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**Casting Lots**  
in the  
**Old and New Testament.**

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

# Casting Lots in the Old and New Testament.

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## Topics.

- An overview and summary of the practise of casting a lot.
- Lots are cast over two goats for offerings.
- Israel's land was divided by lot.
- The LORD exposes Achan's sin against the LORD to Israel by lot.
- The people of Israel went against Gibeah by lot.
- Cities were given to the Levites by lot.
- Saul was chosen to be king by casting a lot.
- A lot is cast to discover if King Saul or his son Jonathan had sinned.
- The dwelling places for the Levites, was chosen by lot.
- The duties and services of the Levites were decided by casting lots.
- Lots were cast to choose who would live in Jerusalem.
- Haman cast lots to find a lucky day to exterminate the Jewish race.
- The LORD determines the outcome of the lot.
- Casting lots puts an end to quarrels.
- Tyre and Sidon cast lots for God's people Israel.
- Mariners cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.
- You will have none to cast the line by lot in the assembly of the LORD.
- Lots were cast for the honoured men of Niviveh.
- Zechariah the priest was chosen by lot to enter the temple.
- Roman soldiers cast lots for the garments of Jesus.
- The apostles cast lots to choose between Joseph and Matthias.

**INTRODUCTION:** since there are many Scriptures that speak of casting a lot and some readers may simply want a brief overview and summary of what casting a lot in the Bible actually means and if it is a lawful practise for Christians today this study begins with an overview of the sum total of conclusions taken from each verse in which the practise of casting lots is used.

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## AN OVERVIEW OF THE PRACTISE OF CASTING A LOT

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The word lot in the Old Testament comes from the Hebrew word (gowral) and means to be rough (as stone) it carries the idea of a small stone or pebble being used for the purpose of a lot to determine a portion or destiny. In the New Testament the word lot comes from the Greek word (Kleros) and refers to using bits of wood for the purpose of deciding a thing by chance. In some circumstances the easy way to decide a thing or stop a quarrel is to flip a coin. Following is a simple example of this principal. When my building partner and I decided to go our own way we had to divide the tools, we were good mates and did not want to upset each another so we prayed that God's will would be done and then grouped the tools together in pairs of equal value, then wrote our names

on opposite sides of a block of wood and then tossed it in the air. We agreed that whoever's name came up would have the first choice then we would alternate choosing from then on, it worked really well and stopped any tension that could have developed. In casting lots God's will was done because we both agreed to accept the outcome whatever way the block fell and both accepted the outcome of it as God's will. Proverbs states; "The lot puts an end to quarrels and decides between powerful contenders (Proverbs 18:18). Added to this it totally does away with man's bias or favouritism in choice making. Neither the people of Israel nor the people of other nations took the practice of casting lots lightly or entered into it flippantly. This is because the decision of the lot carried the nature of an oath, meaning its outcome was as binding as a promise before the LORD and as binding as a legal document. All parties involved in the judgment that is to be made by the lot concerning persons or things accepted the outcome in the same manner they would accept a binding legal document.

The book of proverbs states:

- The lot is cast into the lap, but it's every decision is from the LORD. (Proverbs 16:33).

This means that the decision of the lot is not made by any virtue of the lot itself, but by the will of God who guided the uncertain lot. The final decision of casting a lot before God is from God so it is not against God's will in things which cannot otherwise be easily distributed or when there is no apparent advantage or disadvantage whichever way the lot falls and when neither choice is preferred above another, such as an employer trying to choose between two equally qualified and suitable candidates for the same job. Neither is it against God's will when whatever way the lot falls is a good outcome, an example of this would be if Paul and Peter were attending a church meeting in the same house on the same Sunday at the same time. There would be nothing wrong with them flipping a coin to see which one of them was going to speak at the meeting and by faith accept the choice the lot made as God's will since no matter whether the coin fell in favour of Peter or Paul the outcome is a good result for those attending the meeting and for God's Kingdom.

Though God sometimes sanctioned this type of deciding in difficult cases generally speaking casting a lot to decide what one should do, is wrong, unless it is in a matter of indifference meaning either way the lot falls would be a good thing or perhaps in some extreme necessity where all other human means fail. In almost all scenarios of casting lots in Scripture it mattered not which way the lot fell since there was no right and wrong choice and there was no bad outcome whichever way it did fall. The choice to be made was not choosing between a good situation and a bad one or choosing between a good person and a bad person obviously no one would cast lots in such circumstance since the choice to be made for both situations would be clearly obvious. Though it mattered not which way the lot fell in most cases it did matter in the following six cases which way it did fall:

1. Exposing the sin of Achan (Joshua 7:13-15).
2. Choosing of Saul as King over Israel (1 Sam. 10:20-21).
3. Exposing the sin of Jonathan (1 Samuel 14:42).
4. Haman casting lots to destroy the Jewish nation. (Esther 3:7) (Esther 9:23-26).
5. Mariners casting lots and it falling on Jonah. (Jonah 1:7-8).
6. Zechariah (the father of John the Baptist) being chosen by lot to enter the temple on a particular day. (Luke 1:8-9).

