

## MATTHIAS

**Acts 1:15** And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples [*in the upper room, v.13 ... most probably the same upper room where Jesus had previously commemorated the Feast of the Passover, - the Last Supper*], and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) ... It is interesting to learn of how many were gathered, and for what reason. Previously, John records, **20:19** 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. ... There was no fear on *this* occasion though. Instead, they were waiting in prayerful anticipation for the fulfilment of the instructions and promise Jesus had made to the disciples, prior to His ascension, **Acts 1:4** And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. **5** For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. ... And we can read about the promise of the Spirit in John chapters fourteen and sixteen. So that was their reason for gathering ...

With regards to those who were gathered/present, let's see how many of the 120 (Acts 1:15) we can identify ...

**Acts 1:13** And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both *Peter*, and *James*, and *John*, and *Andrew*, *Philip*, and *Thomas*, *Bartholomew*, and *Matthew*, *James the son of Alphaeus*, and *Simon Zelotes*, and *Judas the brother of James*. ... Eleven of the disciples ... **14** These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, [**Mt. 27:55** And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: **56** Among which was *Mary Magdalene*, and *Mary the mother of James and Joses (who was also the wife of Alphaeus/Cleopas)*, and *the mother of Zebedee's children (i.e. James and John)*. ... **Mk. 15:40** There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was *Mary Magdalene*, and *Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses*, and *Salome (probably the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John)*; **41** (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem. ... **Jn. 19:25** Now there stood by the cross of Jesus *his mother*, and *his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas*, and *Mary Magdalene* ... **Lk. 24:9** And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. **10** It was *Mary Magdalene*, and *Joanna*, and *Mary the mother of James*, and *other women* that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.] ... And there were also ... **Acts 1:14** ... and *Mary the mother of Jesus*, and with *his brethren* [**Mk. 6:3** Is not this the carpenter, the son of *Mary*, the brother of *James*, and *Joses*, and of *Juda*, and *Simon*? and are not *his sisters* here with us?].

So, altogether, we can identify more than two dozen of those present, - Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James, Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Cleopas, James and John's mother, Jesus' mother, her sister, Joanna, Jesus' brothers (James, Joses, Judah, Simon), = 21 ... and His sisters ... and Barsabas and Matthias.

Something else we see here is how families came to be united in Christ, following His crucifixion and resurrection. Some had been with Him from the beginning, - or, at least, almost the beginning, - and others gradually came to recognise He was truly the Messiah.

So, as they wait with expectancy in the upper room, **Acts 1:15** ... 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, [*i.e. Biblical prophecy had to be literally 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 [*Judas Iscariot*] was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. **18** Now this man [*Judas Iscariot*] purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. [*cf. Mt. 27:3-10*] **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 [*cf. v.16*], Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein [*Ps. 69:25*]: and his bishoprick [*ἐπισκοπή, overseer*] let another take [*Ps. 109:8*]. ...

**Ps. 69:22** Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. **23** Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. **24** Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. **25** Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents. **26** For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. **27** Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness. **28** Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.

**Ps. 109:2** For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. **3** They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. **4** For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer. **5** And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love. **6** Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand. **7** When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. **8** Let his days be few; and let another take his office.

... So, Judas Iscariot had gone, and his place would be filled by a man who had to have been an eyewitness of Jesus, who also had to have experienced

the life and ministry of the Saviour, beginning with His baptism in the River Jordan, and continuing through to His crucifixion and resurrection, and up until the day of His ascension. The added necessary requirement was that the person was *ultimately* to be chosen by God. ... <sup>21</sup> Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup> 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.

And the means by which they would discover the mind of God regarding the choice of the new disciple/apostle would take place in the prayer meeting, prior to the Day of Pentecost. ... And Peter led the proceedings.

Why was it necessary to have *twelve* disciples? I believe the simple answer is that it corresponds with the twelve tribes in the Old Testament. Jesus had come to be the Saviour of His people Israel (Mt. 1:21 ... thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.) He came to institute the *new* covenant ... and so, the twelve disciples are continuing the work God began in the Old Testament. He will keep His Word, as is promised, - for example, - in such passages as Jer. 33:<sup>14</sup> Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. <sup>15</sup> In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. <sup>16</sup> In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.

