

*“Are We Better Off Without Jesus?”*

## 1. **Intro:**

- 1.1. I read an article entitled: *A Tiger Bites its Tail*. It's about the **F-11 Tiger** that is notorious for being the first jet aircraft to **shoot itself down**. On September 21<sup>st</sup> 1956, during a test firing of its **20mm cannons**, pilot Tom Attridge fired 2 bursts mid-way through a shallow dive. As the velocity and trajectory of the cannon rounds decayed, they ultimately crossed paths w/the Tiger as it continued its descent, disabling it and forcing Attridge to crash land the aircraft...The pilot survived. The problem...he was traveling **too fast!** He had flown *below* the trajectory of his bullets & 11 sec's later, flew through them as their flight paths met
  - 1.1.1. You are also traveling too fast...if you don't have time to **pray!**
  - 1.1.2. If you're neglecting **prayer**, you're probably traveling **too fast to hear** the sound of God's voice. You're probably traveling **too fast to know** whether you are in the center of His will.
  - 1.1.3. **Better slow down before, like the jet, you shoot yourself down!**
- 1.2. Last week we had Jesus' **last words**, now we have His **last sighting!**
- 1.3. **Outline: Are We Better Off w/o Jesus? & History's Most Powerful Prayer Meeting**

## 2. **ARE WE BETTER OFF WITHOUT JESUS? (9-11)**

- 2.1. This event we call the **Ascension**, officially ended Jesus' incarnation & His 1<sup>st</sup> coming to earth.
  - 2.1.1. It allowed eyewitnesses to see **both** the **risen Christ** on earth & victorious, **and** the **eternal Christ** returning to heaven to minister at the right hand of the Father.
  - 2.1.2. **Contrast** how Jesus **came**, humbling Himself in His move from Heaven to earth; **and now** how He **leaves**, **exalted & lifted up!**
  - 2.1.3. **He will not appear in person to the world again until His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming.**
  - 2.1.4. **[Not in cloud formations, nor in a frying pan, not even on a Tortilla!]**
- 2.2. But the question is, **“Are we better of w/o Jesus?”** – Jesus said yes!
- 2.3. Jn.16:7 **“It is to your advantage that I go away.”**
  - 2.3.1. **Why? If I don't go away, the Helper(H.S./Comforter) will not come to you.**
  - 2.3.2. Instead of **Jesus** being limited in His earthly body to one location at one time, **now** the **Spirit** would indwell every believer, equipping them for the task of evangelizing the world.
  - 2.3.3. The immediate presence of the **3<sup>rd</sup> Person** of the Trinity was going to be **more helpful** than the immediate presence of the **2<sup>nd</sup> Person** of the Trinity.

- 2.3.3.1. They would have access to **the only power source** capable of binding & loosing those in spiritual darkness.
- 2.3.4. So now Jesus expanded his earthly ministry from its **geographically limited** earthly dimensions, to its **universal** heavenly dimensions.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.4. **A Cloud received Him** – A cloud often expresses **God’s glory** (*pillar of cloud* Ex.13:21)
  - 2.4.1. This is a reference to the **Shekinah**, the cloud of God’s glory.
  - 2.4.2. It is the **visible manifestation** of God’s radiant Glory.
  - 2.4.3. Therefore, the manner of Jesus’ departure was **not at all ordinary**.
    - 2.4.3.1. It goes beyond **Enoch** being taken up to heaven, or the departure of **Elijah** going up in his chariot of fire.
    - 2.4.3.2. It was a moment of **remarkable splendor!!!**
  - 2.4.4. He goes to the Father; sits at His right hand; takes the seat of cosmic authority; enjoys His coronation & confirmation as the King of Kings.
- 2.5. They stared into the clouds so long that 2 angels had to come to **move them along!**<sup>2</sup>
  - 2.5.1. This brought the disciples back to their senses, & they went to Jerusalem where they joined **history’s most powerful prayer meeting**.
- 2.6. Last week we read the **Promise of Power**(8); this week we find the **Path of Power!**
  - 2.6.1. **Regarding Power** → A.C. Dixon used to say,  
When we rely on **organization**, we get what **organization** can do.  
When we rely on **education**, we get what **education** can do.  
When we rely on **eloquence**, we get what **eloquence** can do.  
**But when we rely on the Holy Spirit, we get what God can do!”**
  - 2.6.2. **Regarding the Path** → the path to that power is **prayer!**
    - 2.6.2.1. This is **the cry** for God’s power through **prayer**.