On all six occasions it is very clear in Scripture that God was fully involved and in total control of all the events leading up to and surrounding the casting of the lot.

In the book of Proverbs, it is written:

- The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD. (Proverbs 16:33).

Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes wrote:

- I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favour to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. (Eccles. 9:11)

Casting a lot is an act of chance and we are told God is in full control of it and the following verse tells us that time and chance comes to all. Does this mean that all things that come upon our lives, is God's will for our lives? If one of our sons dies of a drug overdose or our daughter is raped or killed in a car crash is this God's will for our lives or is there another way to view such horrific and painful events. The word chance comes from the Hebrew word (*pega*) it carries the idea of something unplanned imposing and intruding or interrupting and invading a person's life and impacting upon it by accident or by violence and affecting it in a manner that was unexpected.

The principal of time and chance is different to the principal of casting a lot in that everyone involved in casting lots is not only fully aware of the two outcomes the lot may choose, they have also agreed to accept the outcome whatever that maybe. In contrast to this the principal of time and chance takes whoever it falls upon by surprise since it is not something they had expected or planned. Since there are many injustices in the mortal and corrupt world we live in and such things as rape, murder, adultery, stealing and oppression of the poor etc., are clearly not God's will certain troubles that may befall the faithful have to be given over to the principle of time and chance. This statement is supported by the following words of Solomon:

- Man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out. (Eccles. 8:17).

The following verses show that the faithful of the Old Testament lived by faith and not by sight, meaning they did not judge God according to their circumstance (good or bad) but by faith:

- Abraham the father of faith went by faith not knowing where he was going to live in the land of promise. He and many others went by faith because they were looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. These all acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth who desired a better country, a heavenly one. (Heb. 11:8-16).
- By faith Moses considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward and not being afraid of the anger of the king he by faith left Egypt for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. (Heb. 11:26-27).
- Many faithful families went about destitute, afflicted, mistreated wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth and of these God said, "The world was not worthy of them," and commends them for their faith. (Heb. 11:35-38).

Despite the troubles, hardships and sorrows these faithful men and women suffered they endured in faith knowing their citizenship was not of this world, but of the heavenly world to come and God commends them for their great faith. Though all faithful Christians who belong to the global body of Christ are promised eternal life no one no matter how faithful is promised a trouble-free life this side of Eternity.

This is why Paul tells us to walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7) meaning regardless of time and chance, good or bad we trust in the Lord looking toward a better country to come knowing that our citizenship is not of this world. The following verses show that the practise of casting lots was commonly used amongst the people of Israel and all other nations for various purposes.

### LOTS ARE CAST OVER TWO GOATS FOR OFFERINGS

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- **Leviticus 16:8-10.** Aaron shall *cast lots* over the two goats, *one lot* for the LORD and the *other lot* for Azazel. <sup>9</sup>And Aaron shall present the goat on which *the lot fell* for the LORD and use it as a sin offering <sup>10</sup>but the goat on which *the lot fell* for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.

This is casting lots over two goats so there is no wrong decision to be made, in fact by casting lots in this situation totally does away with man's bias or favouritism in choice making. Added to this either way the lot falls is a right choice since there is no right and wrong decision. Notice both goats are spoken of as having being chosen by the lot. This is because whichever goats name came up in the casting to the lot the other goat was chosen by default by the lot.

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### ISRAEL'S LAND WAS DIVIDED BY LOT

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- **Numbers 26:52-56.** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>53</sup>"Among these the land shall be divided for inheritance according to the number of names. <sup>54</sup>To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance; every tribe shall be given its inheritance in proportion to its list. <sup>55</sup>But the land shall be *divided by lot*. According to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. <sup>56</sup>Their inheritance shall be divided *according to lot* between the larger and the smaller." (Extra verses that speak of Israel inheritance being divided by lot) (Num. 33:54) (Num. 34:13) (Num. 36:2-3).

The land was to be divided up amongst the twelve tribes of Israel, so twelve portions of land were measured, the bigger portions of land were listed together and the smaller portions were listed together. They would then cast a lot amongst the larger tribes to decide which tribe gets which portion of the larger portions of land and then cast a lot amongst the smaller tribes to see which tribe gets the smaller portions of land. Doing it this way is fair for all and totally removes any favouritism. Added to this either way the lot falls is a right choice since there is no right and wrong decision.

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### THE LORD EXPOSES ACHAN'S SIN TO ISRAEL BY LOT

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- **Joshua 7:13-15.** The LORD tells Joshua to: Get up! Consecrate the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the LORD, God of Israel, "There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you." <sup>14</sup>In the morning therefore you shall be brought nearby your tribes. And the tribe that the LORD *takes by lot* shall come near by clans. And the clan that the LORD takes shall come near by households. And the household that the LORD takes shall come near man by man. <sup>15</sup>And he who is taken with the devoted things shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done an outrageous thing in Israel.

