

Matthias

Memorial

[14 May](#)

Profile

Apostle. As he could bear witness to the Resurrection of Jesus, he was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot. [Preached](#) the Gospel for more than 30 years in Judea, Cappadocia, [Egypt](#) and [Ethiopia](#). Remembered for preaching the need for mortification of the flesh with regard to all its sensual and irregular desires. [Martyr](#).

Died

[stoned to death](#) at Colchis in 80 AD; some relics in the abatical church of Triers, others in Saint Mary Major in [Rome](#)

Name Meaning

gift of Yahweh (Mattithiah)

Patronage

[alcoholism](#), [carpenters](#), diocese of [Great Falls-Billings Montana](#), [reformed alcoholics](#), [smallpox](#), [tailors](#)

Prayers

[Prayer to...](#)

Images

[Gallery](#) of images of Saint Matthias

Additional Information

[Open Directory Project](#)

Reading

"In those days, Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples and said..." As the fiery spirit to whom the flock was entrusted by Christ and as the leader in the band of the apostles, Peter always took the initiative in speaking: "My brothers, we must choose from among our number." He left the decision to the whole body, at once augmenting the honor of those elected and avoiding any suspicion of partiality.

[Did not Peter then have the right to make the choice himself? Certainly he had the right, but he did not want to give the appearance of showing special favor to anyone.](#) "And they nominated two," we read, "Joseph, who was called Barsabbas and surnamed Justus, and Matthias." He himself did not nominate them; all present did. But it was he who brought the issue forward, pointing out that it was not his own idea but had been suggested to him by a scriptural prophecy.

And they all prayed together, saying: "You, Lord, know the hearts of men; make your choice known to us. You, not we." Appropriately they said that he knew the hearts of men, because the choice was to be made by him, not by others.

They spoke with such confidence, because someone had to be appointed. They did not say "choose" but "make known to us" the chosen one; "the one you choose," they said, fully aware that everything was being preordained by God.

from a homily on the Acts of the Apostles by Saint John Chrysostom

Many have concluded, or at least suggested that Peter made a mistake casting lots for Judas' replacement. G. Campbell Morgan wrote:

“Their principle of selection (casting lots) was wrong. The method of casting lots was no longer necessary. The we have the wrong appointment of Matthias. He was a good man, but the wrong man for this position, and he passed out of sight . . . and I am not prepared to omit Paul from the twelve, believing that he was God's man for the filling of the gap” (*Acts*, p. 21).

However, Paul never claimed to be #12, was not a witness of the resurrection, nor was he with Jesus throughout the three years of Jesus' ministry, which was the criteria for the man to fill the office vacated by Judas.

Further, in Acts 1:26 we read “And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was enrolled with the eleven apostles” and then in Acts 2:14 the Holy Spirit acknowledges Matthias as one of the Twelve with these words: “But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice . . .”

St. Matthias, Apostle

Butler's Lives of the Saints

MAY 14

St. CLEMENT of Alexandria assures us, from tradition, that this saint was one of the seventy-two disciples, which is confirmed by Eusebius and St. Jerome; and we learn from the Acts of the Apostles, that he was a constant attendant on our Lord, from the time of his baptism by St. John to his ascension. St. Peter having, in a general assembly of the faithful held soon after, declared from holy scripture the necessity of choosing a twelfth apostle, in the room of Judas; two were unanimously pitched upon by the assembly as most worthy of the dignity: Joseph, called Barsabas, and, on account of his extraordinary piety, surnamed the Just; and Matthias. After devout prayer to God, that he would direct them in their choice, they proceeded in it by way of lot, which falling by the divine direction on Matthias, he was accordingly associated with the eleven and ranked among the apostles. When in deliberations each side appears equally good, or each candidate of equally approved merit, lots may be sometimes lawfully used; otherwise, to commit a thing of importance to such a chance, or to expect a miraculous direction of divine providence in it, would be a criminal superstition and a tempting of God, except he himself, by an evident revelation or inspiration should appoint such a means for the manifestation of his will, promising his supernatural interposition in it, which was the

case on this extraordinary occasion. The miraculous dreams or lots, which we read of in the prophets, must no ways authorize any rash superstitious use of such means in others who have not the like authority.

