

## When Judas Hanged Himself

With the season of the resurrection of Jesus Christ upon us, I thought it would be nice to review the information about, “When did Judas hang himself?” Over the years, Bible teachers have had trouble in reconciling the supposed two accounts of Judas’ death. Most Christians have been taught that after Judas realized that he had betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ, went into the Temple, threw down the 30 pieces of silver, and then went immediately and hanged himself.

**God’s Word** teaches that Judas not only was alive at the time of the crucifixion, but he saw the resurrected Christ and was also an eyewitness of Christ’s ascension. To begin with, Let’s look at **I Corinthians 15**.

**I Corinthians 15:4-7:** And that he [Jesus] was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: **5** And that he was seen of Cephas [Peter], then of [or, by] the twelve: **6** After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. **7** After that, he was seen of James; then of [or, by] all the apostles.

If the resurrected Christ was seen of the twelve as verses **5 & 7** state, then Judas had to be alive during the appearances of Christ. Next, let’s take a look at Acts 1, which describes a conversation that Jesus had with the twelve apostles. The narrative of this book is made by Luke who wrote it by revelation. It starts off...

**Acts 1:1:** The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, **2** Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the **apostles whom he had chosen**: *Who were the apostles?*→

**Luke 6: 12** And it came to pass in those days, that he [Jesus] went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. **13** And when it was day, he called *unto him* his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; **14** Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, **15** Matthew and Thomas, James the *son* of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, **16** And Judas *the brother* of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. Back to Acts 1.

**Act 1:3** To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them [*the apostles whom he had chosen*] forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: **4** And, being assembled together with *them*, [*the apostles whom he had chosen*] commanded them that they [*the apostles whom he had chosen*] should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me.

As one would read this record in **Acts 1**, it is easy to find that the “**apostles whom he had chosen**” is referred to with the pronouns “**them**,” & “**they**.” A pronoun is controlled by its closest associated noun. In this case, it refers to the “... **the apostles whom he had chosen**.” This follows all the way to the ascension itself in verse **10** And while *they* [*the apostles whom he had chosen*] looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; **11** Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Now we have a detail that we should pay close attention to. In verse **11**, it no longer states, “**the apostles whom he had chosen**,” but now says: “... **ye men of Galilee**.” There were eleven apostles who were all Galileans, one was not. Guess who wasn’t; Judas Iscariot. He was not

from Galilee, but rather from Kerioth, a city in southern Judea. Iscariot means “man from Kerioth.”

To reconcile what appears to be two differing accounts of Judas’ death. The first record, assumed to be before the crucifixion, is found in **Matthew 27:5**, which states:

**Matthew 27:5** And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

The second record, found after the ascension, is described by Peter in **Acts 1:16-20**. This account graphically details Judas’ death:

**Acts 1:16-20:** Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

“Coincidentally,” why would Peter be outlining what needed to be done at this point in Acts? In fact, Judas came up missing during the time after the ascension of Christ. Hence, the need to replace Judas. If Judas had died prior to this time, and before the crucifixion, why wouldn’t have Jesus himself replaced Judas? The reason Peter is doing so is that this is the time shortly after Judas killed himself. The traditional explanation fails to reconcile the details provided. Instead, the issue lies in a misunderstanding of the time element. While **Matthew 27:5** is often assumed to describe Judas’ immediate suicide after his betrayal of Jesus Christ and shortly before the crucifixion, the Word of God offers no specific indication of when Judas actually died in the record in **Matthew 27:5**.

However, the Scriptural evidence of Judas’ presence after the resurrection is spoken of in the records in the Gospels of Luke and John. These two records reveal that eleven apostles were gathered together after the resurrection. The only one absent was **Thomas, not Judas**.

**Luke 24:33-36:** And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found **the eleven** gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

**John 20:19-23:** Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

All twelve apostles were present eight days later. After eight days, all twelve apostles, including Thomas, were gathered to see the risen Christ. This confirms Judas was alive and present.

**John 20:26-29:** And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Paul writes by revelation in **1 Corinthians 15:5**, and confirms that all twelve apostles were present to see the risen Christ.

**1 Corinthians 15:5:** And that he was seen of Cephas [Peter], then of [or, **by**] the twelve.

Again, we see on the day of the Ascension in **Acts 1** and **1 Corinthians 15:7** indicate that all twelve apostles, including Judas, were alive and present.

**Acts 1:6:** When they [*the apostles whom he had chosen*] therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

**1 Corinthians 15:7:** After that, he was seen of James; then of [or, **by**] all the apostles.

Another significant point of confusion arises from the mention of two different fields associated with Judas' betrayal and death: the Potter's Field and Aceldama (the Field of Blood). Understanding the differences between these fields and how they were purchased is crucial to reconciling the accounts.

The first field, called the Potter's Field, was purchased indirectly by the chief priests using the thirty pieces of silver that Judas had returned. Considering it to be blood money, they deemed it unlawful to place in the treasury and used it instead to buy the field for burying strangers.

**Matthew 27:6-10** And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

This field was bought by the chief priests as a public act and served as a burial ground for strangers. It became known as the Field of Blood because it was purchased with blood money.

The second field, called Aceldama, was associated with Judas' own money, referred to as the "reward of iniquity". This likely indicates money Judas had embezzled or stolen while managing the disciples' treasury. Judas' death occurred in this field, and it became notorious as "the field of blood" due to his violent end.

**Acts 1:18-19** Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

The key differences are as follows: **The Potter's Field:** Was purchased with the thirty pieces of silver given to Judas for his betrayal of Jesus. This was purchased by the chief priests as a burial ground for strangers. On the other hand, **Aceldama:** was purchased indirectly by Judas' through the stolen money from the disciples' treasury. It was also the *place* of Judas' death.

If Judas had died before the ascension, Jesus Christ would have replaced Judas himself. However, it was Peter who assumed responsibility for replacing Judas after the ascension. This shows that Peter understood Judas' departure and death which occurred after the ascension. The replacement of Judas with Matthias in **Acts 1:14-26** confirms that Judas' death occurred only after the ascension.

**Acts 1:15:** And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) **16** Men *and* brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. **17** For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. **18** Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong [*by impaling on a sword*], he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. **19** And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. **20** For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take. **21** Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, **22** Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. **23** And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. **24** And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, **25** That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. **26** And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

#### **Addressing Matthew 27:5 “...and went and hanged himself.”**

The Greek word for “hanged himself” in KJV is ***apanchōmai***, from the root ***apanchō***. It is used only once in the New Testament. In classic literature it means “to strangle” or “to choke.” It is used figuratively here to mean “to choke with anger or grief.” Even today we may say about a person that they are “really choked up.” ***Apanchō*** points to death by grief rather than by literal choking. Judas was extremely grief-stricken over the betrayal. He was carried away by grief and despair. It was too much for him to cope with emotionally. He literally “fell upon his sword.” His death occurred in a similar way that King Saul impaled himself on his sword.

The misunderstanding surrounding **Matthew 27:5** arises from ASSUMING Judas' death was immediate. However, the verse only indicates Judas' intention, not the timing of his actual death. The lack of corroboration from the other Gospels and the evidence of his presence during and after the resurrection further confirms this. Judas likely planned to kill himself but delayed or changed his mind until a later time, which ultimately resulted in the horrific death described in Acts 1:18.