

The Rest of the Story

Studies in the Book of Acts

***“We will move the world not by criticism of it, nor conformity to it –
but by combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God”***

Vance Havner

Text

Acts 1:12-26

Topic

The apostles and disciples gathered in the upper room make a decision to choose Matthias as the twelfth apostle

Title

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Acts 1:12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.

Acts 1:13 And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James *the son* of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas *the son* of James.

Acts 1:14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Acts 1:15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said,

Acts 1:16 "Men *and* brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus;

Acts 1:17 for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry."

Acts 1:18 (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out.

Acts 1:19 And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)

Acts 1:20 "For it is written in the Book of Psalms: 'LET HIS DWELLING PLACE BE DESOLATE, AND LET NO ONE LIVE IN IT'; and, 'LET ANOTHER TAKE HIS OFFICE.'

Acts 1:21 "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

Acts 1:22 beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."

Acts 1:23 And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

Acts 1:24 And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen

Acts 1:25 to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."

Acts 1:26 And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Introduction

It is estimated that you make as many as one-thousand decisions each day. Most of your decisions are trivial; but some may be momentous.

If you are a Christian, you not only make lots of decisions each day, but you want them to reflect your love for Jesus. You want them to be consistent with the will of God for your life.

Good, godly decision making is something we should all strive for. One way to grow in our own decision making is to analyze the good, godly decisions we discover when reading the Bible.

The first followers of Jesus were waiting for the baptism with the Holy Spirit. During those ten days between Jesus' ascension and the Day of Pentecost, they made many thousands of individual decisions. They made some corporate decisions. And they made one momentous decision – they chose Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot as the twelfth apostle.

Watching them and listening to them in the upper room, we can learn some things about good, godly decision making.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Make Your Decisions With An Upper Room Mentality, and #2 Make Your Decisions With An Upper Room Finality.

- #1 Make Your Decisions
With An Upper Room Mentality
(v12-14)

The first three verses of our text describe the general atmosphere of the upper room. The things we observe about the disciples are a kind of mentality for good, godly decision making.

The first thing we observe is their obedience:

Acts 1:12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.

Just as He ascended from the Mount of Olives, the Lord, Jesus, told them to return to Jerusalem to wait for the baptism with the Holy Spirit. They did exactly that.

Obey the Lord and you find yourself exactly where you are supposed to be. You're not confused or conflicted about previous decisions and can therefore make future decisions with a greater confidence.

Next we observe their fellowship:

Acts 1:13 And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James *the son* of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas *the son* of James.

Acts 1:14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

The **upper room** was probably the same one in which they had shared a last supper with Jesus. It would have been a large upper story over a home. This one could easily accommodate one hundred and twenty people.

The eleven remaining disciples are listed – many for the last time in Scripture. It isn't that they weren't as important to the Lord or His work; just that their work wasn't necessary to record in Scripture. It's recorded in Heaven.

I take great comfort in the fact that most of the original apostles are obscure. They represent you and me and the vast majority of believers whose work for the Lord is unknown to most, but known to the Lord.

Among the women, all the ‘Mary’s’ were probably their: Mary Magdalene, Mary (the wife of Clopas), Mary (the mother of Jesus), and Mary and her sister, Martha.

I’m not going to spend any time pointing out that Mary was called the **mother of Jesus** and *not* the mother of God; or that she fades from the scene after this mention; or that no one prayed either *to* her or *through* her; or that she considered herself a humble disciple in need of the baptism of the Holy Spirit just like everyone else; or that no special place of authority or influence was given to her.

Jesus’ **brothers** were there— half-brothers, really. They were born to Joseph and Mary after Jesus was virgin-born. They were unbelievers until after the resurrection. They were James, Joses, Jude, and Simon. (I guess by the time Simon was born they gave-up on ‘J’ names!). According to Mark 6:3 Jesus also had half-sisters. So I don’t need to point out that Mary was not a perpetual virgin.

These disciples **continued** in fellowship. It was a unique time, for sure; but they would also continue in fellowship *after* receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit. They would teach us by word and example about the importance of continuing in fellowship in a body of believers.

When you are in fellowship with the Lord and with other believers, you have a much better opportunity to make good, godly decisions. For one thing, you are held accountable. There is a positive peer pressure that can keep you from getting drawn into the world.

Next we see that there was an atmosphere of **prayer**. This is the first of at least eighteen prayer meetings in the *Book of Acts*. **We must remain a praying people!**

These disciples were exactly where they were supposed to be; they were in constant fellowship with one another; and they continually prayed. It’s a mentality that contributes to good, godly decision making.

A decision was about to be made – from which we can glean several more insights for ourselves.

#2 Make Your Decisions With An Upper Room Finality (v13-26)

There is a lot of scholarly controversy surrounding the selection of Matthias. Some say it was not the will of God. They say that Peter impulsively jumped the gun.