The story: the LORD told Joshua that Israel cannot stand before their enemies because they have lied and stolen some of the devoted things (Joshua 7:1-13). Then tells him to bring the twelve tribes before him and the LORD will take one of the tribes by lot and then from that tribe take one of their clans by lot and from that clan the LORD will take one of the households by lot and from that household bring the men before the LORD and from those men the LORD will take one man by lot. Joshua did as the LORD said and Achan was taken by lot. After Achan admits he had stolen the silver, gold and the devoted things Israel stoned his sons and

daughters, his oxen, donkeys, sheep and his tent and all that he was burned in the valley of Achan. (Joshua 7:1-26). In this scenario the LORD told Joshua to cast the lot to expose Achan and was in full control of all the circumstances surrounding the casting of the lot and the exposing of Achan by lot.

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## THE NINE AND ONE-HALF TRIBES INHERITANCE WAS BY LOT

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- **Joshua 14:1-2.** These are the inheritances that the people of Israel received in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun and the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the people of Israel gave them to inherit. <sup>2</sup>Their inheritance was by lot, just as the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses for the nine and one-half tribes.

Though the land of Israel was given to the tribes of Israel by lot it was done in a manner that was fair to all. Before they cast the lot they divided the land into portions. The larger portions were set aside for the larger tribes and the smaller portions for the smaller tribes. Then the lot was cast so that the larger tribes would inherit the larger portions and the smaller tribes the smaller portions. (Num. 26:52-56).

Doing it this way was fair for every tribe and totally removed any favouritism. Added to this either way the lot fell was a right choice since each tribe inherited a portion of land suited to the size of their tribe.

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## LOTS ARE CAST OVER SEVEN DIVISIONS OF LAND

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- **Joshua 18:2-6.** There remained among the people of Israel seven tribes whose inheritance had not yet been apportioned. <sup>3</sup>So Joshua said to the people of Israel, "How long will you put off going in to take possession of the land, which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you? <sup>4</sup>Provide three men from each tribe, and I will send them out that they may set out and go up and down the land. They shall write a description of it with a view to their inheritances, and then come to me. <sup>5</sup>They shall divide it into seven portions. Judah shall continue in his territory on the south, and the house of Joseph shall continue in their territory on the north. <sup>6</sup>And you shall describe the land in seven divisions and bring the description here to me. And *I will cast lots* for you here before the LORD our God.

Seven tribes remained with no portion of land allotted to them. So three men went throughout the land and drew a map of it divided into seven portions. Joshua then cast lots to see which of the seven tribes would inheritance each of the seven portions. Doing it this way is fair for all and totally removes any favouritism. Added to this either way the lot falls is a right choice since there is no right and wrong decision.

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## THE NINE AND ONE-HALF TRIBES INHERITANCE WAS BY LOT

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Though the land of Israel was given to the tribes of Israel by lot it was done in a manner that was fair to all. Before they cast the lot, they divided the land into portions. The larger portions were set aside for the larger tribes and the smaller portions for the smaller tribes. Then the lot was cast so that the larger tribes would inherit the larger portions and the smaller tribes the smaller portions. (Num. 26:52-56). Doing it this way was fair for every tribe and totally removed any favouritism. Added to this either way the lot fell was a right choice since each tribe inherited a portion of land suited to the size of their tribe.

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## SEVEN PORTIONS OF LAND ARE CHOSEN FOR SEVEN TRIBES OF ISRAEL BY LOT

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- **Joshua 18:10-11.** Joshua *cast lots* for them (the land) in Shiloh before the LORD and there Joshua apportioned the land to the people of Israel, to each his portion. <sup>11</sup>The lot of the tribe of the people of Benjamin according to its clans came up, and the territory allotted to it fell between the people of Judah and the people of Joseph.

**The story:** there remained among the people of Israel seven tribes whose inheritance had not yet been apportioned so Joshua sent men into the land to describe the land on paper and divide it into seven sections. So the men went and passed up and down in the land and wrote in a book a description of it by towns in seven divisions. Then Joshua cast lots for them before the LORD and apportioned the seven portions of land to the seven tribes of Israel. By apportioning the seven portions of land to the seven tribes in this manner prevented any argument and stopped anyone being accused of showing bias and favouritism.

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## SEVEN TERRITORIES OF LAND WERE APPORTIONED TO ISRAEL BY LOT

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Joshua chapter eighteen tells us that seven tribes of Israel had not yet been apportioned any land for their inheritance. Chapter nineteen give further detail of how the seven portions of land were apportioned to the seven tribes for their inheritance.

1. The first lot came out for the tribe of Benjamin thirty-one cities with their villages for their inheritance (Josh. 18:11-28).
2. The second lot came out for the tribe of Simeon seventeen cities with their villages for their inheritance. (Josh. 19:1-9).
3. The third lot came out for the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities with their villages for their inheritance. (Josh. 19:10-16).
4. The fourth lot came out for the tribe of Issachar sixteen cities with their villages for their inheritance. (Josh. 19:17-23).
5. The fifth lot came out for the tribe of Asher twenty-two cities with their villages for their inheritance. (Josh. 19:24-31).
6. The sixth lot came out for the tribe of Naphtali nineteen cities with their villages for their inheritance. (Josh. 19:32-39).
7. The seventh lot that came out for the tribe of Dan was lost so they fought against Leshem and their cities and villages became their inheritance. (Josh. 19:40-48).

