

Why Did There Need To Be Twelve Apostles? (Acts 1:12-26)

Introduction:

1. In answering this question “Why did there need to be Twelve Apostles”; another question comes to mind.....why was Judas Iscariot selected to begin with?
 - In answering this I find **John MacArthur’s** statement in his *Commentary on Acts page 26* to be quite comforting; “It is a marvelous and reassuring truth that our sovereign, omnipotent, God works His will through men. His providential control over events takes into consideration all the acts of human wills – even those opposed to Him, such as Haman, Herod, and Judas”.
 - We will see just a little bit later in our study that Judas’ betrayal was absolutely crucial to God’s plan for it was prophesied in the Old Testament.
 - 1) Judas was placed among the apostles because he had a duty to perform which was to betray Christ. God didn’t force Judas into this against his will, but in the foreknowledge of God, He knew Judas would by his own choosing, betray Christ. Jesus will state in the Gospel record from Matthew and Luke; that it would have been better that he had not even been born (Matthew 26:24, Luke 22:22).
 - 2) Therefore God used Judas’ evil intent (just like Haman and Herod) to accomplish His predetermined purposes. (Acts 2:23)

2. Let's set the context of what is going on:

- Jesus was clear in His teaching to the Apostles that the Comforter would come (John 14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:7).
 - 1) The Comforter is the _____
 - 2) Why did the Holy Spirit need to come?
- “The continued work of Christ on earth was now placed in the hands of His disciples” (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Volume 2 page 354*) Acts 1:1-2, 8
- The Holy Spirit would be the means by which the Apostles and all believers would be able to accomplish this “unfinished work”. (Acts 2:33-36)
- The Apostles were commanded to wait for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:1-4) and they were to stay in Jerusalem until that occurred.
 - 1) Jesus spoke of this in His teachings while with the Apostles before His death and probably during the 40 days after His resurrection so they were anticipating that the Holy Spirit would come.
 - 2) They also knew it would be soon because just prior to His ascension Jesus says; “for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5)
- It would have been during this period of waiting (in Jerusalem) that the Apostles (primarily led by Peter) would set themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14) and choose a replacement for Judas.

Submission – A Mark of a Follower of Christ (Acts 1:12-14)

1. We are told that they returned from the “mount called Olivet” which is the Mount of Olives.
 - It is more of a hill than a mountain (approx. 200 feet higher than Jerusalem)
 - It is a short distance (approx. one half to three quarters of a mile) from Jerusalem. According to Rabbinical Law (based on Joshua 3:4), this would have been the maximum distance that a person was permitted to travel on the Sabbath which was based more on tradition than Scripture; however Luke seems to recognize the need to record this so I figured we should understand why.
2. They went into the “upper room” which was a common meeting place as those rooms tended to be larger and able to hold more people.
 - Some conclude this was John Mark’s mothers’ house but we don’t know for sure - see Acts 12:12.
 - Those who gathered in the room were:
 - 1) **The remaining eleven apostles** (Peter, John, James, Andrew, Phillip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas or Thaddeus who was the son of James)
 - 2) There were women present; Mary the mother of Jesus, probably Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Clopas, Martha, Salome and others.
 - 3) Also Jesus’ half brothers (those born to Mary and Joseph after the virgin birth of Christ) whose names were James, Joses, Judas and Simon. James was the first leader of the Jerusalem Church and probably wrote the Epistle of James, and Judas/Jude probably wrote the Epistle of Jude.

3. We are told the reason they gathered together was for prayer (Acts 1:14)
 - The importance of prayer and supplication was taught by Jesus to the disciples on many occasions. (Matthew 6:5-13, Matthew 26:36-46)
 - Prayer became a mainstay for the early church for we are told that when they gathered together this was one of their primary functions. (Acts 2:42)
4. In addition to prayer their purpose was also to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit.
 - It was probably during this time of supplication that the Lord impressed upon Peter to move the rest of the apostles towards selecting a replacement for Judas Iscariot.
 - Take note that Luke points out that they were of one accord or of one mind.
 - 1) This is the result of being in prayer together, not necessarily praying aloud, or even praying together, but their hearts were united because of their common bond, common desire, and common purpose.
 - 2) They were now separated from the physical presence of Jesus and this was now their only means of communicating with Him.
 - 3) This may well mark the beginning of praying in the name of Jesus (John 14:13-14)

The Cost of Betrayal (Acts 1:15-20)

