

# Born to Win

## From Passover to Pentecost

by Ronald L. Dart

Some nineteen hundred and seventy or so years ago today, the disciples of Jesus were still *reeling* from the events of the last week and a half. I imagine they were walking into things when they weren't paying attention to what they were doing, because they were so stunned. When you consider all their hopes that had been dashed on the day of the crucifixion, and then what had happened to them on the day of the resurrection of Jesus, and their encounters with him on that day, they must have all been walking around in a fog for quite some little time after that; because it was just a few days ago *today*, being...

### John 20

AKJV

<sup>19</sup> [...] the same day at evening, being the first day of the week,

Sunday night, just a week ago, that they were all together.

### John 20

AKJV

<sup>19</sup> [...] when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, [...]

They were actually in hiding, if you can believe it.

### John 20

AKJV

<sup>19</sup> [...] came Jesus and stood in the middle, [...]

I mean, the door is closed; they're shut in; and they're all together praying, I suppose, and then the next thing they know Jesus is there in the room with them.

### John 20

AKJV

<sup>19</sup> [...] and said to them, Peace be to you.

<sup>20</sup> And when he had so said, he showed to them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the LORD.

Have you ever considered the importance of him showing them his hands and his side? One of the questions that is sometimes raised is whether or not a person believes in the "bodily resurrection" of Jesus. It's hard for me to understand how anyone could think otherwise whenever Jesus shows up to his disciples and says, "Here, see my side? Here, see my hands?" *Obviously* Jesus was resurrected *bodily*, and he still bore the scars. It was important that he be able to show these scars to his disciples so that

they would know that it was him, that he had been *dead*, that he was *flesh*, that he had been killed, and that there were no games being played in this thing by God. Well, they were excited, and he said:

**John 20**

AKJV

<sup>21</sup> [...] Peace be to you: as my Father has sent me, even so send I you.

So he was actually, at this point in time, commissioning him.

**John 20**

KJ2000

<sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive you the Holy Spirit:

Now, I've heard this explained in various ways; because people look at Acts 2 and they see them receiving the Holy Spirit in Acts 2; and they're thinking, "Well, perhaps this was a *symbolic* act at this time. They didn't actually *receive* the Holy Spirit until the Day of Pentecost." Frankly, I don't see any case that can be made for that interpretation. Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive you the Holy Spirit." Why would we assume that they did not receive it at that time. What happened on Pentecost was not the receiving of the Holy Spirit for the first time but the *empowerment* of those men by the Holy Spirit that took place on that time. So there's no need to have a problem with this particular verse. You might want to pay a little more attention to the next verse that follows, because he says: "Receive the Holy Spirit. I'm sending you as my Father has sent me."

**John 20**

KJ2000

<sup>23</sup> Whosoever's sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever's sins you retain, they are retained.

Now, that's a *heavy* commission and an *enormous* responsibility. The problem that you run into here is that, because of the claims the Roman Catholic Church has made down through generations about priestly authority for the remission of sins or the retention of sins and so forth, the absolution for sin, that Protestants have reacted the other way and tried to find other ways of explaining this passage. And some Greek "scholars" (and I put the word "scholars" in quotes, because I really feel that they are being less than honest with their approach to this passage of Scripture) think that it should be translated, "Whosoever's sins you remit, they *will have been* remitted to them (before you remit them); and whosoever's sins you retain they will have been retained (before you retain them)", thus reducing the apostles to merely making an announcement of what God has already done before they came along to do it. I don't read this that way. And in fact, I've looked at the Greek; I've examined the tenses (of this and the next two scriptures I'm going to point out to you); and I find it very difficult to think that he meant *anything* besides what he said here. He granted to his disciples (that is, to his *apostles*) the authority to remit or to retain sins—an enormous responsibility, to say the least.

