

The Book Of Acts: Verse-By-Verse

Acts 1:23-26

The prerequisites that Peter listed for the person who would take Judas' place among the Twelve Disciples: 1. Someone who had been with the rest of the apostles throughout Jesus' entire ministry – from John's baptism to His Ascension. 2. Someone who was an eyewitness of Jesus' resurrection.

Choosing A Replacement: vv. 23-26

The 120 nominated two men. Certainly, they could have nominated a larger list, but they decided to present only two – Barsabbas and Matthias.

Once they selected them, they simply reconvened their prayer meeting and asked the Lord to show them what to do: "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."

The Prayer And The Outcome:

1. Only God Knows Everyone's Heart.

Both men had all the outward requirements that had been stated. Most likely, the core apostles knew each of the men well – even though they hadn't been part of their original number.

A reminder: Samuel anoints a new king: When Jesse lined up his sons, Samuel looked them over. More than once, he thought to himself, "This must be the one". But each time, God said "No, not this one."

What God said to Samuel when he was ready to anoint Eliab: "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

God looks on the heart, but we look on the outward. Only God really knows everyone's heart. The apostles were wise enough to know that, so they asked for his guidance.

2. The Apostles Believed That God Had Already Chosen Judas' Replacement.

"Show which one of these two you have chosen." The original language strongly suggests that they are asking **Jesus** to reveal His choice for Judas' replacement.

Acts 1:2 tells us Jesus had chosen the original 12 to be His apostles. So, now, they are asking him, "Lord, which one have you chosen?"

We know that the normal pattern is for us to pray to the Father, in the Son's name, but here they are asking Jesus to show them his choice for Judas' replacement. This reminds us that they saw Jesus as God. They prayed to Jesus because they understood he was God.

3. They Chose An Old Testament Method

After praying for the Lord's direction, the disciples chose an Old Testament method for securing God's will. "Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles."

I've always wondered why they reverted to this formula for making such an important decision. The practice of casting lots is a very Old Testament method. It occurred primarily during the division of Canaan under Joshua's leadership. See: Joshua 14-21; Numbers 26:55

- Israel's High Priest and the Urim and Thummim.

The Hebrew word “Urim” means “lights”. This suggests that the Urim and Thummim were some types of reflective or semi-transparent crystals, gems, or rocks.

The High Priest carried these stones in a pouch or pocket on his breastplate. See: Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8. These stones were used to reveal the “judgment” or decision (“mishpat”) of the Lord.

Proverbs 16:33 uses the same word, “mishpat” when it says, “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.”

More on casting lots: At times, the duties and functions of the Temple priests were decided by casting lots. See: 1 Chronicles 24:5, 31; 25:8-9; 26:13-14.

“... The lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.”

This is the last time in the New Testament that “casting lots” is mentioned. After the Day of Pentecost, Jesus’ followers began depending upon the Holy Spirit for his guidance. With the selection of Matthias the original number of disciples – and soon to be apostles – was complete.

- **What Happened To Matthias?**

According to Church tradition: Matthias probably started his preaching ministry in Judea, but eventually went to an area of the Roman Empire called, Colchis. This correlates with the modern Republic of Georgia on the Black Sea.

Matthias was a strong evangelistic apostle. He was martyred - like so many of the original Twelve. A marker placed in the ruins of the Roman fortress at Gonio is the reported burial site of Matthias.

- **The Judas Question:** v. 24

“Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this

apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs."

"Was Judas somehow predestined to betray Jesus?" A foundational statement by R.C. Sproul in his Commentary on Mark:

"It is not as though God in His sovereignty coerced Judas to carry out the evil act of betraying Jesus. Rather, the sovereign God worked His will in and through the choices of His creatures.

Judas did exactly what Judas wanted to do, but God brought good out of evil, redemption out of treachery." We cannot blame God for our sin. We sin because we want to do what is wrong."

Two points: 1. God never causes anyone to sin. 2. God, in his foreknowledge works everything to his intended goals – even the willful sins of humans.

Judas Was Chosen As An Apostle:

The Gospels tell us that Jesus chose his 12 disciples/apostles after a night of prayer. (Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-19) Jesus specifically chose the men God revealed. What did Judas have in common with the other apostles?

1. Judas was called to be a core disciple. 2. Judas had the same relationship to the Holy Spirit as the other eleven.

Delving into the second point a little deeper. Because the Holy Spirit had not yet indwelt any of the 12, Judas had the same relationship to Him as the others. While the Spirit empowered Judas to be a disciple, He didn't indwell him, but he related to him the same way he related to the other apostles.

So what happened? I think we have some clues in the Gospels.

John 12:6 gives us one clue: "... As keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it." – John 12:4-6. Judas already

had a weakness that was perhaps part of his personality. Clearly, some level of greed was operating in Judas' life – even though he was chosen to be an apostle. Luke 22:36: Greed is again cited as Luke tells us how Judas sought out the chief priests and offered to betray Jesus for money.

Judas was dealing with temptations stemming from greed. He may have been dissatisfied with Jesus' refusal to mount a campaign against the Romans, but clearly greed was the source of his problems.

It wasn't a large step from greed to betrayal. Up to that point, the temptations were external, but as Luke puts it, at the critical moment, "Satan entered his heart" and tipped the scales.

Perhaps, all along, Judas' failed to develop a vibrant relationship with Jesus. It left him vulnerable to Satan's attacks and eventually led to his betrayal of Jesus and his taking of his own life.

- **The Larger Story:**

Judas had the same opportunities to listen to the Spirit as the other apostles. Instead of responding to those appeals, he chose to harden his heart. God didn't need to make a "bad guy" to betray his Son. As one bible teacher put it, "Bad guys make themselves."

An Old Testament example: Pharaoh.

Exodus 9:12: "**...The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh...**" Did God make Pharaoh's heart proud and resistant to God's will? No, throughout the Exodus story Egypt's king hardened his own heart. See: Exodus 7:13.

At the end of a series of self-hardenings we read that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. God brought to a head what Pharaoh had been doing for many months.

I see the same thing in Judas' situation. We aren't sure exactly what

Judas' wanted, but he chose his own path. Yes, there were prophecies about his betraying Jesus and taking his own life – but as one bible scholar put it:

“There were prophecies concerning his betrayal and death, but these merely formed a path. It was of his own free will that he decided to follow it. He just chose wrongly for himself.”

Although we cannot fully understand how all of this happened, Judas was not predestined or forced by God to play the role of the betrayer so that God's plan for Jesus' sacrifice could be fulfilled. That would make God an accomplice in evil.

Let me read R.C. Sproul's statement once more: *"It is not as though God in His sovereignty coerced Judas to carry out the evil act of betraying Jesus. Rather, the sovereign God worked His will in and through the choices of His creatures."*

Judas did exactly what Judas wanted to do, but God brought good out of evil, redemption out of treachery." We cannot blame God for our sin. We sin because we want to do what is wrong."