When Israel had finished distributing the several territories of the land as inheritances, they gave Joshua the city Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim and he rebuilt the city and settled in it the dividing of Israel's land was finished. (Josh. 19:49-51). For further detail see the title: "Seven portions Land are chosen for Seven Tribes of Israel by Lot," in the previous section.

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## THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL WENT AGAINST GIBEAH BY LOT

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- **Judges 20:8-11.** All the people (of Israel) arose as one man, saying, "None of us will go to his tent, and none of us will return to his house. <sup>9</sup>But now this is what we will do to Gibeah: we will go up against it by lot, <sup>10</sup>and we will take ten men of a hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and a hundred of a thousand, and a thousand of ten thousand, to bring provisions for the people, that when they come they may repay Gibeah of Benjamin, for all the outrage that they have committed in Israel." <sup>11</sup>So all the men of Israel gathered against the city, united as one man.

**The story:** a Levite man and his concubine went to Gibeah (it belongs to the tribe of Benjamin) to spend the night. The leaders of Gibeah surrounded the house at night and not only attempted to kill him, but violated his concubine so violently that she died so the Levite man cut his concubine into pieces and sent her throughout all the country of Israel (Judges 20:1-6). When Israel heard the story, they were so horrified they assemble together as one nation against Gibeah. To choose who would go to war against Gibeah Joshua cast ten lots amongst groups of a hundred to choose ten men, he cast one hundred lots amongst groups of thousand to choose one-hundred men and cast one thousand lots amongst groups of ten thousand to choose a thousand men. By choosing who would go to war in this manner it prevented arguments and quarrels and no one could be accused of showing favouritism to anyone. It was perfectly OK to use the lot in this manner since it mattered not who the lot chose since all men were over twenty and able to go to war. Added to this they all came together for this very purpose.

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## CITIES WERE GIVEN TO THE LEVITES BY LOT

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- **Joshua 21:3-10.** By command of the LORD the people of Israel gave to the Levites the following cities and pasturelands out of their inheritance. <sup>4</sup>The *lot came out* for the clans of the Kohathites. So those Levites who were descendants of Aaron the priest *received by lot* from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin, thirteen cities. <sup>5</sup>And the rest of the Kohathites *received by lot* from the clans of the tribe of Ephraim, from the tribe of Dan and the half-tribe of Manasseh, ten cities. <sup>6</sup>The Gershonites *received by lot* from the clans of the tribe of Issachar, from the tribe of Asher, from the tribe of Naphtali, and from the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities. <sup>7</sup>The Merarites according to their clans received from the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad, and the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities. <sup>8</sup>These cities and their pasturelands the people of Israel *gave by lot* to the Levites, as the LORD had commanded through Moses. <sup>9</sup>Out of the tribe of the people of Judah and the tribe of the people of Simeon they gave the following cities mentioned by name, <sup>10</sup>which went to the descendants of Aaron, one of the clans of the Kohathites who belonged to the people of Levi; since *the lot fell to them first*.

The twelve tribes of Israel were to give the Levites cities from their portions of land. So, the twelve tribes cast lots to see which cities they would give from their twelve portions of land to the Levite priests. They gave by lot:

- To the sons of Aaron of the tribe of the Kohathites thirteen cities.
- To the rest of the Kohathites ten cities.
- To the Gershonites thirteen cities.
- To the Merarites twelve cities.

The twelve tribes chose by lot which of their cities they would give to the Levites, by doing it by lot Israel could not pick the worst of their cities to give to the Levites. Choosing the cities in this manner totally stopped anyone from being accused of favouritism or choosing the best cities for themselves which means that this method of deciding which cities to give was fair for all especially since there was no right and wrong choice to be made since it mattered not which city the lot fell upon.

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## SAUL WAS CHOSEN TO BE KING BY CASTING A LOTS

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- **1 Samuel 10:20-21.** Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was *taken by lot*. <sup>21</sup>He brought the tribe of Benjamin nearby its clans, and the clan of the Matrites was *taken by lot*; and Saul the son of Kish was *taken by lot*.

There was not a man amongst Israel more handsome and taller than Saul; his father's donkeys went missing so Saul goes to ask Samuel the prophet were his father's donkeys might be. Prior to this God had revealed to

Samuel that he would anoint Saul to be king over Israel. Saul stays a night with Samuel and Samuel tells Saul the donkeys had been found (1 Sam. 9:1-27). Samuel pours oil on Saul's head and tells him the LORD has anointed him to be King over Israel and he will reign over the people of the LORD and save them from their enemies. Later the Spirit of the LORD came upon Saul and he prophesied with a group of prophets. When Saul left Samuel, God gave him another heart. After this the LORD through Samuel tells all Israel they have rejected their God who saves them from all their calamities and have said to him, "Set a king over us." The LORD then tells them to present themselves before Him by their tribes.

- From the tribes of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot.
- From the tribe of Benjamin, the clan of the Matrites was taken by lot.
- From the clan of the Matrites Saul was taken by lot.

Then Samuel tells the people, Saul is the man the LORD has chosen to be King and all the people shout, "Long live the king!" (1 Sam. 10:1-24). It was in this manner that Saul was chosen by lot to be king. God had already chosen and anointed Saul to be king long before these three lots were cast so it is clear that in this scenario God was in full control of the three lots being cast since all three had to fall a predetermined way.