So, these were important times, and God's people gathered in the upper room knew it, and consequently, the names of two men were presented before the eleven disciples, Acts 1:23 And they [*i.e. the disciples/Apostles*] appointed [ἴστημι] two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. ... These two men obviously met the requirements and were already well-known to the apostles.

Both men were Jews ... and, in fact, *everyone* in the upper room were Jews. The first of the two names mentioned was Joseph, and his name means "let him add", relating to the Hebrew "Jehovah has added". ... And Joseph, - in the upper room, - would have been named after Joseph in the Old Testament who was the favoured son of Jacob and the man God mightily used in Egypt.

As we have noticed with the disciples, many of them had additional names ... We have seen, for example, how Simon was also called Peter, Bartholomew was also called Nathanael, Matthew was also called Levi ... and this candidate for membership of the apostles also had two names, - Joseph Barsabas (n.b. not *Barabbas*). Barsabas means ‘bar’ – son of – Sabas, which is an Aramaic word meaning ‘will’, ‘desire’. ... But not only had he *two* names, he also had his surname which was ‘Justus’, from the Latin word meaning ‘Just’. ... Joseph Barsabas Justus, “Jehovah has added”, “the son of desire”, “the just”. ... Obviously, *he* had excellent qualifications. He would have been *perfect* for the role.

The other candidate was simply known as Matthias, meaning “gift of God”. ... That is all we are told about him.

And remember how the disciples made their choice, - they prayed. Such a potentially difficult decision because both men filled the requirements perfectly ... but only one of them would be God’s choice and God’s answer to the prayers of the apostles, [Acts 1:24](#) 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 ... They were abundantly aware the decision to make was not finally theirs ... it was the Lord’s, and therefore, they had to learn from Him as to whether Joseph Barsabas Justus was be chosen, or Matthias. ... Lord, it is not our work, it’s Yours ... so lead us to the man of Your choice.

Being Jews, they used the familiar Old Testament practice of ‘drawing lots’ .... However, despite so many references to this practice, - which is mentioned over seventy times in the Old Testament and seven times in the New Testament, - nothing is known about what the actual lots *were*. The word is *gowral*, and it originally meant ‘stone’. So, whatever it specifically means, it had something to do with the idea of casting stones in a particular manner to arrive at an outcome. ... And when we go back into the Old Testament we learn that in the High Priest’s breastplate, - often referred to as the ‘breastplate of judgment’, - there was kept in a pouch the Urim and the Thummim. These were thought to be two sardonyx stones [cf. Josephus] and they were used in making important decisions, for example, in the division of the land (Joshua 14-21).

It was also a practice among the heathen, as is illustrated by the sailor's on board the ship with Jonah (Jonah 1:7), and it had developed into a game as when the soldiers cast lots for the garments of Jesus (Mt. 27:35).

In following the practice, though, the disciples seemed to have been following the Old Testament High Priestly precedent, **Lev. 16:8** And Aaron [*the high priest*] shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. **9** And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD'S lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. ... **I Chron. 24:5** Thus were they divided by lot, one sort with another; for the governors of the sanctuary, and governors of the house of God, were of the sons of Eleazar, and of the sons of Ithamar. **31** These likewise cast lots over against their brethren the sons of Aaron in the presence of David the king, and Zadok, and Ahimelech, and the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites, even the principal fathers over against their younger brethren. ... **25:8** And they cast lots, ward against ward, as well the small as the great, the teacher as the scholar. **9** Now the first lot came forth for Asaph to Joseph: the second to Gedaliah, who with his brethren and sons were twelve ... **26:13** And they cast lots, as well the small as the great, according to the house of their fathers, for every gate. **14** And the lot eastward fell to Shelemiah. Then for Zechariah his son, a wise counsellor, they cast lots; and his lot came out northward.

Should we 'cast lots' today, or even use some form of modern equivalent? ... Is it not a form of gambling, and 'throwing a dice'? Indeed, it *is* a practice associated with gambling, and the throwing of dice, and it ought *not* to be continued among Christians. It is no different to the Lottery, or any other form of gambling. ... It is *not* for Christians today.