But now, if you're going to understand this, you have to understand it in relation to two other scriptures. The first one is Matthew 16, and verse 19. Jesus said (after Peter's great confession):

**Matthew 16**

AKJV

<sup>19</sup> And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Now, what did he mean by this? Well, again some Protestant scholars come along and say, “Well, what he’s saying is, ‘Whatever you bind on earth shall be what *has been bound* in heaven.’” But the problem with that is the Greek really doesn’t support that. This is as good a translation of the passage as you’re going to get. “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Now, it would take some kind of a fool to assume that he was granting to his apostles the authority to bind and loose *contrary to his Law*. You follow me? It would take a fool to think that. But, you see, the problem is that within the Law there is an *enormous* range of decisions that have to be made that are not covered by the letter of the law; and what he is doing is granting to his apostles the same authority he granted to the priests, the Levites, and the judges in the Old Testament: to make firm decisions *within the Law* having to do with the way in which the community would function within the Law. So that whenever you brought questions about the Law to Moses, he would answer them. And those answers became *binding* when Moses gave them to them. They are, by and large, things that are done in doubtful matters, that involve all of us, that *somebody* has to decide. And when that someone does decide, we are all bound by that decision.

Now, in the New Testament, you don’t have the kind of authority that you had in the Old Testament where they were a physical nation as well as a spiritual nation. But you have something comparable to it today: It’s that when the church decides that we’re going to have church in this location, and we’re going to have it on Saturday afternoons, Bible study at 1:00 and at 2:00, that’s when we’re going to do it. And it’s kind of silly to say so, but that’s binding upon all of us. If we want to be there to attend church, that’s when we got to do it; otherwise we’re going to be kind of on our own. I think this also reaches out to more far-reaching decisions than this, because the church—the apostles—had the responsibility of making this *kind* of decision for the church.

The next scripture is Matthew 18, verse 18. The arguments made regarding Matthew 16—that Jesus gave this authority solely to Peter—doesn’t work; because in Matthew 18 he gives the same authority to everybody. He says:

**Matthew 18**

KJ2000

<sup>18</sup> Verily I say unto you, [...]

He’s speaking now to all the apostles who are there.

**Matthew 18**

KJ2000

<sup>18</sup> [...] whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be what has been bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be what has been loosed in heaven.

So the apostles now have the authority to make decisions for the church in matters that are not specifically covered by the Law.

**Matthew 18**

KJ2000

<sup>19</sup> Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth concerning anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven.

Which puts a different cast on that scripture from what some people put on it. What Jesus is saying is that for such a binding and loosing decision to be made, at least two of you have to be involved in the decision—preferably three. We don’t want any unilateral handing down of Petrine or Papish authority—one man handing down decisions that are going to affect people’s lives. There need to be at least two or three of you involved in making any decision like this.

**Matthew 18**

KJ2000

<sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

This doesn't mean that any two disciples can make a decision like this. Basically he's talking about the people who are in authority in the church who make this kind of decision; he's talking specifically to the apostles. They are not granted a unilateral authority; they're granted *collective* authority to make this kind of decision for the church. So "whosoever's sins you remit, they're remitted; whosoever's sins you retain, they're retained" needs to be understood in the light of these other two verses—that the authority for deciding in doubtful matters, the authority for deciding in things not covered by the Law as to what the church is going to do, that authority was invested in the apostles; and that's all that he means by this. Now, continuing in John 20, and verse 24:

**John 20**

AKJV

<sup>24</sup> But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

<sup>25</sup> The other disciples therefore said to him, We have seen the LORD. But he said to them, [...]

"Oh yeah, right."

Now, I don't really know...I can't imagine myself how I would have felt had I been Thomas; but at the same time when you consider he saw Jesus—he saw him dead—knew that Jesus had died, was not aware of any of the events that took place in between, he comes back on the scene and they rush up to him saying, "We've seen the Lord!" What would *you* say? Would you have been that persuaded by these guys? I mean, sure you'd spent a lot of time with them, and you'd be inclined to *want* to believe them; but when people come and tell you something that is patently unbelievable, I don't care how good a friend they are. You're going to want to know: "What are you trying to do to me here?" He just didn't believe it.

**John 20**

AKJV

<sup>25</sup> [...] But he said to them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

Okay, a week passes.

**John 20**

AKJV

<sup>26</sup> And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: [...].

(To give you kind of a perspective on this year's Passover, this event would be taking place tomorrow night after sundown.)

**John 20**

AKJV

<sup>26</sup> [...] and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the middle, and said, Peace be to you.