1. At some point (between the ascension and Pentecost) during this 10 day season of prayer, and fellowship; Peter stands up and declares to this group of about 120 followers of Christ the following message:
 - He identifies the group as _____, which again implies unity.
 - He speaks with authority by identifying his words to be agreeable with the Scripture.....not the Scripture agreeing with his words.
 - 1) There is a difference and the reason Peter's words were heeded by the others is because they agreed with what the Scriptures declared.
 - 2) The authority begins to rest on the shoulders of the Apostles who were entrusted with that Truth.
 - 3) Note the clear and concise declaration by Luke as to the meaning and understanding of inspiration; "the Scripture had to be fulfilled, by which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas".
 - 4) Peter will record these words later in his Second Epistle; "for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God". (II Peter 1:21 – NASB)
2. Just how did Judas fulfill what was told by David?
 - Psalm 55:12-15 and Psalm 41:9 speak of a betrayal that many conclude has meaning and application to Judas.
 - David also spoke these words; "Let his homestead be made desolate, and let no man dwell in it; and His office let another man take" (Psalm 69:25, Psalm 109:8)

3. Here is what John MacArthur says about Judas; “He represents the greatest example of a wasted opportunity in all of history” (John MacArthur; Commentary on Acts, page 32)
- The Scriptures tell us that Judas was a _____ to those who arrested Jesus.
 - 1) This shows he had malicious intent and his motives were governed by greed.
 - 2) MacArthur goes on to state that Judas was not saved (something I agree with) for Jesus makes it clear in John 6:64; “But there are some of you who do not believe. The Apostle John continues to explain by writing these words; “For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray him”.
 - 3) You cannot follow Jesus half way – Judas may have been counted among the apostles and even shared in the same ministry as the apostles, but he obviously was not really of them because his love of the world was greater than his love for the Savior. (I John 2:15-19, Matthew 6:24)
 - So why was Judas permitted to be counted as one of them? (Acts 2:23)
4. John MacArthur goes on to say these words about Judas; “He had the same convincing, overwhelming opportunity to come to faith in Him as the eleven did. Yet his motives for following Jesus were never anything but selfish (John 12:5).....Driven by disappointment and greed, this most tragic of all men squandered inestimable privilege, betraying the Lord for thirty pieces of silver, and damned his soul to hell!” (John MacArthur; Commentary on Acts, page 32)

5. All of this betrayal resulted in Judas committing suicide (Acts 1:18-20)
- The field (known as the Potters Field – as the soil is good for making pottery) was actually purchased by the Jewish leaders on behalf of Judas because he returns the money. (Matthew 27:3-8)
 - 1) If you recall Judas has an unbearable sense of guilt and remorse and returns the money which causes some to conclude that Judas must have repented.
 - 2) I don't support this claim that Judas repented for a number of reasons (Matthew 7:21-23, Matthew 26:31-46), not the least of which Judas lost his place of designation with the other eleven Apostles for he was replaced by another! (Acts 1:20, 25-26, Matthew 19:28)

The Question Answered (Acts 1:21-26)

1. Why was there a need to replace Judas and restore the total number of Apostles to 12?
 - Because it was a fulfillment of Scripture as there would be “twelve thrones” for “twelve apostles” who would judge the “twelve tribes” of Israel. (Matthew 19:28, Revelation 21:14)
 - Judas who was unregenerate (not saved) and in hell would be unable to sit on the twelfth seat and thus it would be vacant if left unfilled.
2. There was specific criteria set for Judas' replacement:
 - He would have been witness to Jesus' earthly ministry (Acts 1:21)
 - He would have been witness to the resurrection (Acts 1:22); which is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. (I Corinthians 15)

3. Two men fulfilled those requirements:
 - Joseph called Barsabas and also known as Justus (Acts 1:23)
 - **Matthias** who after being selected as an “Apostle” will go on to serve in the region of Armenia and eventually (according to tradition) will be martyred.
4. Take note of the selection process (Acts 1:23-26)
 - First they _____ and sought the _____ of God. (Acts 1:24)
 - Second they acknowledged the _____ of the office. V 25
 - Third they used a method (drawing lots) which was an acceptable Old Testament practice for determining God’s will. (Proverbs 16:33, Lev. 16:8ff, Numbers 26:55ff, Joshua 7:14, I Samuel 10:20, 14:41ff, Proverbs 18:18).
 - 1) Although this was an acceptable method; it seemed to be the last recorded occurrence where this practice was used for future determinations of God’s will.
 - 2) What would have replaced the casting of lots to determine God’s will from this point forward?
5. A few closing remarks
 - Is there such a thing as a “perpetual” office of Apostle, where there was a succession of Apostles as each one died off?
 - 1) We have no record of such and it seems that it would violate Matthew 19:28.
 - 2) The Apostles never replaced James when he died (Acts 12:12)

- Why didn't they just wait for Paul?
 - 1) By his own admittance he was a minister to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:9)
 - 2) He considered himself the "least of the apostles" (I Corinthians 15:9)
 - 3) Luke (Paul's friend and companion) acknowledges the "twelve" as a group and does not include Paul in that list. (Acts 2:14, 6:2)
 - 4) There is no record, sense or spirit in which Matthias is removed or censured and replaced with Paul.....so the decision stood!

“With Matthias’ selection to replace the traitor Judas,
the final preparation for the church is completed; the final
resource provided. All was now ready for the birth of the
church on the Day of Pentecost”
John MacArthur; Commentary on Acts, page 35