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### A LOT IS CAST TO DISCOVER IF KING SAUL OR HIS SON JONATHAN HAD SINNED

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- **1 Samuel 14:42.** Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan." And Jonathan was taken.

Saul in prayer asked the LORD if he should go against the Philistines, but the LORD would not answer him so he called all the leaders of Israel together to inquire whether it was some sin in Jonathan his son that was stopping the LORD from answering and if Jonathan had sinned he would be put to death. Prior to this and unbeknown to Jonathan Saul had put a curse on Israel if they ate that day and Jonathan had dipped his staff in some honey and eaten it. None of the leaders would tell Saul that Jonathan had eaten so Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan." And the lot chose Jonathan. Saul asked Jonathan what he had done and Jonathan said he tasted a little honey with the tip of his staff so Saul said, "God do so to me and more also; you shall surely die, Jonathan," but the people ransomed Jonathan, so that he did not die. (1 Samuel 14:37-45). This is amazing, the people wouldn't reveal Jonathans sin, yet the lot did. In this scenario the lot made the right choice, clearly God was in control of the lot which proves the words of the Proverbs, "The LORD determines the outcome of the lot." (Proverbs 16:33).

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### THE DWELLING PLACES FOR THE LEVITES WAS CHOSEN BY LOT

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- **1 Chronicles 6:54.** These are their dwelling places according to their settlements within their borders: to the sons of Aaron of the clans of Kohathites, for theirs was *the first lot*.
- **1 Chronicles 6:61.** To the rest of the Kohathites were *given by lot* out of the clan of the tribe, out of the half-tribe, the half of Manasseh, ten cities.
- **1 Chronicles 6:65.** They *gave by lot* out of the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin these cities that are mentioned by name.

The twelve tribes of Israel were to give the Levites cities from their portions of land. So, the twelve tribes cast lots to see which cities they would give from their twelve portions of land to the Levite priests.

The tribes of Israel gave by lot the Levites the following cities:

- To the sons of Aaron of the tribe of the Kohathites thirteen cities with their pasturelands for their inheritance. (1 Chronicles 6:54-60).
- To the rest of the Kohathites were given by lot ten cities for their inheritance. (1 Chronicles 6:61).
- To the Gershomites were given by lot thirteen cities for their inheritance. (1 Chronicles 6:62).
- To the Merarites were given by lot twelve cities for their inheritance. (1 Chronicles 6:63).

The twelve tribes chose by lot which of their cities they would give to the Levites, by doing it by lot Israel could not pick the worst of their cities to give to the Levites. Choosing the cities in this manner totally stopped anyone from being accused of favouritism or choosing the best cities for themselves which means that this method of deciding which cities to give was fair for all especially since there was no right and wrong choice to be made since it mattered not which city the lot fell upon.

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### THE DUTIES AND SERVICES OF THE LEVITES WERE DECIDED BY CASTING LOTS

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- **1 Chron. 24:5.** They divided them *by lot*, all alike, for there were sacred officers and officers of God among both the sons of Eleazar and the sons of Ithamar.
- **1 Chron. 24:7.** The *first lot* fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah.
- **1 Chron. 24:31.** These also, the head of each father's house and his younger brother alike, *cast lots*, just as their brothers the sons of Aaron, in the presence of King David, Zadok, Ahimelech, and the heads of fathers' houses of the priests and of the Levites.

Nadab and Abihu (two sons of Aaron) died with no children so Eleazar and Ithamar became the priests in their place with the help of sixteen heads of the sons of Eleazar and eight heads of the sons of Ithamar. Since more chief men were found among the sons of Eleazar than among the sons of Ithamar and there were sacred officers of God in both groups they organized and appointed the two groups their duties and services by casting lots before King David. They did the same for the rest of the Levites (1 Chron. 24:1-19, 31). By appointed their duties and services by this method it was fair for all and stopped arguments over who would do what duty and no one could be accused of showing favouritism.

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### ISRAEL CAST LOTS FOR THEIR DUTIES, SMALL AND GREAT, TEACHER AND PUPIL ALIKE

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- **1 Chronicles 25:8-9.** The number of them (musicians) along with their brothers, who were trained in singing to the LORD, all who were skillful, was 288. <sup>8</sup>And they cast lots for their duties, small and great, teacher and pupil alike. <sup>9</sup>The first lot fell for Asaph to Joseph; the second to Gedaliah, to him and his brothers and his sons, twelve.
- **1 Chronicles 26:13-14.** They cast lots by fathers' houses, small and great alike, for their gates. <sup>14</sup>The lot for the east fell to Shelemiah. They cast lots also for his son Zechariah, a shrewd counselor, and his lot came out for the north. (1 Chron. 26:13-14)

Amongst those set apart to play music and sing in the House of God there were chief and heads of people and common folk (small and great, teacher and pupil alike). Obviously, there is, a lot of services, duties and work to do outside of playing music and singing in the House of God to keep such a large group (288) together and functioning at its highest level. Amongst the work required to keep the group functioning at its peak there would be tasks that would be considered important and others that were not. Rather than give the more important jobs to the chiefs and teachers amongst the group and the menial, boring and tedious tasks to the common folk they cast lots to appoint to each person their duty, service

and work. In doing it this way everyone had a fair chance of getting the better duties, or services or jobs to be attended to rather than them all going to those who were considered the more important people. The divisions and duties, services and work of the gatekeepers were apportioned in the same manner by cast lots, (1 Chron. 26:1-12). In this circumstance it was perfectly safe to cast lots to choose who would do the normal everyday jobs to keep the groups functioning since no one needed any special skills to do them.