<sup>27</sup> Then said he to Thomas, Reach here your finger, and behold my hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

Now here he stands, and his flesh *is there*; Jesus' body *is there*; and he calls upon Thomas to *touch* him.

**John 20**

AKJV

<sup>28</sup> And Thomas answered and said to him, My LORD and my God.

He had no question in his mind, not only that Jesus was his Lord, Thomas was quite persuaded that he was also his *God*.

**John 20**

AKJV

<sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

And I guess, in a way, that considers us; because we didn't get to see him, we didn't get to touch him. We have believed the *testimony* of these men who did.

**John 20**

AKJV

<sup>30</sup> And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

<sup>31</sup> But these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through his name.

At this point, the disciples went away into Galilee. Matthew makes that point; we'll come to Matthew in a moment. But continuing in chapter 21:

**John 21**

KJ2000

<sup>1</sup> After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and in this way showed he himself.

<sup>2</sup> There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

<sup>3</sup> Simon Peter said unto them, I am going fishing. They said unto him, We also will go with you. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

<sup>4</sup> But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

This is one of the interesting things about this: that even though Jesus had the same body, he looked different after his resurrection. For the men on the road to Emmaus who walked along and talked with him didn't recognize him until later [**Luke 24:31**]. Mary did not immediately recognize him [**John 20:14**]. These fellows looked across and saw a man standing on the shore and didn't know who it was. So some changes had been made as of this time. And they saw Jesus anyway and didn't know it.

**John 21**

KJ2000

<sup>5</sup> Then Jesus said unto them, Children, have you any fish? They answered him, No.

<sup>6</sup> And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fish.

Now the dime drops. All of a sudden, the light comes on and everybody realizes who that is.

**John 21**

AKJV

<sup>7</sup> Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved [*John*] said to Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat to him, (for he was naked), and did cast himself into the sea.

<sup>8</sup> And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fishes.

<sup>9</sup> As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, Bring of the fish which you have now caught.

Now, this is really interesting; because Jesus doesn't just show up and then let them build a fire and cook the food and so forth. He's already got supper put together (actually, in this case, *breakfast* put together) for these fellows—had a fire made, coals, fish laid out on them roasting away, bread toasting on the fire. And they all came down and he says, "Come on, get your fish on in here and let's eat." It's fascinating.

**John 21**

AKJV

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, Bring of the fish which you have now caught.

<sup>11</sup> Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: [...]

They counted them out; 153 big ones.

**John 21**

AKJV

<sup>11</sup> [...] and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

<sup>12</sup> Jesus said to them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples dared ask him, Who are you? knowing that it was the Lord.

They didn't dare ask him, "Who are you?" Now, that's a funny thing for him to record for us here; but it underlines again that Jesus *didn't look the same*. He was *changed* in some important way. Of course, he may have shown *all* the signs of what he had been through. He had been beaten to the point to where he may very well have been unrecognizable. In fact, Isaiah 53 almost implies that he was unrecognizable when they got through with him in that particular beating.

**John 21**

KJ2000

<sup>13</sup> Jesus then came, and took bread, and gave to them, and fish likewise.

<sup>14</sup> This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after he was risen from the dead.

<sup>15</sup> So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, [...]

And you kind of get the picture of this, as you read on, that actually they got up from the food and they were walking along the beach there by the lake. He walked along there and he said,

**John 21**

AKJV

<sup>15</sup> [...] Simon, son of Jonas, love you me more than these? He said to him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. He said to him, Feed my lambs.

Now, it's an *awkward* situation that develops here, and I have very little doubt that Peter is feeling the heat; because all of us know that Peter had denied Christ three times on that terrible night in which Jesus was betrayed. And we all know that Peter after that went out and wept bitterly [**Luke 22:62**] and we know how much that must have *hung over him* through all this period of time. I mean, there must have been nights when he lay awake for *hours* thinking about that denial and wishing that somehow he had been able to find the strength within himself not to deny his Lord in that terrible moment. Now Jesus comes along and says, "Do you love me?" And he said, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." I think by now everyone's aware also of the play on words—that Jesus uses the word *agapē* [ἀγάπῃ, Strong's g5368], which means "to prefer above all others". It is the highest form of love. And Peter responds with the word *phileō* [φιλέω, Strong's g25], which means "brotherly love and affection"

**John 21**

AKJV

<sup>15</sup> [...] Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. He said to him, Feed my lambs.

