

ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

NOTES 2

ACTS 1:12-20

FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP BIBLE STUDY

WAITING

After Jesus' ascension the disciples returned to the upper room where they waited and prayed for the Holy Spirit. The exact location of the room is not known, but it could be the room where the last supper had been held, or it could have been in the home of Mary, the mother of Mark as suggested in Acts 12:12. The distance from the Mt. of Olives where Jesus ascended back to Jerusalem was "a Sabbath day's journey away". This distance, 2,000 cubits or 3/5 of a mile, was a rabbinic tradition. The Jews at Qumran where the Dead Sea scrolls were preserved set the acceptable limit even lower.

The eleven remaining disciples were in the room with "the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers." The total number in the room was about 120. A few of the disciples have different names in other accounts. Bartholomew, for example, is called Nathanael in John's gospel (see John 1:45-49 and 21:2). James the son of Alphaeus is called James the younger in Mark 15:40, and Judas the son of James is called Thaddaeus in Mark 3:18 and Matthew 10:3.

The women who were with the disciples are not named, but based on other accounts from Jesus' life, we can guess who some of them were. They may have been the wives of the disciples; 1 Corinthians 9:3-5 gives us reason to think they may have been present: "This is my defense to those who would examine me. Do we not have the right to eat and drink? Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?"

We know from this text that the apostles' wives were generally part of their husbands' ministries and missions. It's also possible that the women in the room included those named as part of Jesus' followers and supporters. Matthew 24:54-56 names Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph as well as the mother of the John and James, the sons of Zebedee. In context, these women are named as part of the group of followers who stood near the cross as Jesus died along with "many women...who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him." (See also Luke 23:44-49.)

Luke 8:1-3 identifies even more women associated with Jesus during his life. The twelve were with Him as he traveled through the villages and cities, and "some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities including Mary Magdalene from whom seven demons had gone out. Also with Jesus was Joanna, the wife of Herod's household manager

Chuza, and Susanna as well as many others who provided for Jesus and His disciples out of their own means.

Luke 23:55-56 mentions that the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed the men as Joseph of Aramathea laid Jesus in his own tomb. These same women prepared spices and ointments with which to embalm Jesus' body before the Sabbath began. It was also women who were the first people to see the risen Jesus after the Sunday morning resurrection.

Jesus' ministry was not theoretical and ideological. It was practical and real, and Jesus redeemed women exactly as He redeemed men—and simultaneously He gave them the dignity and value which was their legacy from creation. Whenever people are changed by Jesus and His Spirit, men and women become able to respect and honor one another without competing. Women become equal heirs along with the men, and God gives them their own spiritual gifts and His work just as He gives to the men. Jesus raised the status of women by being born of one, and He gave them value and significance by accepting their support and ministrations and allowing them to travel as disciples of His.

Mark 6:3 names Jesus' blood brothers: James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. These, apparently, were all present in the upper room with the disciples waiting for the Holy Spirit. Significantly, two of His brothers wrote epistles included in the New Testament: Jude and James.

Even more significantly, his brother James became a leader in the church at Jerusalem. The miracle of these brothers being with the disciples and becoming leaders in the church is contrasted with this anecdote from early in Jesus' ministry recorded in John 7:2-5. The Feast of Booths was soon to arrive, and Jesus had just experienced a turning point in His popularity by saying those who ate His flesh and drank His blood would live; the Spirit gives life; flesh is of no use (John 6:56-63). Jesus was teaching in Galilee because in Judea, the Jews were seeking to kill Him.

His brothers challenged him to leave Galilee and go to Judea for the feast so His disciples would see the works He was doing. "No one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly," they said. "If you do these things, show yourself to the world".

And then John makes this simple and powerful statement: "For not even his brothers believed in him."

Jesus refused, however, saying His time had not yet come. Interestingly, the men who had grown up with Jesus as boys

did not believe in Him, and they actually mocked Him to try to challenge His claim to be the Messiah.

This initial unbelief makes their eventual belief and leadership all the more poignant.

When Paul writes to the Corinthians about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, he witnesses to Jesus' resurrection and validates it by reciting Jesus' appearances to those who knew Him. He says, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."

Paul recounts that Jesus' first post-resurrection appearance to a disciple was to Peter. Following that, He appeared to the rest of the remaining twelve, then to a group of 500 brothers, then to James, then to all the apostles, and finally to Paul.

James had never been mentioned as a disciple of Jesus—he was, rather, unbelieving, and his mocking is what we previously knew of him. Jesus, however, personally appeared to James and prepared him to be an apostle and leader in the fledgling church.

Paul speaks of James early in Paul's own ministry. He tells that after his conversion, when he went to Jerusalem initially, he didn't see any of the apostles except James (Galatians 1:19). He mentions James again in Galatians 2:9—this time in the context of James being seen as the leader of the church in Jerusalem. This context is interesting because Paul is telling how he had to rebuke Peter for being hypocritical in the presence of a contingent of Jewish Christians from Jerusalem. Paul refers to these men as "certain men [who] came from James." James is named rather than Jerusalem, probably because the church thought of James's leadership when they thought of the original home of believing Jewish Christians. Jerusalem was "home base" for the very early church.

The account of the Council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15 also shows James as the leader of the brothers there (see Acts 15:13-18).

JUDAS FORETOLD

Verse 15 begins the section where the apostles, in obedience to God, replaced Judas. Peter was the spokesperson for the group, and he said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry" (v. 16-17). He continued by saying, "For it is written in the Book of Psalms, 'May his camp

become desolate, and let no one to dwell in it'; and 'let another take his office'" (v. 20).

These Psalms to which Peter referred are Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8. Psalm 69:25 says, "Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually. Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them. May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents."