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### LOTS WERE CAST TO CHOOSE WHO WOULD BRING IN THE FIRE WOOD FOR THE ALTAR

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- **Nehemiah 10:34.** The priests, the Levites, and the people, have likewise cast lots for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, according to our fathers' houses, at times appointed, year by year, to burn on the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the Law.

The priest cast lots to choose who would bring in the firewood to burn on the altar. In this scenario casting lots is a very fair system since it not only stops any debate and argument over who is going to labour to collect the firewood, it also stops the menial job being assigned to the lowest or humblest of persons amongst the priest's which is a most common practise even in churches today.

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### LOTS WERE CAST TO CHOOSE WHO WOULD LIVE IN JERUSALEM

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- **Nehemiah 11:1-2.** Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. And the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem the holy city, while nine out of ten remained in the other towns. <sup>2</sup>And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.

Obviously not all the population of Israel could live in Jerusalem; all the leaders, rulers and priests did and the people blessed them for willingly choosing to do so. To choose from the remaining people of Israel who were to live in the city the population was divided into groups of ten and a lot was cast over each group of ten, whoever the lot fell on from that ten was chosen to live in Jerusalem. This method of choosing stopped potential arguments and stopped anyone from being accused of showing favouritism had the leaders been given the power to choose. In this scenario it mattered not which way the lot fell since there was no right or wrong choice and there was no bad outcome whichever way the lot fell. It is not choosing between a good situation and a bad one or choosing between a good person and a bad person obviously no one would cast lots in such circumstance since the choice to be made would be clearly obvious.

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### HAMAN CAST LOTS TO FIND A LUCKY DAY TO EXTERMINATE THE JEWISH RACE

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- **Esther 3:7.** In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, they cast lots) before Haman day after day; and they cast it month after month till the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.

The word Pur comes from the Hebrew word (Pur) and means a lot as a broken piece. In this context it carries the idea of utterly crushing and bringing to nothing it is used both here (Esther 3:7) and in (Esther 9:24). Haman seeking to destroy Mordecai and massacre and exterminate the entire Jewish race called together his diviners to cast lots, according to the superstition and custom of those ancient and eastern people to find what day and what month would be the luckiest to put his atrocious scheme into action. A lot was cast for each day of the month, and for each month in the year, and in some way or other one day and one month were indicated to them as being the most favourable. It was in the first month of the year when Haman began to cast lots, and the time for the execution

of the Jews was by these lots delayed till the last month of the year; which plainly proves the proverb, "though the lot be cast into the lap, yet the whole disposing thereof is from the Lord" (Proverbs 16:33). By this delay almost a whole year intervened between the design and its execution, which gave time for Mordecai and Queen Esther to turn Haman's evil plot against him.

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## HAMAN THE ENEMY OF THE JEWS CAST LOTS TO DESTROY THE JEWISH NATION

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- **Esther 9:23-26.** <sup>23</sup>The Jews accepted what they had started to do (keep the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> day of Adar as days of feasting) and what Mordecai had written to them. <sup>24</sup>For Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur (that is, cast lots), to crush and to destroy them. <sup>25</sup>But when it came before the king, he gave orders in writing that his evil plan that he had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. <sup>26</sup>Therefore they called these days Purim, after the term Pur.

It appears at some point Haman may have been in doubt as to whether he should destroy the Jewish nation or not and to confirm his doubt he cast a lot which confirmed his great desire to destroy the Jews, but the end result was the king favouring the Jews and condemning Haman to be hung at the gallows. This was an enemy of Israel casting the lot clearly it did not give him the right answer.

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## JOBS FRIENDS WILL CAST LOTS OVER THE FATHERLESS AND THEIR FRIENDS

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- **Job 6:27.** You would even cast lots over the fatherless, and bargain over your friend.

Job accuses his friends of being so corrupt that they would even cast lots over the fatherless and bargain over their friends if it was to their advantage

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## ROMAN SOLDIERS CAST LOTS FOR JESUS GARMENTS

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- **Psalm 22:16-18.** For dogs encompass me; (a company of evildoers) (v16) encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet— <sup>17</sup>I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; <sup>18</sup>they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

The word lot in this verse comes from the Hebrew word (gowral) and means to be rough (as stone) it carries the idea of a small stone or pebble being used for the purpose of a lot to determine a portion or destiny. David in this Psalm echoes the Roman soldiers dividing the garments of Jesus by casting lots while he hung bleeding and suffering on the cross.