"That's your responsibility." They walked a little further.

**John 21**

AKJV

<sup>16</sup> He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, love you me? He said to him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. He said to him, Feed my sheep.

They walked a little further.

**John 21**

AKJV

<sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, love you me? [...]

This time Jesus shifted to *phileō*—in other words, to the brotherly affection of love. "Do you love me? Do you really have affection for me?"

**John 21**

AKJV

<sup>17</sup> [...] Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time [*as well he might*], Love you me? And he said to him, Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep.

I don't think it's any coincidence at all that Peter had to affirm Christ three times, because he had denied him three times. That part is fairly simple. And three times, "Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep.", come his commission from Christ. It's a work he had to do.

**John 21**

KJ2000

<sup>18</sup> Verily, verily, I say unto you, When you were young, you dressed yourself, and walked where you would: but when you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another

shall dress you, and carry you where you would not.

<sup>19</sup> This spoke he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said unto him, Follow me.

Because Peter would, according to tradition, be crucified upside-down with his arms extended—himself actually dying the death of crucifixion and following Christ to a stake. Peter...and I have to conclude that Peter's feeling the heat at this time. And when we feel the heat we're generally looking for something to distract attention.

### John 21

KJ2000

<sup>20</sup> Then Peter, turning about, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved [*John*] following; [...]

At a respectable distance, I suppose.

### John 21

KJ2000

<sup>21</sup> Peter seeing him said to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

<sup>22</sup> Jesus [*I think almost exasperated*] said unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you? you follow me.

<sup>23</sup> Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you?

Typical, I think, of people grabbing every word and trying to take every word literally in the way that they did on this occasion; but what is really fascinating to me about this passage of Scripture is: One, there is redemption to a person who has denied Christ. There is a way back. There is a call that comes to every one of us and every one of us has a cross that he has to bear. And Jesus said it, you know: "Whoever does not take up *his* cross", not "*my*" cross, "*his*" cross, "and follow me, he can't be my disciple."

So whatever that may be that each one of us is called to do, we have to do it. The temptation that all of us have is to look around and say, "Well, what about him? And what about her?", whereas Jesus says, "That's none of your business." This is the way he put it back to him: "It doesn't matter. If I will that he tarry till I come back again, what is that to you? It's none of your business. *You follow me.*" And that's the call I think that comes out to every one of us on this day (which is the first Sabbath of the seven Sabbaths leading to Pentecost). "You follow me; and don't worry about what somebody else is doing, or what somebody else is failing to do, or what you *wish* someone else would do but they're not. *Your* job is to take *your* cross and follow Christ. *You* follow me."

### John 21

AKJV

<sup>24</sup> This is the disciple which testifies of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

<sup>25</sup> And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

And I know that's true; but I wish that John had taken a little time and wrote some more of them, just the same.



While Jesus was in Galilee, something very important happened. If you turn to Matthew 28...it's a very familiar passage of Scripture, but there's a little thing in here that the Harmony of the Gospels brings out that's easily missed. Matthew 28, verse 16:

### **Matthew 28**

AKJV

<sup>16</sup> Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. [*He said, "Meet me there."*]

<sup>17</sup> And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

Now, this last phrase cannot include the disciples—not after that first week, no way. They didn't come to him there and doubt. So who was doing the doubting? Well that's what leads the Harmony of the Gospels to conclude that this is an event that Paul spoke of in his letter to the Corinthians. First Corinthians chapter 15, and verse 3:

### **1 Corinthians 15**

AKJV

<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

<sup>4</sup> And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

<sup>5</sup> And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

<sup>6</sup> After that, he was seen of above five hundred brothers at once; of whom the greater part remain to this present, but some are fallen asleep.

