

[Acts 2](#)



Leaders Note

Acts 1: 12-26 – Choices

What a striking contrast.

On the one hand we have the 120: faithful Jesus-followers awaiting the promised Holy Spirit — whatever that might look like and mean — including the remaining eleven of those who had been part of Jesus' inner circle. Here in Acts 1 they are listed for the fourth time. Most of them we won't hear about again, at least not as to the specifics of what they did, where they went, how they lived and died, etc. Peter soon takes center stage in the salvation drama played out on these pages, and doesn't relinquish it until the baton is passed to Paul who ultimately is instrumental in taking the gospel to the "uttermost parts of the earth." It was an illustrious crew of nobodies to whom the work of the kingdom was entrusted. But one spot is empty. Missing from the list is the final entry in the other three: Judas Iscariot "who also betrayed him." Judas went to his own place. He chose poorly. And that really is what is highlighted in this text. Choice, if not the key word, is definitely the big idea. Jesus choice of these twelve. Judas' choice of a bag of coins over Messiah. The Spirit's choice of a new man to take Judas' place. Choices. It's sobering to think about the choices we are making right now. Choices to hear or to harden; to love or to lag; to embrace Spirit-filled adventure or to enhance our portfolio. One wonders about this Matthias chosen to replace Judas. Never mentioned before, never brought up again. But he was there the whole time, present, observing, serving unseen, and, when the moment came, ready to answer the call of divine choosing in his life as he took his place with the eleven. He chose wisely.

Context Stuff

Lots: Though other forms of divination were prohibited in Israel (Deuteronomy 18:9-14), the casting of lots was permitted. Proverbs 16:33 makes this clear: "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord." Lots were cast for various purposes: They settled the apportionment of land, guaranteeing that it was divinely inherited (Numbers 26:55) They narrowed a field of candidates in determining a selection (Saul in 1 Samuel 10:20ff; Matthias in Acts 1:26), order of service (temple personnel in 1 Chron 24:5ff; Zechariah in Luke 1:8ff) or guilt (Achan in Joshua 7:14ff; Jonathan in 1 Samuel 14:4ff) They were used for dividing or distributing people (orphans in Job 6:27; prisoners of war in Joel 3:3 and Nahum 3:10) The sacred lots called the "Urim and Thummin" were used to determine the will of the Lord in a particular matter (Numbers 27:21). - The Archaeological Study Bible



Example of a Greek Bone Die, 2nd Century BC

Men of Galilee: The twelve were called “men of Galilee” because, except for Judas, who was from Judea, they were all from the region of Galilee, typically seen by people in Judea as something of a backwater of Judaism.

A Sabbath day’s walk: This was the legal distance that could be traveled on Saturday (the Sabbath) without the journey becoming “work.” It was approximately 3/4 of a mile (or 1.2 kilometers). You may ask, “Why only 3/4 of a mile?” The answer is...”Tradition!” (If you must know, Rabbis would frequently point to these OT passages to provide a biblical warrant: Exodus 16:9; Numbers 35:5; and Joshua 3:4).

Judas bought a field: Most think that verses 18-19 are a parenthetical thought from Luke, rather than part of Peter’s speech on this occasion. It’s Luke’s rendition of the fate of Judas that you can compare with Matthew’s in Matthew 27:3-10. So just how did Judas “buy it”? Did he hang himself or did he fall down and split open like an overripe melon? (Sorry for the mental picture there, but that’s the picture Luke gives us). Most harmonize the two texts by simply observing that Judas did in fact hang himself, as Matthew says, but that after hanging there for a day or two his body, bloated by the hot spring sun, fell and burst open in the field.



Learning Session

Get your folks to read the above passage. Go over some of the context information laid out above and then get to discuss the questions below in smaller groups.

- How do you account for the fall of Judas?
- What was the qualification for someone to take the place of Judas? What significance do you see in this?
- What was the biggest decision you have ever had to make? How did you make it and what happened?
- What lies does the enemy use to stop you from making choices?
- What choices, especially when it comes to serving in His Church, is the Lord challenging you to make at this time?

Gather folk back into one group for a time of feedback. The following points should come out during this session:

- Although God knew Judas would do what he did, Judas still had a choice. In addition (being mindful that he was not the only one to betray Jesus) he could have repented and sought Jesus forgiveness instead of killing himself. Some may dispute that he could have been forgiven, who knows? The point is this, he was still free to choose.
- The qualification is always due to God’s call and our availability. We start to learn as we step out.
- You can be sure that Matthias served before this; otherwise he would never have been in the running. None of us is called to sit on the sidelines; we all have a part in the body. We might not be called to be apostles but we are called to serve.

Discussion Questions

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