

**Replacing Judas****Acts 1:12—25**

Jesus Christ had just ascended into heaven and the 11 Disciples had gone back to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus had commanded them to do (Acts 1:4). However, before the Holy Spirit would come, it was important to pick a replacement Disciple to take Judas' place after he betrayed Jesus and killed himself. The Kingdom program could not continue without this important step.

**The upper room**

After Jesus ascended, they traveled a Sabbath day's journey back to Jerusalem. The Sabbath day's journey was not a distance spelled out in the Mosaic Law, but was a distance set by the Jewish religious leaders. They defined it as 2,000 cubits, or a little less than a half-mile. They arrived at this rule from such passages as Exodus 16:29 (...let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.), Numbers 35:5 (a distance from outside the city gates) and Joshua 3:4 (the space between the people and the Ark of the Covenant). God commanded that they do no work, and the Jewish leaders defined what they thought God meant. The Sabbath Day's journey is used merely as a measure of distance in the Bible and does not indicate that it is part of the Mosaic Law.

The 11 Disciples, along with well over a hundred other people, were gathered together in the upper room. It's possible that this was the same room where Jesus had the Passover meal with His Disciples just before being arrested and put to death. However, since the Greek word used in Acts by Luke is different than the word used for the upper room mentioned in the book of Luke, it was probably a different room.

**Peter, the leader**

Peter had been given the role as leader of the Disciples. We see this in Matthew 16 when Jesus said He would give Peter the keys to the Kingdom. Much has been made of this by Christendom in general, but understanding what this means requires Scripture be carefully read and rightly divided. First, most people think this Kingdom IS heaven when in reality it is OF heaven. This Kingdom will be the Kingdom that comes out of heaven and is established on this earth with Christ as King. Peter and the 11 Disciples will be ruling in this Kingdom from the temple, the Father's house (Luke 22:30; John 14:1—2).

Peter was not originally going to be given this authority in the Kingdom. The religious leaders of Israel were first in line to continue their leadership of Israel into the promised Millennial Kingdom. However, having rejected their Messiah (Mark 8:31; Luke 7:30; 9:22), they were ineligible to even be a part of the Kingdom (Matthew 21:43; Luke 12:32). This is why Jesus selected the 12 Disciples.

If we back up about 50 days previous to this, we see Peter denying that he even knew who Jesus was (Matthew 26:75; Luke 22:61). The Disciples were a scared and seemingly unqualified group of men when viewed from the events surrounding Christ's crucifixion. Peter was the most adamant in stating he would never turn his back on the Lord (Matthew 26:33) but couldn't even admit he knew Jesus when questioned by a servant girl (Luke 22:54—57).

It's interesting to read in Scripture how those who deny Jesus have no place in the Kingdom, and will be denied by Jesus before the Father (Matthew 10:33). When Peter denied Jesus, Jesus then should have denied him (the same Greek word is used). However, instead of being denied, Peter was affirmed and brought back into the fold by being told to "feed My sheep," a reference to Peter taking care of the lost sheep of the house of Israel who were now believers. Although Peter denied Jesus, he was a believer (Matthew 16:16; John 20:31) and was repentant for what he did, a complete contrast to unbelieving Judas (John 6:70; 17:12).

Fifty days after denying he knew Jesus Christ, Peter was boldly leading the Little Flock of Jewish believers. Contrast this with how the Disciples were fearfully meeting in a sealed room after Jesus Christ had died on the cross (John 20:19). Certainly knowing that Jesus had risen from the dead greatly encouraged them to carry on His ministry. Even more important, they had been given the Holy Spirit (John 20:22) who would enable them to proceed with great power (the power of the Holy Spirit working in them). This special giving of the Holy Spirit was not the promised giving of the Holy Spirit that happened at Pentecost. Most understand this to mean that the Disciples were only promised that they would receive the Holy Spirit, which was fulfilled at Pentecost. However, the context does not seem to support that idea. Most fail to see that when the Disciples were given the Holy Spirit in John 20 that it was for the purpose of retaining or remitting sins, not a giving of the Holy Spirit to all of believing Israel.

### **Replacing Judas**

After Judas committed suicide the Disciples were down to 11 men, leaving them short of the required 12. Peter knew it was necessary for them to find a replacement Disciple (verse 21) because they all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication (verse 14). Peter knew it was God's will to do so because of the Holy Spirit and being told by God the Father.

He also understood the strict qualifications required of the replacement. The man chosen had to be one who was with the group of believers beginning from the time that John began to baptize until Jesus Christ ascended into heaven. There were only two men who fit this qualification, Joseph who was called Barsabas and Matthias. The Lord directed them to choose Matthias.

The night before Jesus chose the original 12 Disciples, He spent all night in prayer. Although Scripture does not say specifically, it seems obvious that He was in communion with the Father in order that He would know what His will was. Jesus did nothing of His own free will but put Himself under the will of the Father (John 5:19; 8:28). Now, the Disciples were doing the same thing as they sought God's will.

Notice that God made His desire very plain to them. There was no question that He wanted Matthias to be the new Disciple. Although they drew lots to determine God's will, it was God who directed how the lots fell. God instituted the use of lots so Israel would know what God wanted them to do (Numbers 26:55; 27:31; Joshua 18:6—10).

### **Paul not qualified**

There are many who believe that the Apostle Paul should have been the replacement Disciple. They think that Matthias was chosen in haste and God needed to correct their mistake by personally choosing Paul (Saul) while he was on the road to Damascus.

It doesn't take long to discredit this incorrect idea. Scripture make it absolutely clear that the replacement needed to be with Jesus throughout His entire earthly ministry, from John's baptism to His ascension. The Apostle Paul was not even saved until after Jesus Christ ascended. Those who say Paul should have been selected have to make Peter and the 10 other Disciples sinners by going against God's will. There is no evidence that this is the case.

What they miss is that there are two distinct programs in view. Israel's Kingdom program required 12 Disciples to sit on 12 thrones in the forthcoming Kingdom (Matthew 19:28). Paul was raised up only after Israel's leaders rejected their Messiah to announce God's new Dispensation of Grace (Ephesians 3:2).

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