<sup>7</sup> After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

<sup>8</sup> And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

Now, this situation right here in Matthew 28 appears to be about the only possibility where those 500 people could have been assembled—that whenever he met them in the mountain...and it may very well have been the mount where he gave the Sermon on the Mount in the first place. That may be where he told the disciples that they should meet him. And it kind of makes me rethink what I have said before: how that, after Jesus' three-and-a-half-year ministry, there were 120 disciples on that first Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. That's true, but those 120 may not have been all the disciples; they may just merely have been all those that were in *Jerusalem* on that Pentecost; because it appears that on *this* occasion there were 500 people who saw him at one time on that mountainside (possibly where he gave the Sermon on the Mount originally). But listen now, let's go back to Matthew 18 again:

### **Matthew 18**

KJ2000

<sup>16</sup> Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

<sup>17</sup> And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

<sup>19</sup> Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:

<sup>20</sup> Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

I don't know why, but in my thinking of this all along I have sort of thought of that particular commission being given to eleven men standing there, and no more than that; and yet it doesn't necessarily *require* that. The fact is, that little expression, "and some doubted", suggests the possibility others were there. We know that at *some* point Jesus met with 500 people who saw him alive after his resurrection; and here on this occasion he may very well have (if the Harmony of the Gospels is right) on this occasion he may have made this statement of the Great Commission not merely to eleven men, but to 500 people at one time. These 500 witnesses of the living Jesus were very important in the early years of spreading the gospel. When you think about it...you know, only eleven people or twelve people (adding Matthias to the mix) able to testify to the world that Jesus Christ died, was buried, was resurrected is a limited witness when you consider how far and wide the gospel was going to go. Paul was able to say to the Corinthians years later, "I mean, 500 people saw him at once, and the greater part of them are *still alive*." And, in fact, a lot of people here and there had been able to meet them, had been able to say say, "You saw Jesus?" "Oh yes, I saw him. I heard his voice. He talked to us"—could actually testify: "Yes, Jesus Christ was alive after his resurrection. *I saw him myself*." What would it be worth to you to be able to talk to one of those people, ask him questions? "Are you sure?" You know, to look into his eyes, have that person tell you what he saw, what he heard Jesus say. So the witnesses... you know, "The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those that had preached it", coming from the Psalms [Psalms 68:11]. That's what we have on this occasion.

So here is the completion of this part. Now I want to switch at this point to the first chapter of Acts—to Luke who is telling us the story from his perspective of what took place in these last days. He wrote to Theophilus, saying:

#### Acts 1

KJ2000

- <sup>1</sup> The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,
- <sup>2</sup> Until the day in which he was taken up, after he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:
- <sup>3</sup> To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

You know, right now we are well within that time frame in which Jesus was doing that work. We've got seven Sabbaths that lead up to Pentecost; this is the first. So we go 40 days into that period of time and you've got...let's see, what? Six Sabbaths, would it be? No, I'm going to have to do my math on this thing. It would be seven...no, five—five Sabbaths would it be that he would actually be with these men; and I guess about the middle of the week, 40 days later, he would actually ascend to his Father just a week and a half before Pentecost. Anyway, in verse four:

#### Acts 1

KJ2000

- <sup>4</sup> And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, you have heard of me.
- <sup>5</sup> For John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

Ten, to be specific. And you really wonder about that with the disciples: if they could have imagined what that meant. They had *received* the Holy Spirit; they had not been *baptized* or immersed in the Holy Spirit up until this point.

#### Acts 1

KJ2000

- <sup>6</sup> When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, will you at this

time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

That's a funny question from our perspective; but then we have a totally different perspective, don't we? To them, they had come to this situation with certain expectations of what the Messiah was going to do. He was *going to restore the kingdom of God to Israel*. Now Jesus had come, he had died, and hadn't done that. Now he has been *raised*, and now we have the opportunity now to do it. And so they want to know, "Are you going to do it now?"

### Acts 1

KJ2000

<sup>7</sup> And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power.

<sup>8</sup> But you shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit has come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria [*The surprises begin.*], and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The witness of what Jesus did, what he said, what he accomplished, of his death, of his resurrection, of the Kingdom of God had to go *to everywhere*.

### Acts 1

AKJV

<sup>9</sup> And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

<sup>10</sup> And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up [*I imagine with their mouths open.*], behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

<sup>11</sup> Which also said, You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven.

