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Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

1: 12-26

30 AD

About this time, Yeshua was crucified under Pontius Pilate. In addition, the resurrection appearances, Shavu'ot, the initial growth of the Messianic community in and around Yerushalayim are in view.

Matthias chosen to replace Judas DIG: Who is present in this meeting? From Mark 3:20-21, 31-35, and John 7:1-5, how do you account for this change in Yeshua's "family?" In light of Peter's denial of Jesus, how might the others feel about his leadership? How might events of John 21:15-19 calm any fears that they might have had? Given the scene in verses 6-8 how would you be praying if you were in this group? What emotions would you express? What is the role of Scripture, prayer, discussion, qualifications and trust in ADONAI regarding the process for choosing a replacement for Judas?

REFLECT: What have been your best experiences in group prayer? How does faith in Messiah affect your prayer life? How might joining in prayer with others around a common mission (one that is beyond your natural ability) enhance your own prayer life? How does verse 8 provide that for you? How does the pattern of decision-making here compare with how you make important decisions? Which of the ingredients listed here do you utilize more? What is the correlation between faith and your knowledge of God's will? What can you do this week to strengthen your faith in the resurrected Christ?

As the book of **Acts** opened, **Jesus** equipped **the apostles** with the necessary spiritual gifts to launch the completion of **His** unfinished work of gathering a body of believers, **the bride of the Lamb (Revelation 18:23, 19:7, 21:2 and 9, 22:17)**, into the Kingdom of **God**. It was vitally important that the right men were anointed for that mission. Accordingly, a replacement had to be chosen for the dead traitor **Judas** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click [Lm - Judas Hangs Himself](#)**).

They believed in each other: Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey, which describes a short distance, the only kind allowed on the Sabbath (1:12). This was an act of obedience because Jesus had commanded them: **Not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father promised . . . there you will receive power when the Ruach ha-Kodesh has come upon you (2:4-5).** They returned even though Tziyon was not a safe place for them.

The rabbis taught that a Sabbath day's journey was about 0.57 of a mile. How did they come up with that distance? They used three passages of scripture from the Torah. The first one is Exodus 16:29: **See, Adonai has given you the Sabbath . . . let every man stay in his place, and let no man go out on the seventh day.** The second scripture they used was Exodus 31:13: **Surely you must keep My *Shabbatot*, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, so you may know that I am Adonai who sanctifies you.** But neither one of those two passages say anything about distance. So thirdly, they went to Numbers 35:5, which doesn't deal with the Sabbath as such, it deals with a city of refuge. If you killed a man accidentally, to avoid being killed yourself by the avenger of the blood, you could flee to a city of refuge. From then on, however, until the death of the high priest, you were to stay in the city of refuge. You could venture outside the city limits for only 2,000 cubits (Numbers 35:5), which is about three-quarters of a mile. **So what the rabbis did was interpret the two Exodus passages that deal with the Sabbath by the Numbers passage that tells you the distance that someone who killed a person accidentally could go outside a city of refuge, and came up with 0.57 of a mile.**²²

When they had entered, they went up to the upper room where they were staying. The upper room has the definite article in front of it, so it is a specific upper room. Since no upper room is mentioned in the immediate context, we must refer to a previously mentioned upper room. And the only previously mentioned upper room was that of the last Passover (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12). It is also the upper room where one of the post-resurrection appearances of Yeshua took place (John 20:19 and 26). And it is a real possibility that it was where the Messianic community started in Acts 2:1. **The rabbis teach that it was the home of the mother of John Mark, the author of the gospel of Mark.**



Then **Luke** lists **the eleven apostles** that were involved. **Peter and John and Jacob and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; Jacob son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judah son of Jacob** (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Cy - These are the Names of the Twelve Apostles](#)). **Luke** wishes to chronicle the successful growth of the Church from **Jerusalem** to Rome, and **the Twelve**, apart from **Peter** in particular, seem to have played a limited role in this process. In other words, **Luke** wishes to show how it developed away from being a purely Messianic community to being a worldwide movement, with a growing majority of Gentiles as believers in **Luke's** time. To put it a little differently, **the Twelve's** mission field was to **Jews**, and particularly **Jews** who lived in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. As such, this is the last time they are mentioned in **Acts (1:13)**.²³

They believed in prayer: Prayer played a significant role in the story of the Messianic Community as recorded in **Acts**. **All these with one mind (2:1 and 46, 4:24, 5:12, 15:25) were continuing together in prayer for the promise of the Father (1:14a)**. They were united **together in prayer**. The Greek word for **with one mind** (Greek: *homothumadon*, refers to *an inner unity, or being of the same passion*). The word is used in the Septuagint in **Exodus 19:8**, where the people of **Isra'el answered together** [*homothumadon*], "**All that Adonai has said we will do.**" So, **the eleven apostles** were there **along with the women**, who may have included the wives of **the apostles** and certainly **the women** who accompanied **Yeshua** from Galilee and witnessed the crucifixion (**Luke 8:2, 23:55, 24:10**).

