
THE CHOICE OF MATTHIAS IN ACTS 1:15–26

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the choice of a replacement for Judas Iscariot in the Acts of the Apostles particularly from the standpoint of the Semitic background to the event. It begins by determining where the episode actually starts, with respect to an identification of the ἀδελφοί mentioned in the text. It moves on to demonstrate that despite seemingly contradicting Jesus' earlier command to "wait" in the holy city, the disciples see themselves as both justified in their actions and obeying the divine plan in taking this initiative. After addressing the issue of Peter's speech justifying the Apostles' actions, the article takes the position that the prayer of the community beginning with the words σὺ κύριε is likely addressed to the Risen Christ rather than God the Father. The issue of the casting of lots is approached from the standpoint of its Semitic background, particularly from its Hebrew Bible background, as a sacral act linked directly with the preceding prayer to demonstrate that the Risen Lord was still guiding the early Christian community. The final section of the article discusses the concept of the Twelve and its importance to both Judaism and primitive Christianity.

Keywords

Matthias; casting of lots; Judas; Lord; Lukan Christology; Semitic background to the New Testament; the Twelve

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The choice of Matthias in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles is a passage that presents a number of problems on a variety of different levels, not the least of which are the elements that indicate some Semitic background or influence to the incident itself. Right from the start, while verse 26 clearly closes our passage, one

may legitimately ask where the pericope actually begins. In the many different works consulted in composing this article, virtually all of the authors seem to opt for verse 15, yet in the fifth edition of *The Greek New Testament*, the editors have chosen to place the heading “The Choice of Judas’ Successor” at verse 12.¹ This seemingly insignificant detail could have a great deal of bearing if, for example, one views, along with Josep Rius-Camps, the presence of the “brothers” of Jesus as having a significant bearing upon the choice of Matthias to replace Judas as the twelfth Apostle.²

On the most basic level, one notes that in this pericope, the author of Acts presents us with the only story covering the time between the Ascension of Jesus and the Descent of the Spirit. This entire story, however, would seem to be somewhat out of place. One might even say that it is in seeming contradiction to the rather simple command of Jesus to remain in Jerusalem and await the promise of the Father. It would seem legitimate to ask, as does Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, why the entire episode takes place at all, given the additional fact that Jesus himself seemed not to be overly concerned about replacing Judas prior to his Ascension.³

When one comes to the actual details of the story, there are other questions that are raised. Is the number one hundred and twenty to be considered particularly significant as Jacques Dupont seems to indicate,⁴ or is there no major significance to this cipher above and beyond the fact that it is a multiple of the number twelve, as per Hans Conzelmann⁵ or Frederick Fyvie Bruce?⁶ The speech of Peter presents several interesting aspects to the reader. Above and beyond the way in which Hebrew Bible quotations are reworked in order to fit Judas’ situation

¹ Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce Metzger, eds. *The Greek New Testament*. Revised by Florian Voss in cooperation with the Institute for New Testament Textual Research, Münster/Westphalia. (5th ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2014), 397. Luke Timothy Johnson, in *The Acts of the Apostles*, Volume 5 of the *Sacra Pagina Series* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 35 presents the section under the title “Preparing the People (1:12–26).”

² Josep Rius-Camps, “Elecció de Maties, restauració pòstuma del nou Israel,” in *Rivista Catalana de Teologia* 12 (1987), 7.

³ Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, “Die Zuwahl des Matthias (Apg 1,15 ff.),” in *Studia Theologica* 15 (1961), 35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393386108599814>.

⁴ Jacques Dupont, *Les Actes des Apôtres* (Paris: Les Éditions du Clef, 1964), 39.

⁵ Hans Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte*. Volume 7 of *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1965), 23.

⁶ Frederick F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 76.

and the clear difference between this account of the death of Judas and the Matthean account,⁷ why, one may ask, would Peter see the need to tell the details of the story to this group a mere matter of days later, as if these events had occurred quite some time before, and why would he translate an Aramaic term into Greek with the comment “in their own language,” when the entire group was most likely Aramaic speaking?

