

THE FIELD OF BLOOD (Acts 1:19)

The Acts of the Apostles is a testimony to how the Lord guided and guarded the fledgling New Testament Church. Its leaders came from different backgrounds and yet they were determined in their devotion to the Lord Jesus and His instructions, for example, **Mt. 28:19** Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: **20** Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ... **Lk. 24:47** And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem ... **Acts 1:8** ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Exciting times, but a certain issue had to be dealt with. It concerns a patch of ground designated as The field of blood. ... **Acts 1:15** And in those days [*the week preceding Pentecost when they met in the upper room*] Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) **16** Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. **17** For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. **18** Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. **19** And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. **20** For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take. **21** Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, **22** 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. **23** And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. **24** And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, **25** That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. **26** And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

This is the account of the dark episode concerning Judas Iscariot ... how his blood-money, - given to him by the chief priests, - bought the field, how he died, and how he was replaced as an apostle by Matthias.

The 'key that unlocks' this brief passage of Scripture is the phrase, **16** this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before, concerning Judas. Peter then goes on to tell us in v.20 the Scriptures that were being referred to, it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein ... He was quoting from Ps. 69:25, which was a prophecy concerning how Judas Iscariot died and bought a field with the blood-money, that became a desolate field of blood. ... In the same verse (Acts 1:16) Peter also quoted from Ps. 109:8, let another take his office ... prophesying how Judas would be replaced by Matthias, Acts 1:26. Both these psalms are 'Messianic' psalms for they prophesy concerning the Messiah.

The fulfilment of these aspects of the two psalms is the key to this passage ... **16** this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost ... spake ... The Holy Ghost/Spirit is God, and when God speaks, it will be done! ... It might have looked as if the actions of Judas Iscariot were out of control but God's Word shows us they were a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. ... What God says will always come to pass. No matter how long it takes, the will of God will always prevail. ... David made these prophecies one thousand years earlier ... but, a thousand years, what is that to God?! ... It is *as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night* (Ps. 90:4). ... And Peter recognised that, **16** this scripture must needs have been fulfilled ... because the Holy Ghost [*God*] ... spake.

... And how comforting it was for these Christians to understand that what God says in His Word ... no matter when He said it ... it 'must needs to be fulfilled'. He never goes back on His Word. He never gives false hope, nor teach His people in a manner that would leave them confused. ... It is not His remit to disorientate or confound His followers for to them He speaks plainly.

That is not to say we always understand everything, as the psalmist said in Ps. 139:6, *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.* And that is why Paul sometimes used the word 'mystery' to describe the secret things God would do ... secret and 'mysterious' because they are out of the normal ... and sometimes they are too much for understand and yet, for the believer, God grants the ability to trust He will bring to pass everything He promises ... Jesus explains it like this, **Jn. 16:13** *when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you ...* We believe the Word of God because the Holy Spirit is our infallible Teacher.

At this time of potential crisis in the early Church, if God's people had taken their eyes of their hope in Christ, the authorities would have crushed them. Indeed, some of them would have given up, like the two on the road to Emmaus, **Lk. 24:21** *we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.*

But here, in the upper room (v.13), - very probably the same upper room where Jesus had celebrated the Passover supper, - the Holy Spirit reminded them of the great promises in the Word of God. ... It's a lesson for us today also, our God is still on the throne ... and He has spoken, and what He has said, - no matter how long ago, - must be! ... **16** this scripture must needs have been fulfilled ...

Yes, but why use the story of Judas Iscariot to illustrate this truth ... A simple answer is this ... It is not hard to believe God's plans are good and invincible when everything is going well, but when life takes a nasty and an unexpected turn for which we are not prepared ... *that* is when we need *every* ounce of our faith to believe and trust in God! ... It is easy to trust Him in the good times when you are 'lying comfortably in the green pastures', and 'walking alongside the still waters', - it is easy to trust Him then. It can be a different matter, though, when you are walking through the valley, or at the table surrounded by our enemies! ... In these uncertain days of Brexit, God has His purposes already determined and He will fulfil them no matter what governments and Prime Ministers and European Union Presidents dictate ... God's will will be done!

Look at this passage again ... Not even Judas Iscariot and not even Satan from Hell, could or can disrupt the sovereign will and plan of God in the advancement of His people! Peter shows us how God's Word foretold it one thousand years earlier through His servant David ... and what God had promised then, He had not forgotten, - even though it was so long ago in human terms, - and He was about to bring it to pass ... in His own good time.

