

A WALK TO THE CROSS (And Beyond)
Choosing A Replacement For Judas...Did They Miss God?
Acts 1:12-26

It's an encouraging truth that our *sovereign, omnipotent* God works His will *through men*. His *providential control* over events takes into consideration all the acts of the *human will* ...even those opposed to Him (**Jonah**). Scripture is filled with examples of God *using humans* to *accomplish* His *purposes*:

- **Moses** leading **Israel** out of **Egypt** and *Egyptian bondage*.
- **Joshua** leading **Israel** across the **Jordan River** and into the **Promised Land**.
- **Gideon's army of 300**, *defeating* the **Midianites**.

Even in God's work of *redemption*, He has called certain men to *significant participation*. Men have always been used throughout the unfolding drama of the kingdom of God.

After His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ chose the apostles to proclaim His truth and to continue His work of taking the Gospel to the world. **Luke** wrote regarding this...

"We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead."

~Acts 10:39-42

As the book of **Acts** began, Jesus made sure that the apostles were *equipped* with the necessary resources to *actuate their calling*...the *presence* and *power* of the **Holy Spirit**.

So, the apostles aren't at a *crisis of belief*...they're dealing with a *crisis of response*. Keep in mind...they *haven't understood*, nor have they *comprehended* how God *has been, and is at work*.

- *They didn't understand why Jesus had to go to the cross.*
- *They didn't believe at first that He had resurrected...that He had risen from being dead.*
- *They waywardly wondered during the 40 days following His resurrection...even though they had seen Him on several occasions.* They had no direction for their lives.
- *Even though they had seen many convincing proofs of Jesus' resurrection, they still didn't know or understand God's plan of redemption...the forgiveness of sin.*
- *They had decided to return to fishing.*
- *They had asked if Jesus was going to establish His earthly kingdom at this time...still a horizontal focus.*
- *They had just witnessed His ascension into heaven.*

Now, even though, they *haven't understood*, nor have they *comprehended* how God *is at work*...they are moving forward with choosing a replacement for **Judas**.

I. THE RETURN: (vs. 12-14)...

In His *final charge* to the apostles *before His ascension*, Jesus had commanded them to wait in Jerusalem for *divine empowerment* that was to be given them in the *coming of the Holy Spirit* (**Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4**). It was necessary for them to wait, because Jesus had made clear that the Spirit *could not be given until He returned to the Father*.

"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."

~John 16:7

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers (vs. 12-14)...

A Sabbath day's journey...This was the *maximum distance* one was *permitted to travel on the Sabbath* under *rabbinic law*. It was fixed at *2,000 cubits (3,000 feet)*, or *between one-half and three-quarters of a mile* (**Exodus 16:29; Numbers 35:5**). That distance was derived... according to tradition...from *Israel's encampment* during the *forty years of wilderness wanderings*. The *farthest tents* were held to have been *2,000 cubits from the tabernacle*.

They went up to the upper room where they were staying...This must have been part of a large house, since it *accommodated 120 people* (vs. 15). It very well may have been the same *upper room* where the *Last Supper* had been celebrated...and where Jesus had *appeared to the apostles after His resurrection*.

These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer...This expresses the *spiritual unity* that characterized the early *fellowship of the church*...and it's a strong expression, denoting *persistence in prayer*.

Along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers...The women no doubt included

Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary and Martha, and Salome, among others.

Jesus' brothers were his *biological siblings...the children born of Mary and Joseph*. **Mark 6:3** gives their names... **James, Joses, Judas, and Simon**. **James and Judas (Jude)** figure prominently in the New Testament. **James** was the *first head* of the *Jerusalem church* (**Acts 12:17; Acts 15:13-ff**) and *author of the epistle* that bears his name. **Judas** wrote *the epistle of Jude*.

As recently as *eight months earlier*, **John 7:5** records...

"For not even His brothers were believing in Him."
~John 7:5

Their conversions aren't recorded in Scripture, but we can surmise that **James** was *converted* when *his half-brother* appeared to him *after the resurrection* (**I Corinthians 15:7**). It was probably through **James** that the rest became *believers*. But what Scripture and history does record is that they became *devoted followers* of Christ, whom they *acknowledge as Lord, God, and Savior*.