The choosing of Matthias was necessary; and it was of the Lord. I know that because, in *Acts* chapter six, the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to refer to the apostles – including Matthias - as **the twelve**. They weren't the eleven plus some bogus guy! God inspired the choice of Matthias and, thus, we can learn something more about decision making.

We can learn that our decisions must be firmly grounded in God's Word:

Acts 1:15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, **Acts 1:16** "Men *and* brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus;

Peter was remembering the Word of God. In this section, he will refer to Psalm 41:9, Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8; and he will refer to something Jesus told them while He was on the earth.

God's Word is prophetic. Peter said it **had to be fulfilled**. The Scripture he was referring to was in Psalm 41:9. It reads,

Psalms 41:9 Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up *his* heel against me.

In its original context, David penned Psalm 41:9 to describe the betrayal of his counselor, Ahithophel, who joined in a rebellion against him. Jesus applied that verse to Judas at the Last Supper. In other words, there was a prophetic application.

Peter and the other disciples were undoubtedly greatly comforted as they saw the prophetic value of those words. God was in control – **even while Judas was betraying Jesus.**

We still struggle today with the betrayal of Judas. How much more do you think these first followers of Jesus struggled – especially the remaining eleven? Could they, too, go from apostle to apostate? What an awesome comfort to realize that God had prophesied one would betray the Lord – yet still be personally responsible for his sin in doing so.

Biblical prophecy is intended to comfort us. What greater comfort than to know God is Sovereign?

The next thing to point out about God's Word is that it is inspired. Peter said that the **Holy Spirit spoke** it through **David**. While we may see this as obvious, more and more professing Christians are arguing that the Bible is something less than the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God. And many sincere Christians seem to approach the Bible as if it weren't always profitable in telling them how to live. **You cannot make good, godly decisions unless you believe the inspiration of the Bible.**

Peter, and Luke in a parenthesis, discussed the events surrounding Judas Iscariot:

Acts 1:17 for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry."

Acts 1:18 (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out.

Acts 1:19 And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)

Putting all the biblical accounts together, you learn that Judas hung himself, then either the rope or the branch broke, causing him to fall on jagged rocks beneath. He **burst open** upon the rocks and **all his entrails gushed out.**

Acts 1:20 "For it is written in the Book of Psalms: 'LET HIS DWELLING PLACE BE DESOLATE, AND LET NO ONE LIVE IN IT'; and, 'LET ANOTHER TAKE HIS OFFICE.'

Convinced of God's sovereign purpose, Peter was open to the Holy Spirit reminding him of two other Scriptures – Psalm 69 and Psalm 109. The original application of these psalms was for King David; but they had a prophetic application for David's descendant, Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit took the Word of God He had inspired and applied it prophetically to tell the apostles what to do! The Holy Spirit still does this today – **if we will let Him**. It may not seem as dramatic... But He will give you a verse, or verses, to guide and direct your decision making.

Acts 1:21 "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

Acts 1:22 beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."

Acts 1:23 And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

Why these criteria? They, too, were according to the Word of God. Jesus once told these apostles, in Matthew 19:28,

Matthew 19:28 So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, **you who have followed Me** will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

- being changed to bring change -

Jesus was talking to His disciples when He said **You who have** [past tense] **followed Me**. They took it literally to mean that one who had been among them at the time He spoke should take Judas' place to sit on one of the **twelve thrones** as a judge over Israel.

While we are excited about the prophetic application of the Bible, don't neglect its literal application! So many good and godly decisions are already made for you in the Bible.

At least two men met the stated qualifications:

Acts 1:23 And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

Acts 1:24 And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen

Acts 1:25 to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."

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The **casting of lots** was a biblical means of decision making up until the events of *Acts* chapter two. Sometimes two stones were put in a bag – one black, one white. Or their names may have been written on each stone, then chosen.

There are three more things about decision making we can note:

1. They **prayed** some more. Prayer was not just the atmosphere of the upper room. It was the life-breath of the early Church. Remember: there are eighteen recorded prayer meetings in *Acts*.
2. They were humble. There was no lobbying for one man or the other; there were no personal opinions. Whatever the Lord wanted is what they wanted.
3. They were men of faith. They trusted God to choose.

Once the decision was made, they went forward with a confident finality that God had revealed His will in the matter. Their upper room mentality provided an upper room finality to their decisions.

Applying the Word... *changed to bring change -*

Need to make a decision?

1. Make sure you are where you ought to be.
2. Be in close fellowship with other believers.
3. Be praying.
4. Hold the Word of God in the highest regard.
5. Search it out for principles, precepts, and prophecies.
6. *Pray some more!*
7. Humble yourself.
8. Step out in faith – confident that your decision was from the Lord.

If you are not a Christian... There is only one decision that is of any real consequence. It is your decision to confess you are a sinner in need of the only Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is alive, and above, and can be approached to save you.