There's the promise. He told them all before:

### John 14

AKJV

<sup>2</sup> [...] I go to prepare a place for you.

<sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

Now we have two witnesses to this—two angels—who said, "No, don't stand around here gawking. He'll be back."

### Acts 1

AKJV

<sup>12</sup> Then returned they to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

<sup>13</sup> And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where stayed both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

<sup>14</sup> These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Day by day, expecting what? You know, I just honestly don't believe there's any way they could have anticipated what was going to happen. I don't think they had *any idea* that there were going to be a rushing wind, and fire, and tongues, and all this kind of thing. They just knew:

### Luke 24

AKJV

<sup>49</sup> [T]arry you in the city of Jerusalem, until you be endued with power from on high.

He didn't even tell him it would be on Pentecost. He just said, "Wait, here, until you're endued with power." Now, while they waited, there was some unfinished business they had to deal with.

### Acts 1

KJ2000

<sup>15</sup> And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about a hundred and twenty,)

<sup>16</sup> Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spoke before concerning Judas, who was guide to them that took Jesus.

<sup>17</sup> For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

<sup>18</sup> Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his insides gushed out.

<sup>19</sup> And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; since that field is called in their proper tongue, Akeldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

<sup>20</sup> For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his office let another take.

That's just really...it's really fascinating, this man Judas; and he has captured the imagination of people down through the ages who have wondered about this man. The disturbing aspects of it are: You go all the way back to the psalms and there is the anticipation that there would be Judas. And people want to know: Well, did he have no choice? Was he a person whom God actually foreordained from before the foundation of the world to destruction? The poor guy was born, grew up, lived out his life, and then died—hung himself. Jesus, you know, said that...

### Matthew 26

GNT

<sup>24</sup> [...] It would have been better for that man if he had never been born!

What about this man? Why was he chosen from such an early time? Or *was* he chosen from such an early time? Well, you know there's some funny aspects of this that I don't think we fully understand. For one thing, I feel that there's a very strong corollary between Judas and Satan—not merely that Satan *entered into* Judas during this period of time until Judas killed himself, but that actually Judas played a role relative to Christ that *Satan* had played in generations gone by in relation to God; that whenever God created the world and everything that is down here, and he created all the angels, and he made them "ministering spirits for those who should be the heirs of salvation" (to use the words in Hebrews [Hebrews 1:14])... When he did all these things that he put the angels in charge, actually God *placed trust* in Satan. The implications of this is that, you know, looking at the psalm and the way the psalm is worded, that Satan was God's own familiar friend; he was one of the angels that covered—the Cherubs that covered. There was no being in universe closer to God than was the one whom we know as Lucifer or Satan (Hebrew, Helel [הֵלֵל], Strong's h1966]). No one. He was close, he was trusted, and he tried to stab God in the back. He betrayed him completely. And consequently, as Jesus came to the earth, it was necessary that he also be betrayed by one in whom he had placed his confidence. The Scriptures tell us that Jesus knew from the beginning who it was who would betray him [John 6:64].

Did that mean that he had no choice? I don't think so. I think that Jesus made his decision based upon the *kind* of a man that Judas. And you know, there are certain things in this world that are predictable, certainly even more predictable if you are God. You know, if you drag a cat by a certain distance from a dog...you know, the dog is on a 20-foot chain, and you drag a cat by 24 feet away, you can pretty well predict that the dog is going to hit that chain at the end of it just before he gets to the cat; because dogs are dogs and cats are cats. (And you could probably also predict that the cat's going to be terrified and give *you* a bad scratching because he's worried about the dog.) So these things are predictable. Predicting that a man of Judas' character would sell Jesus out was no trick; *selecting* him was the painful part—knowing that you actually have to do that.

