

Bible Study 6

Jesus' Usage of Jewish Scripture

Aim: To examine how Jesus uses the Jewish Scriptures in the Gospels and how Christians may hear those texts today as a call to faithful and holy living.

Opening Prayer: Gracious God, open our hearts and minds as we study your Word. Help us to hear the Scriptures as Jesus taught them, to recognize your liberating work among us, and to respond with faith, humility, and holy living. Guide our conversation, deepen our understanding, and form us into a community that bears witness to your justice, mercy, and peace. Amen.

Learning Guide Questions

- What might Jewish Scripture have meant within its own historical and theological context?
- What should we understand about the imagination and hope of the First Testament?
- How does Jesus interpret Scripture in relation to his mission and message?
- How can Christians today hear Jesus' call to holy living?

Primary Texts

Opening Reflection Question: What criteria should be used to choose leaders for the family of believers?

Readings: Acts 1:15-26

Acts 1:15-26

Replacement for Judas

Commentary:

After the ascension of Jesus, the “family of believers” numbered about one hundred and twenty persons united in prayer. The number 120 may suggest a complete gathering of God’s people and may also echo Jewish communal customs. The replacement of the twelfth apostle mirrors the twelve tribes of Israel and points toward the restoration of Israel (Luke 22:29-30). Symbolism and numbers appear to be important to the author of Luke-Acts. The apostles are presented as a kind of “new Israel,” called to proclaim the good news from Jerusalem to every nation.

Question: Why was it necessary for the “new Israel” to proclaim the good news?

In Acts 1:15-20, Peter takes the initiative as spokesperson to explain Judas’ death and the need for his replacement. Judas loses his apostolic position in fulfillment of Scripture. The account of Judas’ death in Acts differs from Matthew 27:3-10; in Acts, Judas dies quickly and violently. Let us look at both readings.

Questions: Is it difficult to consider that God allowed a violent, self-inflicted death for Judas? Could Judas’ wicked betrayal of Jesus be forgiven?

This replacement took place only at this one gathering of the apostles. When James was later killed by Herod (Acts 12:1), no replacement was chosen for him.

Acts 1:20 quotes Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8 as fulfillment of Scripture. Was this reading of Scripture stretched by the author? Let us look at the Psalms. Psalm 69 is the prayer of one who appears persecuted and defenseless. It includes a plea for

salvation and a complaint about God's seeming delay. The psalmist calls on God to put to shame those who reject trust in God (Psalm 69:6-12). Throughout the psalm, the writer appeals for help. A striking section appears in verses 22-29. Read these verses carefully. This is an imprecatory prayer, containing strong language and a sense of cursing in frustration against the enemies, and perhaps even before God. Verse 25 offers a devastating image against the enemies.

Questions: Who are the enemies of God's people today, in your opinion? How should Christians regard these enemies of God's people?

Psalm 109:1-31 is a petition asking God to deliver the psalmist from the curses and lies of enemies. Verses 1-5 express the weight of accusation against the psalmist, who asks God not to remain silent. The enemies seek a false accuser to pass judgment (verses 6-7). Verse 8 declares, "Let his days be few; let someone else assume his position." Verses 9-19 describe the condition of one who has fallen away from God's faithful love, or hesed. Read these verses carefully.

Question: How do you understand Psalm 109:1-19?

Question: How is this psalm used to describe Judas' demise in Acts 1:20?

Question: Is Scripture being used in similar ways today?

Acts 1:21-23 concludes Peter's address to the community by emphasizing the necessity of choosing a witness to Jesus' resurrection.

Justus and Matthias were nominated by "the 120."

Question: Were women not as important as men as witnesses?

Question: Was this Luke's criterion for apostolic ministry?

According to the New Interpreter's Study Bible, Paul's definition of apostolic ministry may include the following:

- "Apostle" means "sent one," and the term is not limited only to the Twelve (1 Corinthians 15:5-9). Examples include Andronicus and Junia (Romans 16:7).
- Barnabas (1 Corinthians 9:5-9)
- James, the brother of the Lord (Galatians 1:19)
- Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thessalonians 2:7)
- The Samaritan woman, who may be viewed as a witness sent to others in John 4:4-42
- Paul, who refers to himself as an apostle.

Acts 1:24-26 highlights a combined method for choosing replacement leadership. The group prays together, expressing reliance on God's guidance for carrying forward the ministry of Jesus. Then they cast lots, following a common practice used to discern God's will (1 Samuel 14:36-44).

Christians today are led by the Holy Spirit into many forms of ministry. In every context, the church is called to be a living witness to Jesus Christ.

Question: How can we discern ministry callings within the body of Christ today?

Study Summary

This study explores how Acts 1 presents the early community's effort to understand Judas' betrayal and replacement through the lens of Jewish Scripture. By drawing on Psalms 69 and 109, Peter interprets the community's crisis as part of God's continuing work and calls the believers to choose a faithful witness to Jesus' resurrection. The lesson invites participants to consider how Scripture is interpreted, how leadership is discerned, and how the

church today can remain faithful to its calling as a Spirit-led witness to Christ.

Closing Prayer

Lord God, thank you for speaking to us through Scripture and for guiding your people in times of uncertainty. Help us to discern your will with humility, to honor faithful witnesses, and to serve as living signs of the risen Christ in our world. Strengthen us by your Spirit, and lead us in truth, love, and holy living. Amen.