Judaism always granted an important place to **women**; however, in the synagogue men and **women** were traditionally separated by a dividing wall or curtain (*m'chitzah*) so that nothing could be a distraction with **prayer**. Although in a powerful **prayer** meeting such concerns are gone, as all turn to **YHVH**. Moreover, this group functioned more like a family than a congregational assembly.²⁴

Much legend, myth, and faulty dogma have arisen over the centuries in connection with

Miriam, Yeshua's mother (1:14b). In contrast to the inordinate devotion the Roman Catholic Church gives **her**, **she** is mentioned here for the last time. At this point **she** walks off the pages of the Bible never to be heard of again.

Miriam was a woman of extraordinary virtue, or **she** would never have been chosen to be the mother of **the Lord Jesus Christ**. For that role **she** deserves respect and honor (**Luke 1:42**). Still, **she** was a sinner who praised **ADONAI** as **her Savior**. **She** referred to **herself** as a humble bond slave to **God**, who needed mercy (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Au - Jesus Presented in the Temple**). To offer **prayers** to **her** and elevate **her** to a role as co-redemptrix with Christ is to go beyond the bounds of Scripture and **her** own confession. The silence of the epistles, which form the doctrinal core of the New Covenant, is especially significant. If **she** played the important role in salvation as assigned to **her** by the Roman Catholic Church, or if **she** were to receive **prayers** as an intercessor between believers and **Messiah**, surely the B'rit Chadashah would have spelled that out. Nor do such Roman Catholic teachings as **her** virgin birth and bodily assumption into heaven find any biblical support. They are fabrications.²⁵

And His four half-brothers (1:14c and Matthew 13:55). During the ministry of **Jesus** **they** were unbelievers (**Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; John 7:3-5**). But **they** became believers as a result of the resurrection of **their half-brother**. In fact, one of the resurrection appearances of **Jesus** was to **His half-brother James** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Mp - Then Jesus Appeared to James**). **They** became active in ministry, in fact, two of the four wrote books in the B'rit Chadashah, **James** and **Jude**.

However, there was one apostolic spot that had been vacated by **Judas**. Therefore, **in those days, Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters**. Although **Peter** took the lead and made this proposal; nevertheless, **he** did not make the final decision because **he** did not have the sole authority of appointment. **The number of names all together was about a hundred and twenty (1:15)**. That number is significant. **The rabbis taught that a hundred and twenty was the minimum requirement for constituting a local Sanhedrin**. In spite of all **Yeshua's** miracles - raising the dead, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, and **His** authority over demons - **Isra'el** rejected and crucified **Him**. And at the time of **His** death, it seems **He** had **about a hundred and twenty** dedicated followers.

Peter acted as the spokesman for the community, as **he** did in the majority of cases in the early chapters of **Acts**. **He** was not offering **his** own opinion, but was being led by **the Spirit of God**. **He** began by noting that **Judas** didn't spoil **God's** plan, **he fulfilled** it:

Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Ruach ha-Kodesh foretold (the divine author) **by the mouth of David** (the human author), **concerning Judas - who became a guide to those who seized Yeshua. For he was counted among us** (one of the Twelve) **and received his share of this office (1:16-17).**

Now this man Judas bought a field with the reward of his wickedness (1:18a). This seems to contradict **Matthew 27:3-10**, where it says the priests were the ones who purchased the field. Under Jewish law money that was improperly obtained could not be used in the Temple treasury. However, **Judas**, filled with remorse, threw it into the Temple compound and left. **Matthew** points out that the priests felt that this was money wrongfully gained, and therefore could not be used for the Temple treasury. In such cases, Jewish law said the money had to be returned to the donor. However, the law also made a provision if the donor died before the money was returned, which was the case of **Judas**. In those cases, the money still could not be used for the Temple treasury, to purchase something for the common good. So the priests bought a field to bury poor people in. And since the field was bought with **blood** money, it became known as **the Field of Blood**. But Jewish law also said the thing purchased had to be in the name of the donor even though he was dead. So legally, **Judas** bought the field although **he** was not involved in the transaction whatsoever.

