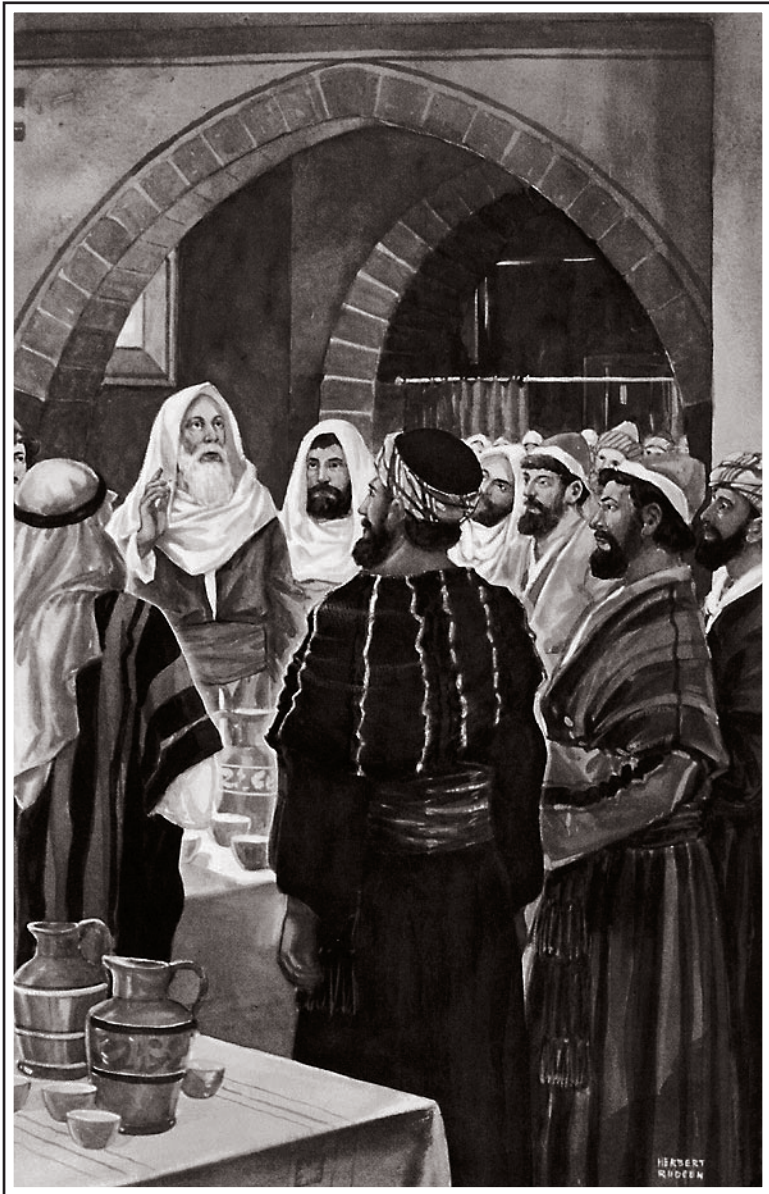


The Twelve Apostles of the Lamb



Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick [position as overseer] let another take. Acts 1:20

Chapter Twelve



Choosing a Replacement for the Betrayer

After the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus, the eleven faithful Apostles, along with about one hundred and twenty of Jesus' disciples were gathered together in an upper room in Jerusalem, waiting for the promised blessing of the holy Spirit. *Acts 1:4-15* And while waiting, the Apostle Peter remembered the prophecies concerning Judas in the book of Psalms, "*Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick [office of an overseer] let another take.*" *Acts 1:20* From this, Peter urged his brethren that they should choose from among those who were faithful followers of Jesus a replacement for the betrayer Judas.

This replacement for Judas had to be a believer who had witnessed the life and resurrection of their Lord. The Apostles selected two honored Christians from among them, Justus* and Matthias, and prayed for the Heavenly Father to bless which one He wanted to replace Judas. "*...and they gave forth their lots: and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*" *Acts 1:21-26*

Now, Matthias was definitely a faithful example to the early Church. We know he was a Jew, because the call of the Church had not yet gone out to the Gentiles. He was probably

*It is possible that Justus is the same as Barnabas, also called Joses in Acts 4:36. Joses is the same as "*Joseph called Barsabas who was surnamed Justus*" in Acts 1:23. More will be written on Barnabas in the next chapter on the Apostle Paul.

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from a faithful Jewish household, for his name means “*Gift of Jehovah.*” It is very possible that he was a former follower of John the Baptist, for Peter noted this as one of the qualifications they looked for in a replacement. *Act 1:21, 22* And by these qualifications, it is quite likely also that he was one of the 70 disciples that Jesus sent out to preach by the power of the holy Spirit. *Luke 10:1* Matthias would have been a very responsible and active example of a believer, otherwise he would not have been selected to such a place of honor among the brethren.

Even though Matthias was quite capable as a good Christian example to replace Judas, and the Apostles in their zeal were trying to do God’s will, for many reasons they were wrong to jump ahead of the Lord. One reason was that Jesus simply told them to stay in Jerusalem and “*wait for the promise of the Father...*” He did not direct them to take matters of great importance to the Church into their own hands. Another reason was that they had not yet received the begetting of the holy Spirit, which would have given clearer wisdom in such matters. Finally, Peter should have known through the many lessons of his walk with the Lord, that he should beware of his tendency toward acting out first, before considering the consequences. He should have been very cautious with his impetuous nature.

Even though the Heavenly Father appreciated the zeal of their hearts, He ignored their error and let time prove to them that He was quite able to make His own choice of an Apostle to replace Judas. *Reprint 549-552* Jehovah had another plan and was preparing a better instrument of His own choosing—Saul of Tarsus. But, Saul? The Apostles would never have chosen him! He was known as a persecutor of the Church, and soon he would even assist in the stoning of their beloved Stephen! *Acts 7:57-60* God would prove to the early Church and to all believers that He could take the misguided zeal of Saul, and by His holy Spirit, transform him into the most noted of the twelve Apostles. *I Cor. 1:26-29 & II Cor. 11:5* Much is known of the faithful Apostle Paul through the Scriptures, and his conversion and life will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

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But what of Matthias? When he saw that God had not blessed him to be the Apostle to replace Judas, did he become jealous or hurt and fight for his right to be an Apostle? Did he storm off in disgust and leave the flock of the Lord? It is likely that he did not, for history claims him to be very active in the witness of the Gospel. All Christians should learn a lesson by this humble loving spirit which would rejoice in the special blessings of others. In I Corinthians 13:4 we read that love envies not. The fact that others had chosen Matthias to replace Judas was a testimony of his loving character toward the Lord and his brethren.

Historians claim that Matthias helped in spreading the Gospel as far as Armenia and Ethiopia. Church history also states that he was imprisoned and blinded by the Ethiopians and then was rescued by the Apostle Andrew. Historians also believe that the final mission of Matthias was in Jerusalem where he was stoned to death for his ministry to Jesus.

We recall that Matthias and Justus were present with the one hundred and twenty disciples gathered in the upper room who received the holy Spirit at Pentecost. It is certain, through the Scriptural records that Matthias and Justus were well respected by the eleven faithful Apostles and even though neither was numbered as one of the twelve Apostles, both can be respected by the Church as faithful followers of the Lamb.