We justly admire the virtue of this holy assembly of saints. Here were no solicitations or intrigues. No one presented himself to the dignity. Ambition can find no place in a virtuous or humble heart. He who seeks a dignity either knows himself unqualified, and is on this account guilty of the most flagrant injustice with regard to the public, by desiring a charge to which he is no ways equal; or he thinks himself qualified for it, and this self-conceit and confidence in his own abilities renders him the most unworthy of all others. Such a disposition deprives a soul of the divine assistance, without which we can do nothing; for God withdraws his grace and refuses his blessing where self-sufficiency and pride have found any footing. It is something of a secret confidence in ourselves, and a presumption that we deserve the divine succor, which banishes him from us. This is true even in temporal undertakings, but much more so in the charge of souls, in which all success is more particularly the special work of the Holy Ghost, not the fruit of human industry. These two holy candidates were most worthy of the apostleship, because perfectly humble and because they looked upon that dignity with trembling, though they considered its labors, dangers, and persecutions with holy joy and with a burning zeal for the glory of God. No regard was had to worldly talents, none to flesh and blood. God was consulted by prayer, because no one is to be assumed to his ministry who is not called by him and who does not enter it by the door and with the undoubted marks of his vocation. Judas's misfortune filled St. Matthias with the greater humility and fervor, lest he also should fall. We Gentiles are called upon the disinherison of the Jews, and are ingrafted on their stock. We ought therefore to learn to stand always in watchfulness and fear, or we shall be also cut off ourselves, to give place to others whom God will call in our room, and even compel to enter, rather than spare us. The number of his elect depends not on us. His infinite mercy has invited us without any merit on our side; but if we are ungrateful, he can complete his heavenly city without us, and will certainly make our reprobation the most dreadful example of his justice, to all eternity. The greater the excess of his goodness and clemency has been towards us, the more dreadful will be the effects of his vengeance. Many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth.

St. Matthias received the Holy Ghost with the rest soon after his election; and after the dispersion of the disciples, [he] applied himself with zeal to the functions of his apostleship, in converting nations to the faith. He is recorded by St. Clement of Alexandria, to have been remarkable for inculcating the necessity of the mortification of the flesh with regard to all its sensual and irregular desires, an important lesson he had received from Christ, and which he practiced assiduously on his own flesh. The tradition of the Greeks in their menologies tells us that St. Matthias planted the faith about Cappadocia and on the coasts of the Caspian sea, residing chiefly near the port Issus. He must have undergone great hardships and labors amidst so savage a people. The same authors add that he received the crown of martyrdom in Colchis, which they call Æthiopia. The Latins keep his festival on the 24th of February. Some portions of his

relics are shown in the abbatical church of Triers, and in that of St. Mary Major in Rome, unless these latter belong to another Matthias, who was one of the first bishops of Jerusalem on which see the Bollandists.

As the call of St. Matthias, so is ours purely the work of God, and his most gratuitous favor and mercy. What thanks, what fidelity and love do we not owe him for this inestimable grace! When he decreed to call us to his holy faith, cleanse us from sin, and make us members of his spiritual kingdom and heirs of his glory, he saw nothing in us which could determine him to such a predilection. We were infected with sin and could have no title to the least favor, when God said to us, I have loved Jacob -- when he distinguished us from so many millions who perish in the blindness of infidelity and sin, drew us out of the mass of perdition, and bestowed on us the grace of his adoption, and all the high privileges that are annexed to this dignity. In what transports of love and gratitude ought we not, without intermission, to adore his infinite goodness to us, and beg that we may be always strengthened by his grace to advance continually in humility and his holy love, lest, by slackening our pace in his service, we fall from this state of happiness, forfeit this sublime grace, and perish with Judas. Happy would the church be, if all converts were careful to maintain themselves in the same fervor in which they returned to God. But by a neglect to watch over themselves, and to shun dangers, and by falling into sloth, they often relapse into a condition much worse than the former.

Anchor Bible Dictionary

MATTHIAS (PERSON) [Gk *Matthias* (Μαθθίας)]. The disciple chosen to fill the vacancy left by Judas among the Twelve (Acts 1:23, 26).

Matthias is a diminutive form of the common name Mattithiah, “gift of Yahweh.” Apart from his election to the Twelve nothing else is known about him. Later legends numbered him among the Seventy disciples of Luke 10, identified him with Zacchaeus or Barnabas, and gave two different accounts of his death. An apocryphal gospel was written in his name.

Since there is no reliable information about him beyond these few verses in Acts, his importance lies in the ideas connected with the story of his election.

Luke, with two exceptions, limits the use of “apostle” to the Twelve. Paul seems to distinguish the Twelve from apostles (1 Cor 15:5–7). In unraveling the traditions behind the story of Matthias’ election to the Twelve, it appears that Luke has imposed his own definition of the apostolate upon an earlier time. The Twelve were not originally apostles. They were eschatological representatives of messianic Israel. Symbolizing the twelve tribes, they stood as the foundation of the true Israel. It was essential that the vacancy left

by Judas be filled in order to fulfill this function. With Matthias' election the early community stood ready for the eschatological gift of the Spirit at Pentecost and their anointing as the true Israel. It is doubtful that the Twelve functioned in this sense outside of Jerusalem or that they functioned for very long as a definite group within Jerusalem. This helps to explain the lack of knowledge about Matthias and others of the Twelve.