II. THE REMEMBERING: (vs. 15-19)...

At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry." (vs. 15-17)...

A gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together...From that small nucleus *the Church was born*...and spread throughout the **Roman Empire**.

At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren ...and said...Peter, under the *inspiration of the Holy Spirit*, shared that what Judas had done...he had *fulfilled* Old Testament *prophecy* as *foretold* by David in the Psalms.

Peter is using the most compelling proof...*Scripture*...to reassure his hearers that Judas' *defection* and *betrayal* were all *part of God's plan*.

(Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) (vs. 18-19)...Since this field was *acquired with the money paid to Judas by the Jewish leaders* (Matthew 27:3-10), Luke refers to it as *blood money*. That is why it was named Hakeldama...*Aramaic* for Field of Blood. It was located south of Jerusalem near where the Valley of Hinnom intersects with the Kidron Valley.

Evidently the tree Judas chose to *hang himself overlooked a cliff*...and either the *rope* or the *branch* must have *broken* under the weight of his body, plunging him to a gruesome death on the rocks below.

III. THE REASONING: (vs. 20-22)...

For it is written in the book of Psalms, “Let his homestead be made desolate, and let no one dwell in it”; and, “Let another man take his office” (vs. 20)...

Psalm 55:12-15 clearly *predicts the betrayal*. Psalm 69:25 is the source of the *prediction of his removal from office*. Psalm 109:8 speaks of his *replacement*.

Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection” (vs. 21-22)...

This is where it gets interesting. Some have argued that Peter and the apostles were *presumptuous in choosing a replacement* for Judas. That Jesus never commanded them...nor ever gave them instructions to do so. Others see it as *God working through them*. Nothing in this passage makes it clear as to who is right.

In moving forward in choosing a replacement, they list the *requirements* that they felt were needed for *apostleship*. He would need to have had *witnessed the Lord's earthly ministry*...beginning with His *baptism*, and culminating at His *ascension*. And he must also *have seen the resurrected Christ*, since all the apostles were to be *personal eyewitnesses* of the *risen Lord*.

IV. THE REPRESENTATIVE: (vs. 23-26)...

So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles (vs. 23-26)...

Notice that they did everything according to how they had been taught to discern the will of God.

- *They were devoting themselves to prayer* (vs. 14).

- *They were responding to what they understood Scripture taught (vs. 20; Psalm 55:12-15; Psalm 69:25; Psalm 109:8).*
- *They examined the two candidates to make sure that they were Scripturally qualified (vs. 21-22).*
- *They prayed specifically for the Lord to make known which of the two men should occupy this ministry and apostleship (vs. 24-25).*
- *They cast lots to determine the sovereign will of God (Exodus 28:30; Proverbs 16:33; Jonah 1:7). By the way, this is the last time in the Bible that casting of lots were said to be used to determine God's will.*

So...who is the *twelfth apostle*...Matthias or Paul?

The mentioning of the *twelve apostles* in Scripture...

“And Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’”

~Matthew 19:28

“And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

~Revelation 21:14

Paul gives a *defense* of his *apostleship*.

“Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.”

~I Corinthians 9:1-2

Paul typically introduced himself, or addressed himself, as an **apostle** (**Romans 1:1; I Corinthians 1:1; II Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; I Timothy 1:1; I Timothy 2:7; II Timothy 1:1; II Timothy 1:11; Titus 1:1**)...*“Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God...”*

“The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.”

~II Corinthians 12:12

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- We don't do things **FOR** God. He works **THROUGH** us. God isn't looking for our *creativity*...He's looking for our *obedience*.
- Don't get **AHEAD** of God. **WAIT** on Him.
- Waiting on God isn't **PASSIVE**...it's **ACTIVE**. He has already given us *instructions, commands,* and *commissions* of what we are to do until He returns.
- Be in a position to **HEAR** God when He speaks...then **OBEY** Him. Have ears to hear what the Spirit has to say. Be in a position...holiness, walk in righteousness, live by faith, deal with sin God's way, etc.