

Acts

Week 4, The Upper Room

13 And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: (1), Peter, (2) James, (3) John, and (4) Andrew; (5) Philip and (6) Thomas; (7) Bartholomew¹ and (8) Matthew; (9) James the son of Alphaeus and (10) Simon the Zealot; (11) and Judas the son of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Note that there are only eleven disciples, often we get used to hearing the names of the twelve being together and we tend to overlook that Judas Iscariot is no longer with them. Some look at Judas, the son of James, and think they are the same, they are not. We also find the use of Bartholomew instead of Nathanael. They are believed to be one and the same but this debate has gone on for a long time and it will not end here. See note.²

We are at a point now where the disciples have lost Judas Iscariot and have moved on to gather. Wiersbe makes note of verse 14 as to how the group remains in one accord. For what reason and importance would having remained in one accord served? These men who had lived with Jesus and sometimes were at odds with one another had to be taught to think and act in unity. Today we find much division within the church over different doctrinal beliefs, many coming from denominational teachings.

¹ Bartholomew:

bar-thol'-o-mu (Bartholomaios, i.e. "son of Tolmai or Tolmai"): One of the Twelve Apostles (Mt 10:3; Mr 3:18; Lu 6:14; Ac 1:13). There is no further reference to him in the New Testament. According to the "Genealogies of the Twelve Apostles" (Budge, *Contendings of the Apostles*, II, 50) "Bartholomew was of the house of Naphtali. Now his name was formerly John, but our Lord changed it because of John the son of Zebedee, His beloved." A "Gospel of Bartholomew" is mentioned by Hieronymus (*Comm. Proem ad Matth.*), and Gelasius gives the tradition that Bartholomew brought the Hebrew gospel of Matthew to India. In the "Preaching of Bartholomew in the Oasis" (compare Budge, II, 90) he is referred to as preaching probably in the oasis of Al Bahnasa, and according to the "Preaching of Andrew and Bartholomew" he labored among the Parthians (Budge, II, 183). The "Martyrdom of Bartholomew" states that he was placed in a sack and cast into the sea.

From the 9th century onward, Bartholomew has generally been identified with Nathanael, but this view has not been conclusively established.

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² Judas "son of Tolmai, one of the twelve apostles (Mat 10:3; Act 1:13); generally supposed to have been the same as Nathanael. In the synoptic gospels Philip and Bartholomew are always mentioned together, while Nathanael is never mentioned; in the fourth gospel, on the other hand, Philip and Nathanael are similarly mentioned together, but nothing is said of Bartholomew."

The "Martyrdom of Bartholomew" states that he was placed in a sack and cast into the sea. (Budge, II, 183)
<https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/Dictionary/viewTopic.cfm?topic=ET0000457,HT0000380,IT0001182,NT0000607,BT0000585>

Look here at Peter, Jesus says He must go and be put to death by the leaders, **Matthew 16:21, Peter walks closer and rebukes Him, "This shall never happen to you!" Verse 22.** They were not in unity, Jesus is teaching about His sacrificial death and Peter is thinking of protecting His Lord, he was failing in understanding of Jesus' entire purpose. Jesus sharply replies, **"Get behind me, Satan! Verse 24.** Just before this Jesus congratulates Peter for giving a correct answer and now rebukes him for missing the point. It is God's plan that must be carried out.

Losing life to have life.

We find two teachings here, first, at this point Jesus is nearing the end of His earthly ministry and must be put to death by sinful men, see Luke 24:7. Although we find here mentioned "by sinful man," it could not have come to be if the leaders of the church and of the law, the Sadducees and the Pharisees had not put his suffering into motion. This is the first part of the equation, the second is that our eternal life would be altered if Jesus did not go to the cross. In the crucifixion Jesus raises and conquers death, He died that we may live and He then returned to His rightful place. Had Jesus remained in the world the task would not have been completed. In our lives we are to follow much in the same fashion, we are to die to this life, that which we are born into and begin to live in the newness of the life earned for us through the blood of the Lamb.

Matthew verse 16:25 Jesus now brings the understanding a bit further, **"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it."** The answer to the riddle is here in the one who finds his by life in faith in Jesus. As we look at this we need to understand the difficulty which Peter has stumbled. Was the information beyond Peter's and the other's ability to comprehend, or was it the thought of losing Jesus was something they were not ready to accept?