Psalm 109:6-8 cries, "Appoint a wicked man against him; let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he is tried, let him come forth guilty; let his prayer be counted as sin! May his days be few; may another take his office!"

These Psalms should be understood, originally, to be speaking generally of the fate of the wicked. They will be cut off from their people ultimately; their families will be impoverished and suffer loss because of their wickedness. Others will be chosen to take their places among God's people.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter calls on these two Psalms, understanding that the Holy Spirit had foreshadowed these events hundreds of years ago as He impressed David to write. Now they must select a successor to Judas.

Verses 18-19 say in references to Judas, that "this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood."

This account fleshes out the details of the Matthew account of Judas' last hours: "Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' They said, 'What is that to us? See to it yourself.' And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.' So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers."

When we read these passages together, each articulated by a different disciple, we get a more nearly complete picture. Judas did not purchase the Field of Blood himself. Rather, stricken with guilt and remorse, he threw the 30 pieces of silver back at the priests in the temple. On the basis of principles established in Deuteronomy, the priests could not take Judas' money back and use it in the temple because it had been blood money.

The principle on which they based this decision is rooted in Deuteronomy 23:18: "You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute or the wages of a dog into the house of the Lord your God in payment for any vow, for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God."

The word "dog" in the passage refers to a male prostitute. This Mosaic law sets forth the principle that money acquired

from acts of sin cannot be brought as money to give to God in payment for a vow. The money people brought to the temple as offerings to God and for temple use had to be “clean” money, and Judas’s money was not “clean”.

Of course, the irony is that those same priests paid Judas to commit a sin, and they used temple money for the contract. But because no specific law governed that sinful act, they were technically justified in giving that money to Judas. Because Judas then brought it back after it had been used for its intended criminal purpose, they could not use it.

Instead, they purchased a field that could be used as a burial ground for strangers.

Apparently Judas, at some point in the process of his hanging, fell—either as he was hanging himself or after his death. The rope likely broke, and Judas’s body fell to the rocky ground and broke open.

No one knows the exact spot of Judas’ hanging and death, but it is known that it was in the Valley of Hinnom, or Gehenna, south of Jerusalem. This was the valley where Israel historically had burned its garbage. The perpetual fires smoldering on the refuse piled there have become the metaphor and image that lies behind the word “hell”. How ironic that Judas hanged himself and died in the place that is the prototype of hell.

MEDITATE

God is asking you to trust Him, as the first apostles and disciples did, to direct your life and activities. Just as they waited until God sent what He had promised, so God asks each of us to wait, not ceasing to pray or to do the thing that is in front of us to do, as we wait for God’s purposes to unfold and His promises to be realized.

God ALWAYS keeps His promises. When we don’t know what will happen or how to proceed, our position must always be one of surrender and submission to God. He will show us the next step—and that next step may be all we see at first. Just as the disciples were waiting and praying, not knowing exactly what would “show up” or how they would be affected, so we are to wait and pray. Yet God directed them even then. He impressed them, revealing the Scriptural foreshadowing that instructed them to replace Judas.

God lets us know the next thing to do. He does not reveal His full provision all at once. We are to obey Him by walking into the very next thing that lies in front of us. We are not to borrow trouble or make decisions based upon fear or uncertainty. Rather, we are to do what lies at hand and trust God to show us the next step at the right time.

God is faithful; He will do what He has promised.



JERUSALEM AND THE KIDRON VALLEY FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.



**MOUNT OF OLIVES
FROM JERUSALEM
ACROSS THE
KIDRON VALLEY.**

**GREEK ORTHODOX CONVENT IN
THE VALLEY OF GEHENNA SOUTH
OF THE TEMPLE MOUNT.**



**THE EASTERN END
OF THE VALLEY OF
GEHENNA.**

ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

2

ACTS 1:12-20

FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP BIBLE STUDY

STUDY

A Sabbath-day's journey was approximately 2 cubits, or 3/5 of a mile. Jews at Qumran where the Dead Sea scrolls were preserved had a lower limit.

1. Verse 13 contains a list of the remaining 11 disciples. Some accounts use different names for some of these men. See the following passages to determine the alternate names for these disciples:

Bartholomew:

John 1:45-49 _____

John 21:2 _____

James the son of Alphaeus:

Mark 15:40 _____

Judas the son of James:

Mark 3:18 _____

Matthew 10:3 _____

2. What is the possible identity of "the women" who were present in the upper room with the disciples? See the following:

1 Corinthians 9:3-5 _____

Matthew 27:54-56 _____

Luke 8:1-3 _____

Luke 23:44-49 _____

Luke 23:55-56 _____

Luke 24:22-23 _____

3. Who were Jesus' brothers?

Matthew 12:46-50 _____

Acts 12:16-17 _____

Mark 6:3 _____

4. What do we know of Jesus' brother James?

John 7:2-5 _____

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 _____

Galatians 1:19 _____

Galatians 2:9 _____

Galatians 2:12 _____

Acts 15:13-18 _____

5. What Scripture foreshadowed Judas' fate?

Psalms 69:23-25 _____

Psalms 109:6-8 _____

6. How did Judas acquire a field "with the price of his wickedness", and what is the full story of his death?

Matthew 27:3-7 _____

7. On what principle did the priests base their decision not to keep the money Judas returned?

Deuteronomy 23:18 _____

MEDITATE

In what areas of your life is God asking you to believe Him? Is your belief rooted in "knowing" and "seeing", or is rooted in trust of God's own words? Ask your Father to give you deep trust and belief that His promises and purposes are certain, and that you can release your grip of control on the circumstances of your life.

"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." 1 Peter 2:24-25, NIV