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## THE LORD DETERMINES THE OUTCOME OF THE LOT

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- **Proverbs 16:33.** The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

The ancient practice of casting a lot into the lap was to throw the lot into the gathered folds of a robe and then draw them out this is what is meant by the words, "The lot is cast into the lap." But it is not limited to this since it could be cast into a hat, cap, urn, or whatsoever he has in his lap from where the lot is taken out. The casting of lots was used in choosing officers (civil or ecclesiastical) in dividing inheritances, and determining doubtful cases; and making up differences, and putting an end to strife and contentions, which otherwise could not be done. Neither the people

of Israel nor the people of other nations took the practice of casting lots lightly or entered into it flippantly. This is because the decision of the lot carried the nature of an oath, meaning its outcome was as binding as a promise before the LORD or a legal document. The whole decision or judgment of the lot is of the LORD; all parties involved in the judgment that is to be made by the lot concerning persons or things accepted the outcome in the same manner they would accept a binding legal document.

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## CASTING LOTS PUTS AN END TO QUARRELS

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- **Proverbs 18:18.** The lot puts an end to quarrels and decides between powerful contenders.

When a decision is to be made that could result in quarrels and arguments an easy way to make that decision is to cast lots. This is a legitimate way to make decisions when there is no bad outcome whatever way the lot falls and all parties involved agrees to accept whatever choice the lot falls on. An example of this would be if Peter and Paul happened to be in the same home church on the same Sunday at the same time there would be nothing wrong with them casting a lot to see which one would speak since the outcome of the lot is good no matter who it chooses. Another example is when things have to be divided up between two people there is nothing wrong with putting the things together in pairs of equal value and then casting lots to see who gets each item.

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## THE LORD HAS CAST THE LOT FOR WILD ANIMALS AND BIRDS

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- **Isaiah 34:16-17.** Seek and read from the book of the LORD: Not one of these (wild animals and birds) shall be missing; none shall be without her mate. For the mouth of the LORD has commanded, and his Spirit has gathered them. <sup>17</sup>He has *cast the lot* for them; his hand has portioned it out to them with the line; they shall possess it forever; from generation to generation they shall dwell in it.

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12

This chapter begins with all nations being called to hear the word of the LORD and being told that He is enraged against all the nations and devoted them to destruction (v1-2). The focus of this chapter is God bringing judgment upon all the corrupt nobles, kings and princes and the wicked people of Edom (v5-6). It is upon the Day of the LORDS vengeance against Edom because of their violence against Israel (8-9). The LORD is saying, though all the corrupt nobles, kings and princes and the wicked of Edom will be destroyed, the wild animals and wild birds will always remain in their land with their mate from generation to generation.

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## TYRE AND SIDON CAST LOTS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE ISRAEL

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- **Joel 3:1-4.** or behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land, <sup>3</sup>and have *cast lots* for my people, and have traded a boy for a prostitute, and have sold a girl for wine and have drunk it. <sup>4</sup>"What are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia?"

The people of Tyre and Sidon were casting lots over the children of Israel who they held in captivity and then then trading them for profit to others to use as sex slaves. Even today next to weapons of war and drug smuggling human trafficking is the third biggest black market trade in the world.

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## EDOM WAS LIKE THOSE WHO CAST LOTS FOR JERUSALEM

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- **Obadiah 1:10-11.** Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. <sup>11</sup>On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them.

This is a vision concerning Edom (v1, 6, 8) The LORD is saying though Edom soars aloft like the eagle He will bring him down, because they were like those who cast lots for Jerusalem. When the fierce and cruel armies of Babylon invaded Jerusalem and burnt the people's homes and destroyed the Temple of God and led the inhabitants of Jerusalem in chains captive to Babylon the people of Edom mocked and scorned the prisoners.

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## MARINERS CAST LOTS AND THE LOT FELL ON JONAH

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- **Jonah 1:7-8.** The mariners said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.

God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and speak against it, but Jonah fled from the presence of God on a boat to Tarshish so God caused a great storm to come up upon the sea that threatened to sink the ship. The mariners were extremely afraid, and prayed to their gods while Jonah was fast asleep. The captain woke Jonah and said, "Perhaps your God will give a thought to us that we might not perish and told Jonah to pray to his God. (Jonah 1:1-6). So the sailors cast lots to find out on whose account this mighty storm had come upon them and the lot fell on Jonah. He tells them he is a Hebrew and fears the LORD the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land and the mariners were exceedingly afraid because he had previously told them he was fleeing from the presence of God. (Jonah 1:7-10). It is almost certain they feared because they had heard of the mighty miracles and wonders Israel's God had done and being professional mariners they would have been aware of the weather conditions prior to sailing so it is most likely that the day was a day of calm on the sea and blue sky and all of a sudden a mighty storm appears out of nowhere which would explain why they knew that this was no ordinary storm especially since they would have experienced many storms throughout their fishing careers. This idea is supported by the fact as soon as Jonah was thrown overboard the storm immediately stopped.

Though these sailors believed in foreign gods they were good men, we know this because when Jonah told them to hurl him overboard and save their lives they initially refused and tried to row even harder to get to the shore, but the storm increased so they had no choice, but to throw him overboard, but even then they had great grief and guilt in doing it so much so they offered a sacrifice to the LORD. Once Jonah was thrown into the sea the storm immediately stopped. God appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah up and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. (Jonah 1:1-17). The sailors cast a lot and it chose Jonah from amongst all the men on the ship. Clearly God was in control of every event prior to casting the lot, during casting he lot and after the lot was cast.