When we have family members or friends who have received a bad report from a doctor we are often closed to accepting the report. Our feelings and emotions, our need to protect those we love takes over and it is difficult to believe it is happening, we get sad, we get pitiful, we get angry, we deny, and finally we accept it and hurt. These are normal human patterns and we find this in most people who suffer from the news. It must have been extremely difficult for the disciples to imagine Jesus, their Messiah who healed the sick and raised the dead, must die at the hands of sinners. Jesus gives understanding, He must go. **Verse 26, "Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?"** Yes, this was His mission, to offer Himself to save our souls, the purpose He had come, He offers Himself for us. There is no other way.

Let's go back now to the one accord, as used here, accord is with one mind, with one accord, with one passion, this can only be accomplished with unity. Although there may still be differences in understanding, which are often rectified in fellowship, open discussions, and with fervent prayer. These disciples who were at odds with one another at times are here being taught to think alike. Acts **verse 1:14, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication."** Supplication - Homothumadon is a compound of two words meaning to "rush along" and "in unison". This is what Jesus wanted for them and for us, yet far too many seek to create a new story, a sensational story, missing the entire point that nothing can be more profound and sensational than God coming in the incarnate Jesus to remove our sin. This is the

unity of the church, we may argue about trimming toenails and hair designs, but of Jesus being our salvation there shall be no difference.

How many churches and discussions have you had over the years with our brothers and sisters that agree on Jesus atoning' sacrifice but not so much other verses? Some respond as though they have never heard of the verse you are addressing or they see things completely different. Now, stop for a moment and think back on your own walk with the Lord and think of the number of times you have re-read a verse but now you see it from a fully different angle? The problem exists when we fail to come together as a body of believers and to openly discuss those issues there may be indifferences with.

You go to a little league baseball game, it's a team, yet one of the outfielders is more interested in butterflies than the ball. It's much different with the Scripture but much the same also. Our attention often gets diverted to other things happening around us, our focus becomes impossible to keep on track and we can easily misunderstand not only a verse but an entire chapter. Soon our misunderstanding becomes our understanding and we feel justified where we stand, we have worked it out and it sounds reasonable. The problem is, pigs can't fly and no amount of persuasion is going to convince others into believing what you yourself never really sat and looked into for the errors in your opinion. This is a very frequent and dangerous problem that plagues the church and has from the beginning, we develop our own understandings, hold onto it and never realize we are out of sequence with others parts of the body. Unity cannot and will not exist in such an environment.

Verse 1:15-17, 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, "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; "for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry."

Peter had a boldness come upon him as he stood up and began to preach to all who were in the room. Let us take note that there were more than twelve disciples, it says here up to one hundred and twenty. We opened the upper room identifying the eleven disciples and Mary, the mother of Jesus and His brothers, but now we find many more. It is not a contradiction, the importance is found in the fact that the original disciples were present.

Judas in this verse is not the same Judas present in the opening, this is Judas son of Simone, Judas Iscariot, the other is Judas brother of James. Judas Iscariot as spoken of by David in **Psalm 109:8; Let his days be few; and let another take his office.** As we read the chapter in 109 is appears that it is a general statement about all of King David's enemies, but let's jump ahead for just a minute to **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.'** We will in short find Judas being replaced by Matthias, and so his place was filled again as the Psalm says.

Many of those in the room had been with Jesus and Apostles from the day of Jesus' baptism. It was not always just the twelve as we so easily focus on, but others are often brought into the picture, the seventy of which our Lord sent out two by two, Luke 10:1. Our focus is on the

teaching of the twelve and how they reacted, they mirror much the same we find today in our churches, those who have many questions, those who believe just by Jesus touching them in spirit, those who doubt as Thomas did. It appears the more we grow in our world the more we are apt to stumble. So what has changed? Evidence, we have what they lived as a record to guide us. We have the Holy Spirit to indwell us all the time, and we have the faithful promise of our Lord's return which they were deeply troubled by.

Important is what Peter has to say about Judas Iscariot, that he had lived with them and learned with them, all the time not receiving Him. There are many today who are troubled and doubtful about much of the bible, perhaps these may become those who simply believe without study but who the Spirit directs and keeps safe. The tiny cross that hangs on our cross represents a person who deeply wanted Christ in her life and to rid the drug ridden world in which she was trapped. I make no claims that she is today saved, I only know that during the time she sat and weaved this tiny cross she was given a sign and a hope, and even more, a desire to come to Jesus. We cannot Judge a person's salvation based on a moment in our lives in which we meet them, we can however pray with them as I did that night when she gave me the cross. There was a comfort and a stillness in her as I prayed and her sobbing for a moment stopped.

God does not wait on us to get clean, it is only God who makes us clean. Come broken hearted, come and taste, for there is freedom and new life found through faith, offer your hands out to the Lord and He will gladly receive them.

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

23 And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen 25 to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." 26 And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.