

Sunday Sermon – 10th Matthew – St. Matthias, The Missing Link – 2015-08-09

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In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Jesus handpicked a 12 link chain to connect His message and ministry with the Church of the future. We refer to that 12 link chain as the 12 Apostles. Unfortunately, one of those links turned out to be not only the weakest link, but a faulty and broken link – ultimately a missing link. It almost created a complete break and the end of what would become the world's largest religion, the message and ministry that would save generations of mankind and transform the world.

We read in very early in the Acts of the Apostles ([chapter 1, verses 20-26](#)), that the Apostles themselves realized they needed to add a good strong link to complete the 12 link chain.

²⁰ “For it is written in the Book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it’. (Psalm 69:25), and, ‘Let another take his office.’ (Psalm 109:8)

²¹ “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

²³ And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

²⁴ And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen ²⁵ to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” ²⁶ And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

The Orthodox Church commemorates this St. Matthias today. He was one of the 70 who were with Jesus from the beginning of His Ministry and was selected by the Apostles and the Holy Spirit to replace Judas. The Apostles themselves realized and recognized that the number 12 was significant. They understood that they were selected to become the Judges and spiritual representatives of the New Israel, the Church of Jesus Christ. When we depict the Twelve Apostles separately in our iconography, we usually depict Matthias as one of the 12. However, when we depict

them together either at Pentecost or in the Synaxis of the 12 Apostles, St. Paul is usually depicted as one of the 12 instead. This is not historically accurate, but it is to show just how significant St. Paul's ministry was in spreading the Message and Ministry of Jesus Christ.

In the Orthodox tradition, the Apostle Matthias was born in Bethlehem and was of the Tribe of Judah. From his early childhood he studied the Law of God under the guidance of St. [Simeon the God-receiver](#), the Simeon who received Christ in his arms in the Temple on the occasion of his 40 day blessing. When the [Lord Jesus Christ](#) revealed himself to the world, St Matthias believed in him as the Messiah, followed constantly after him and was numbered among the Seventy Apostles, whom the Lord "sent them two by two before His face" ([Luke](#) 10:1).

After the [Ascension of the Savior](#), St Matthias was chosen by lot to replace [Judas Iscariot](#) as one of the Twelve Apostles ([Acts](#) 1:15-26). After the [Descent of the Holy Spirit](#), the Apostle Matthias preached the [Gospel](#) at Jerusalem and in Judea together with the other Apostles ([Acts](#) 6:2, 8:14). From Jerusalem he went with the Apostles [Peter](#) and [Andrew](#) to Syrian Antioch, and was in the Cappadocian city of Tiana and Sinope. Here the Apostle Matthias was locked into prison, from which he was miraculously freed by St. Andrew the First-Called Apostle.

The Apostle Matthias journeyed after this to Amasea, a city on the shore of the Black Sea. During a three year journey with the Apostle Andrew, St. Matthias was with him at Edessa (Syria) and Sebaste (Iran). According to Church Tradition, he was preaching at Pontine Ethiopia (presently Western Georgia) and Macedonia. He was frequently subjected to deadly peril, but the Lord preserved him to preach the Gospel.

Once, pagans forced the saint to drink a poison potion. He drank it, and not only did he himself remain unharmed, but he also healed other prisoners who had been blinded by the potion. When St. Matthias left the prison, the pagans searched for him in vain, for he had become invisible to them. Another time, when the pagans had become enraged, intending to kill the Apostle, the earth opened up and engulfed them.

The Apostle Matthias returned to Judea and did not cease to enlighten his countrymen with the light of Christ's teachings. He worked great miracles in the Name of the Lord Jesus and he converted a great many to faith in Christ.

The Jewish High Priest Ananias who hated Christ and earlier had commanded the [Apostle James, Brother of the Lord](#), to be flung down from the heights of the

Temple, and now he ordered that the Apostle Matthias be arrested and brought for judgment before the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem.

The same impious Ananias uttered a speech in which he blasphemously slandered the Lord. Using the prophecies of the [Old Testament](#), the Apostle Matthias demonstrated that Jesus Christ is the True [God](#), the promised Messiah, the Son of God, Consubstantial and Coeternal with God the Father. After these words the Apostle Matthias was sentenced to be stoned to death by the Sanhedrin.

When St Matthias was already dead, the Jews, to hide their malefaction, cut off his head as an enemy of Caesar. This is one tradition about how he died a martyr's death.

According to several other historians, the Apostle Matthias was crucified, and indicate that he instead died at Colchis, which is modern day former soviet Georgia. The Apostle Matthias received the [martyr's](#) crown of glory in the year 63.

We heard in today's Epistle that St. Paul and the other Apostles endured great suffering and persecution as they strove to share the Message and Ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The devil has always persecuted those who would share the message of the Gospel. Though for many years here in America and in Europe the Gospel was taught and passed on largely without any persecution – that time may be at an end. In many predominantly Muslim countries, our brothers and sisters in Christ are even today being persecuted and killed, becoming modern day apostles and martyrs of the Christian faith.

Today we are holding our youth ministry registration. We need parents and teachers to step forward and witness to the Message and Ministry of Jesus Christ to the next generation. We cannot afford to be either the "weakest" or worse yet the "missing" link. All of us are called to take up our cross and follow Jesus Christ. We are all called to be ambassadors of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are all called to be members of the royal priesthood, teaching and ministering the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Judas fell away and was replaced by St. Matthias, who was called to step up in His place. We are the inheritors of the Message and Ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are called now to step up. Unless the Second Coming happens first, we will die a physical death. We cannot, we must not allow the Message and Ministry of God's Holy Church to die with us. I pray that today you may also hear the calling of Jesus Christ, of the Apostles and of the Holy Spirit. I pray that you, individually and collectively, may step up and become a strong link in the chain that will continue to spread and grow the Message and Ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Like Matthias, God is calling you to step up and take the place of those who have fallen or been taken away. What will your response be? Your eternal destiny and the destiny of

God's Holy Orthodox Christian Church depends on your answer. May God give you the wisdom and courage to say YES.

To God be the glory, now and forever and to the ages of ages, Amen.