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## YOU WILL HAVE NONE TO CAST THE LINE BY LOT IN THE ASSEMBLY OF THE LORD

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- **Micah 2:5.** Therefore you will have none to cast the line by lot in the assembly of the LORD.

Micah is alluding to the manner of dividing the land for Israel's inheritance during Joshua's time. None to cast the line by lot means, none will ever return to this land, to claim an inheritance and see it allotted by line, and given to them to possess it. The whole nation in general, the priests, nobles, the rulers have become so corrupt and oppressive and the towns

folk so wicked that they will no longer be counted as the congregation of the LORD to claim their portion among God's people. Their sins are so great they have provoked God to punish them according to their wicked ways. The LORD used Babylon as his servant (Jer. 25:8-9) to bring this punishment upon the people of Judah and the inhabitants of the Jerusalem. They were taken captive for seventy years by the fierce and cruel armies of Babylon and their land was laid waste. Many of the Jews were scattered in the world amongst all nations and so there was no need of any person to be employed in such service as dividing the land by lines. This is what Micah means by the words, "They will have none to cast the line by lot in the assembly of the LORD." Those who are corrupt and oppress others for their own gain will have no part in the Kingdom of God.

**This entire chapter:** is directed toward God's people, it is a testimony of how corrupt they have become. God is basically saying, "Woe to those who devise wickedness and think plans of evil, take fields and seize family homes for their inheritance and oppress others for their own gain they will have none to cast the line by lot, meaning even if they cast lots amongst their midst it would not find one righteous person to fall upon nor would the lot find anyone to defend them (especially on the day of the LORD'S judgment).

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### LOTS WERE CAST FOR THE HONOURED MEN OF NIVIVEH

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- **Nahum 3:10.** Niviveh became an exile; she went into captivity; her infants were dashed in pieces at the head of every street; for her honored men *lots were cast*, and all her great men were bound in chains.

Niviveh was taken captive and those who took them prisoners cast lots for the great and honoured men of Niviveh, perhaps to torture and kill them or to learn from the rulers, the successful traders and the wise etc. Obviously in this situation it mattered not who the lot fell upon.

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14

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### ZECHARIAH THE PRIEST WAS CHOSEN BY LOT TO ENTER THE TEMPLE

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- **Luke 1:8-9.** Now while he (Zechariah) was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, <sup>9</sup>according to the custom of the priesthood, he was *chosen by lot* to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

Lots were cast amongst the priesthood, because some parts of the sacred service were more honourable than others. Many of the functions and the distribution of services and duties for the priests and Levites during the week was determined by lot and would set the order of the courses of rotation for one week. (Many other sorts of service were settled in this same manner). The Jewish writers inform us that it was customary for the priests to divide their daily task by lot. Some writers say that lots were cast to see:

- Who should cleanse the altar from the previous service?
- Who should slay the sacrifice and sprinkle the blood?
- Who should remove the ashes from the innermost altar?
- Who should cleanse the candlestick and attend to the bread?

Who should sprinkle the incense on the hot coals in the Holy Place while the smoke of it ascended making intercession for the people. Sprinkling the incense on the hot coals in the Holy Place was the most distinguished part of the service and it was for this service the lot chose Zachariah at this time. Luke tells us while Zachariah was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense

there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense who not only told him God has heard his prayer and his barren wife Elizabeth will bear him a son, and he will call his name John, but also told him that John will be filled with the Holy Spirit and be great before the Lord and make ready for the Lord a people prepared. (Luke 1:8-17). Clearly God was in control of the casting of lots amongst the priesthood on this particular day.

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## ROMAN SOLDIERS CAST LOTS FOR THE GARMENTS OF JESUS

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- **Matthew 27:35.** When they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. (Mark 15:24) (Luke 23:34) (John 19:24).

The word lot in this verse comes from the Greek word (Kleros) and refers to using bits of wood for the purpose of deciding a thing by chance. Roman soldiers divided the garments of Jesus by casting lots while he hung bleeding and suffering on the cross.

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## THE APOSTLES CAST LOTS TO CHOOSE BETWEEN JOSEPH AND MATTHIAS

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- **Acts 1:21-26.** So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup>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." <sup>23</sup>And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. <sup>24</sup>And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen <sup>25</sup>to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." <sup>26</sup>And they *cast lots* for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

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15

The faithful in the upper room (v13) agreed that there were two men who were equally qualified to replace Judas so either way the lot fell would have been OK. This was not a situation in which they had one man who would be perfect for the position and another who would not, no-one nor was it a choice between one bad man and one good man, no one with any wisdom would leave that kind of decision to what would appear to be chance, especially when the outcome would certainly not be God's will if the lot did fall upon the wrong man. Added to this no one would need to cast a lot should that be the case since the right decision to make would be very obvious. By doing it this way it avoided either man being chosen from bias and anyone from being accused of showing favouritism.

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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