

45// OF ST. MATTHIAS THE APOSTLE

JUDAS THE TRAITOR

St. Matthias the apostle was in the place of Judas the traitor, and therefore first we shall rehearse here the birth and beginning of Judas.

His Parents Cast Him Out to Sea in a Basket

It is read in a history, though it be named apocrypha, that there was a man in Jerusalem named Reuben, and by another named Simeon, of the kindred of David, or, after St. Jerome, of the tribe of Issachar, which had a wife named Ciborea, and on the night that Judas was conceived his mother had a marvellous dream whereof she was so sore afeard. For her seemed that she had conceived a child that should destroy their people, and because of the loss of all their people her husband blamed her much, and said to her: Thou sayest a thing over evil, or the devils will deceive thee.

She said: Certainly if so be that I shall have a son, I trow it shall be so, as I have had a revelation and none illusion.

When the child was born the father and mother were in great doubt, and thought what was best to do, for they durst not slay the child for the horror that they should have therein, neither they wist not how they might nourish one that should destroy their lineage. Then they put him to a little fiscelle or basket well pitched, and set it in the sea, and abandoned him to drive whither it would. And anon the floods and waves of the sea brought and made him arrive in an island named Scarioth, and of this name was he called Judas Scariotes.

Matthias in Hebrew is as much to say as given to our Lord, or a gift of our Lord, or else humble or little. For he was given of our Lord when he was chosen from the world, and was set and entered among the seventy-two disciples, he was also given of our Lord when he was chosen by lot and numbered among the apostles. He was little for he had all very meekness in him and humility. There be three manners of humilities, as St. Ambrose saith that: The first is of the affliction by which a man is made humble; the second is consideration of himself, and the third is of the devotion which is of the knowledge of his maker. St. Matthias had the first in suffering martyrdom, the second was in despising himself, and he had the third in amarvelling the majesty of our Lord. For Matthias is said as doing good for evil, for he being good was set in the place of Judas the traitor. And his life is read in holy church, and Bede writeth it as many holy men bear witness.

The Queen of Scarioth Claims Him as Her Own

Now it happed that the queen of this country went for to play on the rivage of the sea, and beheld this little nacelle and the child therein, which was fair, and then she sighed and said: O Lord God, how should I be eased if I had such a child, then at the least should not my realm be without heir.

Then commanded she that the child should be taken up, and be nourished, and she fained herself [pretended] to be great with child and after published that she had borne a fair son. When her husband heard say hereof he had great joy, and all the people of the country made great feast. The king and queen did do nourish and keep this child like the son of a king.

He Kills His Foster-Brother and Flees to Jerusalem

Anon after, it happed that the queen conceived a son, and when it was born and grown Judas beat oft that child, for he weened that he had been his brotber, and oft he was chastised therefore, but alway he made him to weep so long that the queen which knew well that Judas was not her son, and at the last she said the truth, and told how that Judas was found in the sea. And ere this yet was known Judas slew the child that he had supposed to be his brother, and was son to the king, and in eschewing the sentence of death he fled anon and came into Jerusalem, and entered into the court of Pilate which then was provost. And he so pleased him that he was great with him, and had in great cherety and nothing was done without him.

He Kills His Father and Marries His Mother

Now it happed on a day that Pilate went for to disport him by a garden belonging to the father of Judas, and was so desirous to eat of the fruit of the apples that he might not forbear them. And the father of Judas knew not Judas his son, for he supposed that he had been drowned in the sea long tofore, ne the son knew not the father. When Pilate had told to Judas of his desire, he sprang into the garden of his father and gathered of the fruit for to bear to his master, but the father of Judas defended him, and there began between them much strife and debate, first by words and after with fighting, so much that Judas smote his father with a stone on the head that he slew him, and after brought the apples unto Pilate, and told to him how that he had slain him that owned the garden. Then sent Pilate to seize all the good that the father of Judas had, and after gave his wife to Judas in marriage, and thus Judas wedded his own mother.

He Prays Jesus for Forgiveness

Now it happed on a day that the lady wept and sighed much strongly and said: Alas! how unhappy that I am! I have lost my son and my husband. My son was laid on the sea, and I suppose that he be drowned, and my husband is dead suddenly, and yet it is more grievous to me that Pilate hath remarried me against my will. Then demanded Judas of this child, and she told him how he was set in the sea, and Judas told to her how he had been found in the sea, in such wise that she wist that she was his mother, and that he had slain his father and wedded his mother. Wherefore then he went to Jesu Christ, which did so many miracles, and prayed him of mercy and forgiveness of his sins. Thus far it is read in the history which is not authentic.

