus as far as Egypt, where he was crucified for his faith. Judas, the son of James, also known as Jude or Thaddeus, bore witness to Jesus in Iran, Syria, and Lebanon, where he was beheaded for his faith.

Matthew bore witness to Jesus as far as modern-day Sudan. And church tradition holds that he too was martyred. Philip bore witness to Jesus as far as modern-day Greece, Syria, and Turkey, where he was beheaded for his faith.

- [38 : 00] Simon, the zealot, bore witness to Jesus as far as Mauritania, Libya, and Britain, where he was crucified. Thomas bore witness to Jesus as far as India, where he too was martyred.

And Matthias, finally the last apostle to be appointed to replace Judas Iscariot, bore witness to Jesus in modern-day Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, where he was stoned to death.

These are real people. And we, as Bible-believing, gospel-proclaiming Christians, stand in as heirs of these 12 apostles.

There are no more 12 apostles. There are no more apostles who are eyewitnesses Jesus' death and resurrection. So then, any so-called Christian church or denomination that claims to have new apostles who can modify the church's apostolic teaching is a cult, not the true church.

We are not inventing new doctrines. We're not in the business of customizing or updating Christianity to fit our personal or cultural preferences. We stand in the line of this venerable tradition, and we're not at liberty to change it to our liking.

- [39 : 26] That's what this passage teaches us. And this is why, later in Acts chapter 2, verse 42, it says that the early Christians devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.

Not to any itinerant philosopher's teaching. Not to any so-called Christian's teaching. Not to the teachings of those who have the highest platforms and the loudest microphones.

But to the apostles' teaching. Likewise, Jude chapter 3, Jude verse 3, rather, because it only is one chapter, it says, The word delivered is a technical word that conveys an official transmission of apostolic teaching from one generation to another.

Luke uses that same word in Luke chapter 1, verse 2, to say that he is writing an orderly account of what those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered to him and others.

The Christian faith, the gospel of Jesus Christ, is not something that some self-proclaimed, self-help guru conjured up in his own mind.

- [40 : 44] It's not something that some mystic dreamed up in the middle of some psychedelic ecstasy. It's based on historical realities.

What really happened. Jesus' life. Jesus' death. Jesus' resurrection. Jesus' ascension. It's based on what Jesus himself entrusted to these 12 apostles to faithfully hand down to future generations.

This is why the church is often described as one holy, universal, apostolic church. In other words, this is not a game of telephone where people line up, one person conveys a message to the next person.

It gets distorted at every level. And then at the end of the line, the person says something that's completely different from the original message to uproarious laughter of the crowd that's having a good time.

And in that game, of course, the more distorted it is, the funnier it is. But when it comes to the apostolic gospel, that cannot happen. Because it's a matter of life and death.

[42 : 07] And when that message is distorted, it does grave, eternal, spiritual damage. That's the sacred trust God's given to us as his people, as the church that's founded on these apostles' teachings.

Do you believe what these apostles believed? Do you devote yourself to these apostles' teachings? Do you search the scriptures that they wrote with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit?

Do you search the scriptures to devote yourself to it? What does God say? What is the apostolic deposit? Do you believe what the apostles say about Christ's life, death, and resurrection and ascension?

Some people say, nowadays, that's just... Disciples, the apostles, Jesus resurrected in people's hearts. Jesus was raised again in people's hearts.

He lives on in their memory. The apostles didn't believe that. They believed that he was raised from the dead.

[43 : 22] Are you a faithful steward, a guardian, of the apostolic deposit that's been handed down to you from generation after generation? Do we are not one of the twelve apostles?

We nevertheless continue the ministry of the apostles. And what was their ministry, says in verse 22, to be witnesses to Christ's resurrection. And of course, resurrection assumes and entails his death.

That Jesus died on the cross to bear the punishment that we deserve as sinners so that we might be forgiven, so that we might be cleansed, and that Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day, defeating death, to free us from our slavery to sin, to grant us eternal resurrection life, so that we who entrust ourselves to him might be citizens of the kingdom of God where Christ reigns.

That was the ministry of the apostles. That's what they lived and died for. Is that what you are living for?

Is that what you are willing to die for? Do you plan your life, your calendar, your budget, your location, living situation, your occupation, your relationships, you plan all of those things around being a witness to Jesus because that is your God-given mission.

[45 : 03] Let's be reminded this evening, brothers and sisters, that we have no other message but this message of Christ crucified and Christ resurrected, and we have no other religion but the apostolic gospel.

Let's pray together. O God, let us not be a generation that goes astray and misses the message that has faithfully been guarded and passed down to us.

O let us be a generation that passes on the baton again to the next generation. Let us be a people who live with a crystal clear understanding of our mission.

With a crystal clear understanding of our identity as witnesses of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, we pray.

Amen. Amen. Thank you. Amen. Amen.

[46 : 33] Amen. Amen. Thank you.