

The Betrayer and the Chosen

Acts 1:15-26

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The Lord Jesus had already ascended into heaven. In obedience, the disciples remain in Jerusalem for the Lord instructed them to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. And in an upper room with one hundred twenty believers, Peter began leading the group.

I. The Betrayal God Permitted (vv15-19)

From what we read in the Gospels, Peter had often been the spokesperson of the apostles. But we also know how he acted in fear and weakness during the Lord's arrest. I mean, did he not deny the Lord three times? This time though we see him standing before the believers with confidence and conviction. So, what changed? Peter had seen the risen Lord. The Lord had restored him. Peter was not a perfect man, but he was a forgiven man willing to be used by God.

Indeed, God accomplishes great things through faithful people. The 120 believers with Peter, a small number, would become the foundation of the early church. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God would use them to spread the gospel throughout the world.

Peter began his address by pointing to Scripture. Clearly, this is what the early church valued and prioritized. Peter pointed out that what happened with Judas was something that had been foretold long ago. King David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in the book of Psalms wrote about one who would betray the Messiah.

From the outside, Judas looked like a genuine follower. This tells us that outward association with Jesus is not the same as genuine salvation. For Judas was not merely present among the apostles, he participated in their ministry. Few people in history had greater exposure to the truth than he did. Judas will be condemned not for lack of knowledge. He will be condemned because he continually rejected the truth he was exposed to until the very end. This also highlights the patience and kindness of the Lord Jesus. Despite knowing Judas' heart, He allowed him to remain among the disciples and to hear the truth for years.

Peter understood that what happened with Judas was not an accident. It was not outside God's control. This does not mean that Judas was forced to sin. He was fully responsible for his actions. But, at the same time, Judas' betrayal did not frustrate God's purposes. Instead, it fulfilled what God had already revealed.

Luke then gives additional details about Judas' death. Note that the account in Matthew 27 does not in any way contradict what is written here. Both accounts describe the same event from different angles. For instance, from the Matthew account we know that it was actually the chief priests who bought the field because Judas returned to them the 30 pieces of silver. It was also not a sum that can buy a piece of land. But it was an amount



that Judas was willing to pay in betraying the Lord Jesus. Money did not lead to Judas' wickedness; it simply revealed what was in his heart.

Again, Matthew tells us how Judas died; Acts describes what happened afterward, which was that his body fell and suffered a horrific end. Judas' life is a tragic example of what happens when a person continually hardens his heart against the truth. But the good news is that God offers forgiveness and salvation to all who come to Christ in open repentance and faith.

Verse 19 tells us that Judas' death and betrayal did not remain a private matter. God allowed it to become public to remind us of the tragic consequences of sin.

II. The Replacement God Required (vv20-22)

It must be understood that the apostles were not simply church leaders. They were uniquely appointed witnesses of the risen Christ. Because Judas had abandoned that office through his betrayal, another qualified man needs to fill it.

The candidate had to be someone who had been with them throughout the Lord Jesus' earthly ministry. He needed to be an eyewitness of what the Lord Jesus taught, did, and ultimately of His death and resurrection. The resurrection was the central message the disciples would proclaim to the world. The resurrection confirmed that the Lord Jesus was truly the promised Messiah. Judas' replacement had to be someone who could personally testify to the reality of the risen Christ.

III. The Servant God Revealed (vv23-26)

The believers then proceeded to identify the men who met the established requirements. There were 2 men identified. So their prayer continues... "show which one of these two You have chosen" "to occupy this ministry and apostleship..." Because the question is never about who the apostles preferred but whom the Lord approves. So the disciples did not ask the Lord to help them choose the better candidate. Instead, they ask Him to reveal the one He had already chosen.

Notice how apostleship is described as a ministry. It was a calling to serve the Lord Jesus, from which Judas turned aside. As a result, Judas went to the place of judgment that awaited him because of his rejection of the Lord.

The casting of lots may seem unusual to us. But in the Old Testament times, casting lots was sometimes used as a means of seeking God's direction in matters where human wisdom could not provide the answer. They were not gambling or relying on chance. They believed the Lord was sovereign over the outcome.

Eventually, Matthias was identified as the one whom God had chosen to take Judas' place. Luke does not tell us anything more about Matthias after this event. The focus was not on Matthias himself, but on the fact that the vacancy left by Judas had now been filled. With that, the group that the Lord Jesus had appointed was once again complete.



They are prepared for the coming of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the church's public ministry.

Human failure, while tragic, can never stop the purposes of God. Even when the world feels dark—when evil seems to prevail and human sin appears to threaten God's plan—God's will always prevails. God is almighty and sovereign no matter what is happening.

In the great story of God's redemption, are you standing with the Lord or against Him?