When **Judas** hung **himself** in **the Valley of ben Hinnom**, it was the first day of the Passover and according to Jewish law if there was a dead body hanging in **Tziyon**, the whole **city** was considered defiled and the morning offering could not be celebrated. But since the body hung outside of **Tziyon**, **the city** was considered cleansed and the celebration of the Passover could begin. They could return later and recover the body for burial.

Consequently, **the betrayer's** body hung there until the sun set on Passover. However, the festivals of Unleavened Bread and Pesach together lasted for seven days (**Exodus 12:19**). No one would dare touch **his** body during that time for fear of defilement. Heaven only knows how long **he** hung there that week, but ultimately the weight of **his** body broke whatever branch **he** hung on and **he fell headlong** down the steep cliffs onto the jagged rocks of **the Valley of Hinnom** below. **His body burst open and all his intestines spilled out (Acts 1:18b)**. Death, however, did not relieve **his** guilt. It only made it permanent. As **the Savior of Sinners** repeatedly declared, hell is a place of eternal torment, **of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12, 13:42 and 50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30)**.

So **Peter** points out that what happened to **Judas** and the betrayal was a fulfillment of Scripture. **And that field became known to all those living in Jerusalem, so in their**

own language that field was called Akeldama - that is Aramaic for the 'Field of Blood' (1:19). People spoke both Aramaic and Hebrew so the B'rit Chadashah quotes words from both languages. **For it is written in the Book of Psalms, 'Let his dwelling place become desolate, and let there be no one living in it' (Psalm 69:25 LXX), and 'Let another take his position' (Psalm 109:8 LXX) (1:20).**

Luke quotes the TaNaKh almost always in a form either corresponding to the **LXX** or close to it, and not according to the Hebrew Masoretic Text. Here **Psalms 69:25** and **109:8** are quoted close but not exactly corresponding to the **LXX**.²⁶

It was necessary that twelve men witness at Shavu'ot to **the twelve** tribes of **Isra'el**, and also that **twelve** men be prepared to **sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes (Luke 22:28-30)**. From **Acts Chapters 2-7**, the witness was primarily to **Isra'el, to the Jew first (Romans 1:16, Acts 3:26, 13:46)**. Once the message had gone out to the Gentiles in **Acts Chapters 10-11**, this Jewish emphasis began to decline. When **the apostle James (Yeshua's brother)** was martyred (**Acts 12:1-2**), **he** was not replaced. Why? Because the initial **witness to Isra'el** had been completed, and the message was going out to both **Jews** and Gentiles alike. There was no more need for **the twelve apostles** to give **witness to the twelve tribes of Isra'el** exclusively.²⁷

They believed in the Lord's leading: **Peter** continued, the one to replace **Judas** must come from **the hundred and twenty** that were with **them** in **the upper room**, and to be a witness of **Christ's** whole earthly ministry to be among **the Twelve**. **Therefore, one of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord** (Greek: *kurios*, meaning *Lord* or *Master*) **Yeshua** went in and out among us - beginning with **His immersion by John until the day He was taken up from us - must become a witness with us of His resurrection (1:21-22)**. In the book of **Acts** there are two apostolic groups. The first is the apostolic group of **the Twelve** who were with **Jesus** from **His immersion by John** to **His ascension**. That's why **Sha'ul** did not qualify to be one of this group. The second group of **apostles** had to see the **resurrected Christ**. In the book of **Acts**, three such men are mentioned: **James**, the half-brother of **Jesus** (see above), **Barnabus** (who was one of the **five hundred** of **First Cor 15:6**), and **Sha'ul**, who saw **Yeshua** on **the Damascus road (9:1-6)**.

