

The Potter's Field Was Purchased by Judas

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The Potter's Field Was Purchased by Judas (Acts 1:18)

The Potter's Field Was Purchased by the Chief Priests (Matthew 26:6-7)

There are two possible explanations for what appears to be different accounts of the same event as recorded in the book of Matthew and Acts. Whichever the reader decides upon, there is no contradiction between Acts 1:18 and Matthew 26:6-7.

The first explanation requires that a "metonymy" be applied to Acts 1:18. A metonymy means that "the effect is inserted in place of the event that produced it, or caused it, to occur in the first place." In other words, the "effect" is that some property was purchased as a result of "the event" (i.e. Judas's returning the thirty pieces of silver to the Jewish religious leaders) which caused the purchase to take place. With this in mind, the quotation in the book of Acts will be examined with bracketed notes exploring this possibility.

Now this man (Judas) purchased (caused to be purchased) a field with the wages of iniquity (reward of unrighteousness, or sin) ... (Ac. 1:18a; Ed. notes in parentheses; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

Put another way, Judas's action of returning the thirty pieces of silver meant the he indirectly, or vicariously, purchased some property through the Jewish religious leaders who actually completed the transaction. If this interpretation is correct, it proves there is no contradiction

between the accounts of, what is supposedly, the same event.

The second explanation involves a close examination of the original Greek words applied to the manner in which the property was purchased, as well as the type of property that was purchased. As these original Greek words are very different from each other, it opens the possibility that there were two separate properties purchased. One would have been purchased while Judas was stealing money from the moneybox (Jn. 12:6), while the other was purchased by the Jewish religious leaders following Judas's death. The two accounts will now be compared.

And they (Jewish religious leaders) took counsel and bought (SGD 59 – in the open marketplace where the business of buying and selling is done) with them the potter's field (SGD 68 – field in the country), to bury strangers in (Mt. 27:7; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Now the man (Judas) purchased (SGD 2932 – to acquire for one's self; as in a private sale) a field (SGD 5564 – a farm or estate; cf. Ac. 28:7) with the wages of iniquity (i.e. through robbery, which carries the death penalty according to God's law; cf. Ex. 20:15; Eze. 18:4, 20; Rom. 6:23; 1Jn. 3:4) ... (Ac. 1:18a; Ed. notes in parentheses).

When considering Peter's comments in Acts 1:15-20, it is important to note the order of events because Judas is shown as having already purchased property prior to his death.

For he (Judas) was numbered with us (the other eleven disciples) and obtained a part in this ministry. ¹⁸Now this man (Judas) purchased a field with the wages of iniquity (prior to) falling headlong, (at which time) he burst open in the

middle and all his entrails gushed out (Ac. 1:17-18; Ed. notes in parentheses).

If the property that Peter described as being purchased by Judas was the same one that the Jewish religious leaders purchased, why didn't Peter place the purchase of this property after Judas's death? Instead, Peter placed Judas's purchase of property prior to his death, which points to what Judas was doing with the money he was stealing from the moneybox (Jn. 12:6). In other words, Peter confirmed the sinful state of Judas even before he betrayed Jesus Christ to death. If this is the case, it would explain why Judas did not purchase his property in the open marketplace. Instead, it appears that he made this purchase privately, and as discretely as possible, in order to avoid the attention of Christ, and the other disciples. Also, Judas would have purchased valuable property, and it appears to have been an estate, not just a field to bury the dead.

Whichever position the reader regards as being correct, there is no contradiction between Matthew's account and Peter's commentary on Judas's conduct, as recorded in the book of Acts. Instead, God provided information in both accounts to stimulate further study for those who seek to learn more, as opposed to those who seek to dismiss or discredit God's word. In the closing scripture, God makes it clear that effort must be expended in order to arrive at any given truth.

For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little (Isa. 28:10; cf. 28:13).

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