### **3. HISTORY’S MOST POWERFUL PRAYER MEETING! (12-26)**

- 3.1. **PRAYER MEETING!** (12-14)
- 3.2. The **1<sup>st</sup> church** was a **praying church!**
  - 3.2.1. Same upper room we’re not sure.
  - 3.2.2. Note who was there. 120 all together (15).
  - 3.2.3. We also know during the 10 days they **“were continually in the Temple praising & blessing God.”** (Lk.24:53)
    - 3.2.3.1. **10 days?** – Pentecost = **50** days(i.e. from the Res.); minus the **40** days he walked the earth; leaves us the **10** days of waiting.
- 3.3. This combination of **praise, worship, with sincere prayer & supplication** is an **unbeatable formula** for drawing near to God, opening ourselves to the fullness of the H.S. & hearing the voice of the Father.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd’s Notes; pg.8

<sup>2</sup> Peter Wagner; Acts of the Holy Spirit; pg.59

<sup>3</sup> Peter Wagner; Acts of the Holy Spirit; pg.60

- 3.4. Not only were the disciples **persistent** (10 days) & **obedient** (wait here), but they were also **unified!**
- 3.5. (14) **One accord – one mind**(NASB) – **They all joined together** (NIV).
- 3.5.1. A unique Greek word (its 10 of 12 NT occurrences are in Acts). This helps us understand the **uniqueness** of the Christian community.
- 3.5.2. *omothumadon*[ὁμοθυμαδόν] is a compound of 2 words meaning to “**rush along**” and “**in unison**”.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.5.2.1. See Ex.19:8 Septuagint used it here **answered together**.
- 3.5.2.2. The image is almost **musical**; a number of notes are sounded which, while **different**, **harmonize** in pitch and tone! 😊
- 3.5.2.3. As the **instruments** of a great concert under the direction of a **concert master**, so the **Holy Spirit** blends together the lives of members of Christ’s church.
- 3.5.3. **Q:** How important then is this for **our** prayer meetings? “**The Spirit desires a community of believers united in heart & mind in order to have power in prayer!**”
- 3.6. **Q:** So is **corporate prayer** more effective than **solitary prayer**?
- 3.6.1. It sure seems that way - And I believe the answer is in regards to the principle of **agreement!**
- 3.6.2. Jesus said, “**If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.**” Mt.18:19
- 3.7. The prayer of **one person** alone is certainly not wasted, but the prayer of **two in agreement** is better, & presumably the prayer of **120 in agreement** is better yet!
- 3.7.1. What about your **church**? What of your **life**?
- 3.7.1.1. **Q:** Do you make **plans** on your own & then offer up a quick **prayer** asking God to bless it?
- 3.7.2. Join one of our prayer meetings: **Men**(Tues 6:30-7:30 am upstairs); **Women**(Wed 9am, worship room; also Tues eve in Wenger home); **Persecuted Church Prayer**(Sat 7:30am rm.113) [See green color in Bulletin]
- 3.8. **Prayer...with the women** – interesting walls already coming down.
- 3.9. **With His brothers** – James, Joses, Judas, & Simon. (Mark 6:3)
- 3.9.1. **James & Judas(Jude)** known for their books in the NT.
- 3.9.2. **James** became the leader for the Jerusalem church. (not John’s bro)
- 3.10. Notice change from Jn.7:5 “**for even his brothers did not believe in Him.**”
- 3.10.1. Which give us both a **Warning** & **Encouragement**?
- 3.10.2. **Warning** – Jn.1:13 we are not born(again) “**of blood**(blood relationship), **nor of the will of the flesh**(natural instinct), **nor of the will of man**(human volition), **but of God.**” [The birth of a child of God is **not** a natural birth; it is a **supernatural work of God** in regeneration]
- 3.10.3. **Encouragement** – Hope for all, who previously rejected Him.