However, pre-Pentecost, - i.e. prior to the coming of the Holy Spirit, - it was the means by which the disciples discerned the will of God. This was in accordance with 'the tradition of the fathers' (i.e. from Old Testament times) ... but this *was* the final example in the New Testament of Christians casting lots for *after* Pentecost, - *post*-Pentecost, - the means by which God guided and instructed His people was and is by the Holy Spirit, **Jn. 16:13** Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ... and he will shew you things to come.

So, the eleven disciples prayed and cast lots to discover the will and mind of God ... as their forefathers had done in the Old Testament times. ... Previously, each of the other disciples had been called by Jesus ... but this

now was very different and unique in that this was to be the only appointment to the disciples *not* made personally by Jesus.

And as they prayed, they asked the Lord to demonstrate very clearly and very definitely whether it should be Joseph Barsabas Justus or Matthias who should become the apostle. ... And Matthias was chosen ... the decision having been arrived at similar to how King Solomon explained the process of 'casting lots', [Prov. 16:33](#) The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

As far as the Bible telling us anything more about Matthias ... it simply doesn't! I wonder is that because nothing needed to be said about Matthias because all the people in the meeting knew him, and his service for the Lord. I wonder if his name did not *need* any explanation because he was such a trophy of grace in the Lord's work already?

Basically though, all we do know about him is that when he was appointed, and the number of the apostles was complete ... back again to twelve. Matthias took up his duties and became one with the rest of the apostles. Previously, he had been somewhat on the periphery, [Acts 1:22](#) Beginning from the baptism of John ... But now, through the sovereign choice of God, he was fully integrated into the work of the apostles, for example, [Acts 6:1](#) And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. <sup>2</sup> Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Matthias along with Peter, Andrew, James and John, and the others was preaching and teaching the Word of God.

The story of the call of Matthias illustrates how God has a plan for each of us, even when sometimes it seems to be to keep us in the background. He has a purpose in saving us, and that purpose ought never to be flattered or wasted. No matter how long we are saved, God always has a very definite direction to lead us, and He has certain goals to achieve through us ... and sometimes He keeps us, - as it were, - 'waiting in the wings'.

Matthias does not feature any more, - by name, - in the Scriptures and yet, he was so important as to fulfil Old Testament prophecies concerning a replacement for Judas Iscariot. God shows us He had a plan for Matthias even

before he was born, and that plan was articulated by the psalmist David one thousand years earlier. ... And it does not matter whether we are brought to the fore, or kept in the background ... but what *does* matter is that we serve God faithfully in the capacity in which He sets us.

With regards to the extra-Biblical records, Matthias preached in Judea. The early church witnesses indicate he preached in the land of Colchis (the modern-day Republic of Georgia, on the south-eastern side of the Black Sea). Out of one of the more potentially reliable historic sources, - from the 14<sup>th</sup> century Greek church historian Nicephorus (*Historia eccl.*, 2, 40), Matthias preached in Colchis so powerfully and so effectively that he was stoned to death, c. 80 AD ... And another Coptic record (*Acts of Andrew and Matthias*) follows this up by telling of a marker with Matthias' name engraved on it, indicating his burial site near the ruins of an old Roman fortress called Gonio (previously called Apsaros).

... Matthias is yet another simple illustration of how God calls and uses ordinary men and women ... maybe even those who He might seem to have initially overlooked. ... And yet, He has them waiting and being prepared for the time when He will use them in a fuller capacity. ... And that is what happened to Matthias. How easily he could have thought God did not need him for God had already called such great men as Peter, Andrew, James, and John ... God doesn't need me someone so 'ordinary' as me for He has plenty of 'better' people. And yes, at first, that is how it may have seemed to Matthias at the beginning because he was not one of the original Twelve. ... And he could so easily have left off following Jesus, and gone and done something else ... but no, for he did not think like that. Instead, he kept on following because He loved the Lord and he wanted to be with Him. ... Even before he became a disciple, Jesus was already his Master.

God has a plan of service for each and every one of us ... and that was the testimony of Scripture concerning Matthias. He was one of those ... [Acts 1:21](#) ... men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup> Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us. ... He was following the Saviour. ...

O let me see Thy footprints, and in them plant mine own;  
 My hope to follow duly is in Thy strength alone.  
 O guide me, call me, draw me, uphold me to the end;  
 And then in Heaven receive me, my Saviour and my friend.