Now, will Judas somehow get a chance for repentance for turning that around at sometime in the future? Some people believe he will. The puzzle to me would be, though, why then would Jesus say it would have been good for that man if he had *never been born*; because I can't conceive...If I'm going to be in the presence of God for all eternity. If I'm going to be able to see his glory, *share* in his glory and *share* in eternal life, I can't think of anything in this life that would be so bad that would make me wish that I had never been born. And yet Jesus said that of Judas. I think the problem is that even though God's forgiveness is great, even though the capacity that God has to forget our past and wipe out our sins, *our* capacity for forgetting and for forgiving ourselves is not so great; and that Judas, in all of eternity, would never be able to forget what he had done. He would never be able to put it out of his mind. He would always, in his own eyes, be the betrayer of Christ. And so it is that, in this world now today, that there are people whose lives and what they have done...their deeds are *so evil* that to these people forgiveness doesn't mean anything. God could forgive them, but they will still always be the murderers of thousands or millions of people—and in the case of Judas, the betrayer of Christ.

I don't know the answer to these very deep and profound questions; all I say is that you need to kind of trust what Jesus said and not worry too much about the other side of it. So anyway, it is written that somebody else has to take his office, his bishopric (which means his overseer-ship).

### Acts 1

KJ2000

<sup>21</sup> Therefore of these men who have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

<sup>22</sup> Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

Now, the old question of, “Can there be modern-day apostles?”, keeps getting blown around from time to time. The word “apostle” is used in more than one sense in the Bible. In the sense of “one sent”, you can be your wife's apostle to the grocery store. You know, she gives you a list and says, “Go the grocery store, bring this back; and don't lose the list because you'll forget it, I know.” Okay, you're an apostle to that level. If Paul *sent* Trophimus from one town to another with a message, Trophimus was Paul's apostle to the other town. Okay, we understand at that level. At the level the Bible talks about the Twelve Apostles, there *were* twelve, there *never will be* any more than twelve. *That's what they are.* They are the ones selected to be witnesses of Jesus Christ's resurrection; there never was another, and there never will be another beyond that group. So he had to be with them from the baptism of John to the same day he was taken up because they needed somebody to say, “Yes, I was there. Yes, this happened. Yes, I saw it.”

### Acts 1

KJ2000

<sup>23</sup> And they appointed two, [...]

And it is my thinking, frankly, as I read through this that these were the *only two* who fit that description out of 120 disciples; and I think that's a very reasonable proportion.

## Acts 1

KJ2000

<sup>23</sup> And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

<sup>24</sup> And they prayed, and said, You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which of these two you have chosen,

<sup>25</sup> That he may take part in this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

<sup>26</sup> And they cast their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

And so there were twelve; not thirteen, not eleven, twelve. As I said, these two men both equally fit the description; and they could just as easily have said, "Well, why don't we go ahead with thirteen?" The answer is: twelve. And whenever you begin to research that a little bit, you begin to see that there are prophetic implications to the twelve apostles. They will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, we're told in prophecy [**Matthew 19:28, Luke 22:30**]. So these men have a historic role, a prophetic role, down through the Bible that *only they* can possibly fill and no other person ever can. And no one else would ever have the kind of authority that they had *for* the church from that time until today.

Well, they waited at Jerusalem; and finally...

## Acts 2

AKJV

<sup>1</sup> [...] when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

And what happened to them on that day beggars description. I mean, you can read Luke's account of it here; it's very matter-of-fact, very clear and easy to understand in all of its parts; but it is such a *staggering* event that I don't think any of us can fully appreciate what *happened* on that day when the power of God descended upon that group of people—a larger group than we are today, naturally needing a little more room. About 120 of them were probably there at the time. And then here comes this rushing, mighty wind; fire across the top of the ceiling; a stream of fire descends upon every person in the room (men *and* women, by the way), and they all began to speak in other languages the wonderful works of God. And it was *just a beginning*.

The seven Sabbaths that existed from the day of Jesus' ascension from the grave and ascension to the Father and then his coming back to his disciples were *full* days. They were days of instruction, days of anticipation, days of meeting with the Lord, days of self-doubt, days of clearing up the self-doubts and clearing up the issues of the past, days of preparation, days of teaching. And, oh! I would like to know more of what Jesus told his disciples in those days that passed. But the truth is: In one way or another, we probably have all that he told them—certainly all that we need—in the pages of the Book; because as time went by these men preached, they spoke, they wrote; and the story of Jesus is told for our edification in their words; and the foundation for it, in a way, was laid in seven weeks—from Passover to Pentecost.