

The Casting of Lots in the Bible

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What does the Bible say about the casting of lots?

What was the purpose and is there a scriptural reason today to cast lots? The casting of lots in the Bible is similar to throwing dice or drawing straws. It served two godly purposes:

- Revealing God's Will to Prophet or Priest: but this ended along with the Levitical priesthood.

Heb. 7:12

- Encouraging Humility: as it causes contentions to cease and keeps the mighty apart.

Prov. 18:18

[To hear this topic of lots discussed, just click on over to kgov.com/casting.]

On the occasions when the topic of casting lots arises, it seems that Bible students tend to recognize the use of lots in sacred history to reveal God's will, but that we tend to overlook the other more common use of lots.

To Reveal God's Will (commonly taught)

To Replace Judas: "And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles." Acts 1:26.

Choosing King Saul: See 1 Sam. 10:20-24. (And although less obvious, see also 1 Sam. 16:7-12 about David).

To Exercise Humility (commonly neglected)

Difficult Decision: "Casting lots causes contentions to cease, and keeps the mighty apart."
Prov. 18:18

Priest's Order of Service: "Thus they were divided by lot, one group as another, for there were officials of the sanctuary and officials of the house of God..." 1 Chron. 24:5-19. Thus priestly families who lived in the Galilee did not have to argue about who would have to travel to Jerusalem in the cold of winter or in the heat of summer. And 1,000 years later, the priests were still casting lots, for...

Zacharias in the Temple: "according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord." Luke 1:9

Governmental Decisions: After the rebuilding of the wall, to repopulate their capital city, the Israelites "cast lots to bring one out of ten to dwell in Jerusalem..." Neh. 11:1

Inheritance and the Tribal Division of the Promised Land: "But the land shall be divided by lot; they shall inherit according to the names of the tribes of their fathers." Num. 26:52-56

Casting Lots Shows Humility before God and Man: "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord." Prov. 16:33 Some might assume that this passage provides a mechanism to guarantee supernatural information. However, hermeneutically, by looking at [the immediate and the wider context](#), that assumption does not hold up. The immediate context has nothing to do with special revelation but it is about one's heart attitude, for the preceding verse is about anger and the

following one is about strife. And book-wide, [Proverbs](#) does not deal with supernatural manifestations but with topics like self-control, understanding, judgment, wisdom, and equity.

Thus, as to which brother inherits their father's car, or their father's truck, if God were to come down and arbitrate, His answer would be that He doesn't care which man gets which, but he cares about the condition of each man's heart. For a man who's father had died went to Jesus and asked a question about inheritance, but he would have received the same answer if he had merely cast lots:

“Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?” And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”
Luke 12:[13-15](#)

The man could have gotten this answer from the Lord, or he could have arrived at the exact same result if he were willing to cast lots, for God cares more about the attitude of your heart than whether you or your brother inherits your father's car or his truck.

Sinful Casting of Lots: Like most things, the casting of lots too could be used for good or for evil.

The Roman soldiers “cast lots” for Christ’s robe: Mat. 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; and John 19:24.

Feast of Purim: The book of [Esther](#) explains that Purim is the Akkadian word for [casting] lots. So the Jewish feast of Purim celebrates the defeat of Haman’s plan which used the casting of lots to pick the day on which the Gentiles throughout the empire were to to kill the Jews. Esther 3:7

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