For Paul "apostle" refers to someone called to mission by a special appearance of the risen Lord. See APOSTLE. Luke gives Matthias' qualifications as having been with Jesus from his baptism by John until the ascension. This statement is the origin of speculation that he was one of the Seventy. The probable requirement for membership in the Twelve was simply being a witness of the resurrection. Luke has expanded this to include witnessing Jesus' life as a means of grounding the gospel tradition in eyewitness testimony. Luke's restriction of the term to the Twelve seems to reflect a later solution to the problem already felt in Paul's epistles as to how to distinguish true from false apostles. There are only twelve apostles, the foundation not only of the true Israel but also the Church (cf. Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14).

Luke tells us that Matthias was elected by lot. The exact meaning of the phrase in v 26 and the procedure it describes are uncertain. Some have thought that the verb (*didōmi*) implies that Luke may have meant by *klēpos* not "lot" but "vote." But it seems more likely that Luke, familiar with the LXX and the Hellenistic practice of selecting responsible officials by lot, understood the OT practice where stones with names on them were put in a vessel which was shaken until one fell out. It has also been argued that the word "lot" acquired a metaphoric usage in Judaism. In this view the story indicates that the community selected Matthias (the procedure left unspecified) and that they believed the decision was from God. It was his God given "lot" in life to be one of the Twelve. In this reconstruction Luke's source portrayed a metaphoric use of the word "lot" which he has objectified as a literal "casting of lots" (Beardslee 1960: 245–52). In any event the story makes it clear that God selected Matthias to fill Judas' vacancy. This causes speculations that Paul was meant to be the twelfth apostle and that Peter and the early community overstepped their authority in appointing Matthias to appear polemical.

Bibliography

Beardslee, W. A. 1960. The Casting of Lots at Qumran and in Book of Acts. *NovT* 4: 245–52.

THOMAS W. MARTIN

cf. *confer*, compare

LXX Septuagint

OT Old Testament

NovT *Novum Testamentum*, Leiden

Thomas W. Martin Adjunct Instructor, University of Nebraska at Omaha and Associate Pastor, First United Methodist Church, Fremont, NE

MATTHIAS, TRADITIONS OF. A work named and quoted by Clement of Alexandria, who attributes it to “Matthias the Apostle.” This presumably refers to the Matthias who is named in Acts 1:23–26 as the man chosen to replace Judas among the Twelve. According to Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 1.12.3) Matthias was one of the Seventy (Luke 10:1).

The extent and genre of the *Traditions of Matthias* is uncertain. Clement’s citations from it are brief hortatory sentences (*Strom.* 2.9.45; 3.4.26; 7.13.82). But if *Strom.* 4.6.35 is derived from the same source, then the work may also have contained some narrative about Jesus. The quotations are not overtly gnostic, but according to Clement (*Strom.* 7.17.108) teachings of Matthias were used by Basilideans and perhaps other gnostic groups. According to Hippolytus (*Haer.* 7.20.1) Basilides and his son Isidore claimed to have learned from Matthias “secret words,” which he had received in private teaching from the Savior.

Traditions of Matthias probably was composed in Egypt in the first half of the 2d century. It sometimes has been identified with a work called the *Gospel of Matthias*, but there is too little evidence to decide this question definitively (*NTApocr* 1: 312). The earliest author to mention a *Gospel of Matthias* is Origen (*hom. I. in Lc.*), whose information is repeated by Ambrose and Jerome. Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.25.6) mentions it together with gospels of Thomas and Peter. He describes them as works which were composed by heretics, but which nonetheless were known to most writers in the early Church. The *Gospel of Matthias* is also named in lists of heretical works: the Decretum Gelasianum, the Catalogue of the Sixty Canonical Books, and a list in the Samaritan Chronicle No. II of false books allegedly used by Nazarene Christians.

Jon B. Daniels¹

Hist. Eccl. Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* (= *Church History*)

2d second

NTApocr E. Henneke. *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. W. Schneemelcher. Trans. R.

McL. Wilson. 2 vols. Philadelphia, 1963–65

No. number

Jon B. Daniels Assistant Professor of Religion, Defiance College, Defiance, OH

¹Freedman, D. N. (1996, c1992). *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. New York: Doubleday.