The prayer offered by the disciples presents a problem regarding the address $\sigma\upsilon\ \kappa\upsilon\pi\iota\epsilon$. This simple vocative is easy enough to translate, but difficult to pinpoint. Who is the Lord to whom the disciples offer this prayer? Is the reader to assume along with Conzelmann that the prayer is addressed to God,⁸ or is the prayer addressed to Jesus, the one who chose the original Twelve?⁹ What, if anything, does the answer to this question tell us about the Christological consciousness of the author of Luke-Acts? The casting of lots too raises certain questions. On a most basic level, concerning the “how,” there is very little said. The text does not give a great deal of insight into the method used. From the use of the term, it would appear to offer two basic suggestions in this specific case: either a casting of lots in order to eliminate one or a casting of lots in order to choose one. However, the text merely tells us that lots were “given” and that “the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven Apostles.”

There is, however, a more important related question, namely, why the use of lots at all? Why would the disciples have used such a technique to determine the choice of a successor for Judas? What is the significance of the casting of lots in the ancient world in general, but more specifically in the first century Jewish mind-set? In that regard, the casting of lots actually involves a desire to leave the choice not up to chance, but rather, up to God.¹⁰ This attitude could be particularly significant when put into perspective with the addressee of the prayer in vs. 24. In Luke-Acts, in general, the one who calls is Jesus. Does the juxtaposition of $\sigma\upsilon\ \kappa\upsilon\pi\iota\epsilon$ with a Jewish attitude toward the casting of lots have any significance from a primitive Christological standpoint?

⁷ Not to mention the radical difference from the later account given by Papias of Hierapolis.

⁸ Conzelmann, 25.

⁹ Giovanni Leonardi, “I dodici e ‘gli apostoli’ nei Vangeli sinottici,” in *Studia Patavina* 42 (1995), 170.

¹⁰ Annie Jaubert, “L’élection de Matthias et le tirage au sort.” Pages 274–280 in *Studia Evangelica* 6. Edited by Elizabeth A. Livingstone. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1973), 274.

Finally, let us return to the more overarching question about the entire episode: why does it even occur? What is the purpose of replacing Judas when neither the man replacing him nor the other potential replacement is ever heard from again? Why the concern for the completion of the Twelve when the Twelve as a group will virtually disappear from the scene, except for a number of isolated instances? The question is intriguing, because in this pericope, there would appear to be some eschatological significance to the Twelve, an idea that makes more sense when the statement of Jesus regarding the placement upon thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel in Luke 22:28–30 is brought into consideration. Certainly it is worth noting that there is no visible concern about a replacement for James, the brother of John after Herod has him killed in chapter 12.¹¹

Delimitation of the Text and the “Brothers” of Jesus

Rius-Camps considers the opening verse of the passage to be verse 15.¹² Nonetheless, in “L’elecció de Maties, restauració pòstuma del nou Israel,” he so strongly links the immediately preceding verses, marked by the editors of the *Greek New Testament* as the beginning of the pericope, with our text that it would seem difficult to separate them. He does this by linking the ὄχλος in verse 15 with the group mentioned in verses 13–14, i.e. the Eleven listed by name, the women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.¹⁵

The crux of the matter would seem to be the term ἀδελφός. Verse 14 tells us that the eleven remaining Apostles named in verse 13 were “persevering with one mind in prayer with (the) women and Mary the mother of Jesus καὶ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς αὐτοῦ.” Rius-Camps states that, “Pere tracta d’evitar que els germans de Jesús facin valer els privilegis històrics d’Israel en perjudici de la nova línia iniciada per Jesús amb l’elecció dels Dotze i de la qual ells es consideren els únics legítims continuadors.”¹⁴ This interpretation flows quite smoothly when one puts together the καὶ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς αὐτοῦ of verse 14 with the ἀναστάς

¹¹ José Antonio Jáuregui, “Función de los ‘doce’ en la Iglesia de Jerusalén,” in *Estudios Ecclesiásticos* 63 (1988), 269.