*The main ministry of **the new apostle** was simply to **become a witness with us of His resurrection**. We can have the same ministry by showing that **Yeshua** lives in us.*

So, they nominated two. Only **two** out of **the hundred and twenty** fulfilled the necessary

requirements of **having been with Jesus** and **having witnessed His resurrection: Joseph, called Barsabbas**, a Hellenized rendering of the Jewish name **Bar-Shabbat**, meaning *son of the Sabbath* (however **he** is **also** sometimes called by **his** Roman name **Justus**), and **Matthias** meaning *gift of God*. **And they prayed for God to reveal the choice He had already made, and said, “You, O Lord, who knows the hearts** (Greek: *kardiognosta*, meaning *the heart searcher*) **of all men, show us which of these two You have chosen to take the position in this office as apostle, from which Judah turned aside to go to his own place, to sh’ol” (1:23-25).**

Their doing what **Jesus** would do was notable. How did **the Lord** choose **His twelve apostles**? **And it was during these days that Yeshua went out to the mountain to pray, and He spent all night in prayer to God. When day came, He called His disciples, choosing from among them twelve whom He also named apostles (Luke 6:12-13). He prayed, even as these hundred and twenty did, to see who the Lord would add to their number.**

Then they cast lots for them. This was a divinely approved practice in the TaNaKh: **The lot is cast into the lap, but their very decision is from ADONAI (Proverbs 16:33)** to discern the will of ADONAI (**Leviticus 16:8; Joshua 14:2; Numbers 10:34 and 11:1**). The way it was done was that they would take two stones, one with the name of **Joseph** on it and another with the name of **Matthias** on it. The stones were then put into some kind of a container, and it was shaken until one stone come out. **And the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles (1:26).** There are only **twelve apostles**. This is the last time in the biblical record that this method is used because of the coming of **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh** in **Chapter 2**, this method was no longer necessary. **And he was added to the eleven apostles (1:23-26).** There is no indication anywhere in the book of **Acts** that this was the wrong way of doing it. In fact, in **6:2** we read: **So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together**; therefore, **Matthis** was then counted among **them**. Also, in **Matthew 19:28**, **Jesus** said that **the apostles will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Isra’el**, and **Matthias** would fulfill that roll. Then we are told that the **New Jerusalem will have twelve foundations, and on them will be the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Matthias’ name** will be on one of those **twelve foundations (Revelation 21:14)**.²⁸ With **Matthias’** selection to replace the traitor **Judas**, all was now ready for the birth of the Messianic community on the festival of Shavu’ot and to turn the world upside down.

The stage was then set for Shavu’ot. **The apostles** had received **Messiah’s** Great Commission and seen **His** ascension. **The** team of **apostles** was complete again, ready to be

His chosen **witnesses**. Only one thing was missing: **The Spirit of God** had not yet come. Though the place left vacant had been replaced by **Judas** had been filled by **Matthias**, the place left vacant by **Yeshua** had not been filled by **the Ruach**. So, we leave **Luke's** first chapter of **Acts** with the **one-hundred-and-twenty** waiting in **Yerushalayim**, persevering in **prayer** with one heart and mind, poised ready to fulfill **Christ's** command just as soon as **He** fulfilled **His** promise.²⁹

A closer look at kurios: The Greek word *kurios*, meaning *Lord* or *Master*, is the most frequently used title for **Messiah** in all of **Luke-Acts**, used almost twice as frequently as the term **Christ**. The emphasis in **Luke-Acts** matches **Luke's** basic stress on **ADONAI's** sovereignty and **His** plan of salvation, which is fulfilled through the life and death of **Yeshua**. **He** is the one who expresses and executes this plan of salvation. It becomes clear that the basic connotation for **Luke** of the term *kurios* is of **One** who exercises dominion over the world, and in particular over human lives and events.

Acts indicates that for some of the early believers it was hard to acknowledge that **Yeshua** was the risen **Lord** (**10:40-42, 11:16, 16:31, 20:21**). It is **Jesus**, the risen and exalted **Lord** whom people are called upon to turn to and believe in (**5:14, 9:35, 11:17**). It was this risen **Lord** who confronts Sha'ul on the Damascus road (**9:10-17, 18:9**), and to whom believers must remain faithful (**20:19**). It is **the Lord Jesus** whom the original **apostles** traveled with (**Acts 1:21**), whose teaching Paul can quote (**20:35**), and who commissions people for ministry (**20:24**). In these texts, the name **Yeshua** seems to be added on to *kurios* to make clear the identity of this **Lord**. The continuation of **the Lord's** identity before and after **His** resurrection makes it possible for **Luke** to refer to **Jesus'** earthly activity and teaching using the term *kurios*, even though **he** knows that **Messiah** does not fully or truly assume the roles of exalted **Lord** until after **He** had risen from the dead.³⁰