He Betrays His Lord

Our Lord made Judas one of his apostles and retained him in his company, and was so privy with him that he was made his procurator, and bare the purse for all the other, and stole of that which was given to Christ. Then it happed that he was sorry and angry for the ointment that Mary Magdalene poured on the head and feet of our Lord Jesu Christ and said that it was worth three

hundred pence, and said that so much he had lost, and therefore sold he Jesu Christ for thirty pence of that money usual, of which every penny was worth ten pence, and so he recovered three hundred pence. Or after that some say that he ought to have of all the gifts that was given to Jesu Christ the tenth penny, and so he recovered thirty pence of that he sold him, and nevertheless at the last he brought them again to the temple, and after hung himself in despair, and his body opened and cleft asunder and his bowels fell out.

And so it appertained well that it should so be, for the mouth which God had kissed ought not to be defouled in touching, and also he ought not to die on the earth because all earthly creatures ought to hate him, but in the air where devils and wicked spirits be, because he had deserved to be in their company.

THE ELECTION OF ST. MATTHIAS

Then when the time came between the Ascension and Whitsuntide, St. Peter beheld that the number of the apostles was minished, he arose up in the middle of the disciples and said: Fair brethren, ye know how our Lord Jesu Christ had chosen twelve men for to bear witness of his resurrection, and Judas was gone the evil way, it behoveth to accomplish the number of twelve of such as have been with him.

And sith they chose two of them that were there, that one was named Joseph surnamed Justus, and that other was Matthias. And then they made their orisons and said: Lord God, which knoweth the hearts of all the persons, show to us whom we shall choose of these twain here.

And after, they cast lots, and the lot fell on Matthias, which forthwith was enumbered with the other eleven, and then were they twelve. But the holy St. Denis saith that the lot was a ray and a shining which came and shone upon him.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. MATTHIAS

And anon he began to preach, and had his predication about Jerusalem, and was much virtuous, and did many miracles as is written of him, of whom the legend followeth, which legend is found at Treves in Almaine [Trier in Germany].

St. Matthias which was set in the place of Judas was born in Bethlehem of the tribe of Judah. He was set to school and in a little time he learned all the science of the law and of the prophets; he was afeard of fleshly lusts, and he passed his youth in good manners. His courage was inclined to all virtues, for he was humble and debonair [meek], and alway ready to do mercy, and was not proud in prosperity, ne frail in adversity. He did that which he preached, he made the blind to see and healed the sick men, he raised the dead men, and did great miracles in the name of Jesu Christ.

And when he was accused hereof tofore the bishop of Jerusalem, it was demanded him that he should answer thereto and he said: It behoveth not much to answer hereto, because for to be a Christian man it is nothing criminal but it is a glorious life.

Then said the bishop that he would spare him and give him respite to repent him, and St. Matthias answered: God forbid that I should repent of the truth that I have truly found, and become an apostate.

He was firm in the love of God, and clean of his body, and wise in speaking of all the questions of scripture, and when he preached the word of God many believed in Jesu Christ by his predication.

The Jews took him and brought him to justice and had gotten two false witnesses against him and for to accuse him, the which cast on him first stones, and the other after, and so was stoned, and he prayed that the stones might be buried that the false witnesses had cast upon him, for to bear witness against them that stoned him.

And finally he was slain with an axe after the manner of the Romans. And he held up his hands and commended his spirit to God. And after it is said that his body was brought to Rome, and from Rome it was translated to Treves. Another legend saith that his body lieth at Rome, and buried under a stone of porphyry in the church of St. Mary the Major.

The [iconography of St. Matthias](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

Scanned by Robert Blackmon. bob_blackmon@mindspring.com.

This text was taken from the [Internet Medieval Source Book](#). The Sourcebook is a collection of public domain and copy-permitted texts related to medieval and Byzantine history.

Permission is granted for electronic copying, distribution in print form for educational purposes and personal use. If you do reduplicate the document, indicate the source. No permission is granted for commercial use.

E-text © Paul Halsall, September 2000
halsall@fordham.edu

Reformatted with paragraphs, rubrics, italics, and explanatory insertions by Richard Stracke, rstracke@aug.edu