There is no clock ticking on the walls of Heaven ... and yet, God has all our days marked (Ps. 139:14-16), and He has His plans for every one of His children ... Satan has been doing his evil deeds since he was cast out of Heaven (Rev. 12:9), and he will be allowed to continue to roam like a roaring lion (I Peter 5:8) until God takes him, casts him into the pit and shuts him up for a thousand years (Rev. 20:3). Satan has many plans he yet wants to fulfil ... but he will only fulfil those God allows him. He can only go as far as God permits, to fulfil God's purposes.

Our Heavenly Father knows everything in advance, for He has planned it all. None of us can say why He permits certain events, but He has already prayed for His people in the Garden of Gethsemane, **Jn. 17:9** I pray for them ... which thou hast given me; for they are thine. **10** And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them ... **14** I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. **15** I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil ... And, at this very moment, **Rom. 8:34** ... *It is* Christ ... who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Jesus was not taken unawares by the traitor Judas for He *knew*, [Acts 1:16](#) this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake ... and He had the solution planned before it came about. For then we read about the replacement for Judas Iscariot. It did not call for a long drawn-out process because the Lord had already the answer in their midst, [Acts 1:21](#) Wherefore of these men [*Joseph or Matthias, v.23*] which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² 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. ... There is the word ‘*must*’ again (cf. v.16)! ...

Jesus knew what Judas had been up to all the time, - how he had been stealing from the disciples’ purse (Jn. 12:6), and how he had made the dirty deal with the Pharisees ... God will not allow the devil to disrupt His plans. Annoyingly for the devil, he cannot halt anything God has decreed. He tried to disturb God’s plan in the Garden of Eden by turning away Adam and Eve ... but when we come to the end of the Bible we see that God *will* establish His people on this earth during the one thousand year reign, but even more perfectly in the eternal new heaven and new earth which will follow. *God ultimately wins!*

Once again, Satan would not have seduced Judas if God had not allowed it, [Jn. 17:12](#) those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. ... There we have it again, that the scripture might be fulfilled. ... And all the time, - when Judas was planning and scheming, - Jesus knew all about it ... but He also knew, - as did the disciples, - about two faithful followers who had been following ‘in the background’. Read it again closely and carefully, [Acts 1:21](#) Wherefore of these men [*Joseph or Matthias, v.23*] which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² 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.

Neither of the two men had gained any notoriety, and yet they were faithful in following Jesus *right from the beginning of His ministry* ... and Jesus knew all about them ... He knew about Joseph [*Hebrew*] called Barsabas [*Aramaic*], who was surnamed Justus [*Latin*] ... and He also knew about Matthias [*Aramaic*] and how they both met Him when He was baptised by John at the River Jordan, and had been following Him since. These two men were known in the Lord’s work, - their ‘roots were sunk deep’ into the words and deeds of the Saviour for those past three-and-a-half years. ... Either of them would have been a great addition to the apostles, and regardless of whoever was chosen to replace Judas, the other one would continue to follow Jesus as faithfully as he had done before.

Judas Iscariot had gone out into the “Field of Blood” and took his own life, by means of a most horrible death. He had nothing to live for any longer, - His relationship with the Lord was over! Judas was an absolute failure. He won no victory and he enjoyed no glory. He received no commendation from the Saviour. The thirty pieces of silver were no good to him. He threw them down on the floor of the temple and ran out into the field of Aceldama, the Field of Blood ... and there, he threw a rope over a branch, wrapped the noose around his neck, and hanged himself! ... **Mt. 27:3** Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he [*Jesus*] was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, **4** Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. **5** And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. But he couldn't even do that right ... for when he jumped off the height with the rope round his neck, either the rope broke or the branch broke because **Acts 1:18** ... falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. ... He was a failure in life and he was a failure in death!

Ah but, the devil had won! ... No, he hadn't, for it was all in God's plan, **Acts 1:16** Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas. ... And God put another in his place who did a far better job than Judas was ever able to do.

When we are seeing so many ungodly activities around us, and it might seem as if sin is no longer condemned, instead it is commended ... here is the reminder from God's Word that there is nothing going on around us for which He has not already planned. ... Peter was teaching his fellow-apostles and the one hundred and twenty in that room to *commit* to the promises of God which always will succeed! King Solomon wrote, **Prov. 19:21** There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

Yes, Judas Iscariot *could* have done great harm, but our God reigns and the plans of the enemy always ultimately fail. In these increasingly uncertain and ungodly times, keep holding on to how His Word proclaims, **Is. 46:9** I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, **10** Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.