<sup>4</sup>Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (G3661). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

- 3.11. **BUSINESS MEETING!** (15-26)
- 3.12. (18,19) Luke records **Judas' suicide** pretty graphically. {CSI Miami/Jerusalem}
- 3.12.1. Augustine harmonizes this with the other *hanging account* – by saying he hung himself & then fell.
- 3.13. (20) Peter said the H.S. spoke/predicted through David regarding Judas' death & replacement.
- 3.13.1. Interesting, The Holy Spirit guided him through prayerful reading of the Scriptures.
- 3.13.2. Order? – Continual devotion to **prayer** came 1<sup>st</sup> – along with a saturation of the **Scriptures** - & then came the **activity** that God desired for His people.
- 3.13.2.1. That is exactly the **path to power** that produced the **earth-shaking activity** of the apostolic church!
- 3.13.3. Once Charles Spurgeon was showing some visitors his church building. After visiting the large impressive **auditorium** he said, "Come, & I will show you **the heating apparatus.**" Expecting to see a dusty old room containing a broken-down furnace or possibly some clean, recently installed unit, his guests were surprised when he took them to a room where more than **400 members** were **kneeling in prayer**. The **power** of the church came from the **prayers** of God's people. It always has, & it always will.
- 3.14. Whether your opinion is that Peter made the right decision here or not is to me irrelevant, *because we don't know*. I think what is important is they went through the right process.
- 3.14.1. Some say it was wrong because they **limited God** to these 2 men.
- 3.14.2. Some say it was wrong because you **never hear** from this guy again.
- 3.14.3. Some say it was wrong because it was **Paul** that fulfilled this position.
- 3.14.4. Some say it was Peter being **precipitous**/rash again!
- 3.14.5. I like that they **take initiative** & seek to hear from the Spirit on the matter. And **how** they did it by going to the Scriptures & thru prayer.
- 3.14.5.1. **His Word** is still **a lamp to our feet & a light to our path!**
- 3.14.6. **Never hear from?** – Neither do we hear from Bartholomew or Matthew again after this.
- 3.14.7. **Paul?** – Paul could never have fulfilled this position because he didn't meet the criteria of vs.21,22.
- 3.14.8. **Peter being rash?** – It seems 10 days of "*prayer, praise, worship, & supplication*" was enough for 120 disciples to be in touch with the Father, to have known his will for Matthias!
- 3.14.9. **Besides** – If the wall of the New Jerusalem has 12 foundations & the names on those are the 12 apostles(see Rev.21:14) whose name would be no the 12<sup>th</sup>? (Judas still?)

- 3.14.10. **And** – at least if you're Matthias you don't have very big shoes to fill!  
 3.14.10.1. I'm curious how this position felt?  
 3.14.10.2. Hey, you're the one that got promoted to... **Judas' position!**?!  
 3.14.10.3. Or, Wow, you're an A-postle now!
- 3.15. **Matthias** – no previous nor subsequent reference to him, **but** he **must have accompanied with apostles all the time that the Lord Jesus went in & out among them**(21).  
 3.15.1. **The monument to Virginia's unknown Confederate dead bears this inscription: "Who they were none knows, what they were all know."**
- 3.16. **Cast their lots** – This was a recognized way of ascertaining God's will.<sup>5</sup>  
 3.16.1. Prov.16:33 says, "**The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord,**" which means "that what is attributed to chance, fate, luck, or coincidence is determined by God."  
 3.16.1.1. As Albert Einstein put it in objecting to quantum theory's use of probability mathematics, "**God does not play dice with the universe.**"  
 3.16.2. **Urim & Thummim**(Ex.28:30) - was probably a couple pebbles, different color or marking, that were placed in the High Priests pouch in his breastplate. [Aleph & Tav, or Alpha & Omega, "Lights & Perfections"]  
 3.16.3. **Other things used:** {wood pieces, pebbles, pieces of pottery}  
 3.16.3.1. [1] **Wooden pieces** placed in a bottle with a narrow neck so only one could come out at a time. Then bottle filled w/water, float to top & then poured out.  
 3.16.3.2. [2] Large opening & **drawn out** w/hand.  
 3.16.3.3. [3] Thrown like **dice**.  
 3.16.4. This is the **last time** it was used in the NT.  
 3.16.4.1. For it seemed to be a lower plane of spirituality.  
 3.16.4.2. **But**, the H.S. was not yet given; the bonds of OT tradition still understandably strong; after Pentecost the HS. would lead the apostles by perception & insight.
- 3.17. **We'll continue next week with *History's Most Powerful Prayer Meeting!***  
 3.18. Until next week: If you're neglecting **prayer**, you're probably traveling **too fast to hear** the sound of God's voice. If you're neglecting **prayer**, you're probably traveling **too fast to know** whether you are in the center of His will.  
 3.19. **Better slow down before, like the F-11 Tiger, you shoot yourself down!**

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<sup>5</sup> The Jewish NT Commentary