¹² Rius-Camps, 1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

Πέτρος ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἀδελφῶν in verse 15, acknowledged by Rius-Camps himself as the start of our pericope.

The salutation ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, in verse 16 is not really pertinent to this discussion even though obviously the word ἀδελφός does appear. As Conzelmann points out, the use of this address on the part of Peter serves to demonstrate that the speech was composed in its present form or at least redacted significantly by Luke, since the phrase is a Greek rather than a Hebrew form of address,¹⁵ which one would naturally expect from an Aramaic-speaking Jew from Galilee. Rescinding from the presence of the word ἀδελφός in verse 16, Rius-Camps' interpretation of the other two uses of the term in the preceding verses can seem all the more attractive if one places it in context with problems that arise within the primitive Jerusalem community later in the course of the Acts of the Apostles, such as those concerning the aftermath of the baptism of Cornelius and his household and of circumcision and obedience of the Law. Nonetheless, there are certain difficulties with this conclusion.

The range of meaning in Greek of the term ἀδελφός leaves some doubt as to the exact significance of the phrase in verse 14. A blood relationship is without a doubt the literal meaning of the word. However, if one accepts a literal interpretation, there is no absolute clarity regarding this particular usage of the term. One example is the issue of gender. A translation of the phrase καὶ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς αὐτοῦ could just as easily read “and his brothers and sisters.”¹⁶ A blood relation may not be intended in this particular instance as it is also possible to accept a figurative meaning for the term.¹⁷ This interpretation is valid even if one views the speech as a Lucan redaction of an older tradition translating an original Aramaic כּח. From this standpoint, the link between the term in verses 14 and 15 becomes even more tenuous, and the textual tradition surrounding these verses seems to bear out the weakness of this link. A number of different manuscripts, including Codex Vaticanus, read καὶ σὺν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς αὐτοῦ, whereas Codex Sinaiticus, for example, lacks the preposition.

When one examines verse 14, the addition of the preposition σὺν has been seen “to separate Jesus from his ἀδελφοί, and is therefore

¹⁵ Conzelmann, 23.

¹⁶ BDAG, 18.

¹⁷ Ibid., 18.

suspect as a scribal addition made in the interest of supporting the perpetual virginity of Mary.”¹⁸ As regards verse 15, Bruce Metzger points out that:

The Western text (D, it^e, g^{ig}, p Cyprian Augustine) has substituted μαθητῶν of ἀδελφῶν of κ A B C *al*. The reason is obvious: to prevent the reader from confusing these “brethren” with the brothers of Jesus (ver. 14). (The word μαθητής is used nowhere else in the first five chapters of Acts.) For the same reason the scribe of the Bodmer Papyrus of Acts seems to have substituted ἀποστόλων (P^{74vid}).¹⁹

While it must be acknowledged that these variants are probably secondary, they do present evidence of the ambiguity involved in the interpretation of the term ἀδελφός in our present context. It would appear that in verse 15, certain scribes of the Western tradition saw the possibilities and wished to clarify the term for their readers, while the scribe of the Bodmer Papyrus saw the possibility of confusion and adjusted the text in order to avoid any possible doubt.

Essentially, the thesis of Rius-Camps, while intriguing and certainly feasible from a grammatical standpoint, may be somewhat tenuous. This judgement is arrived at both from the preceding evidence and from the grammatical signal that most clearly delimits our text. Verse 15 begins as follows: Καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις. As Ben Witherington points out, “The phrase ‘in those days’ in *v. 15*, and elsewhere in Luke’s writings indicates a transition to a new section.”²⁰ It would appear, therefore, that Luke is essentially delimiting the text for us.

In conclusion, the pericope concerning the tradition of the death of Judas and the resulting choice of Matthias to take his place among the Twelve may be delimited as Acts 1:15–26. Given this conclusion, supported by both the afore-mentioned Lucan tendencies and the translational possibilities for the term ἀδελφοίς, Rius-Camps’ theory would appear to be somewhat difficult to prove. While quite interesting and possible from a purely linguistic point of view, to link so strongly the

¹⁸ Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: American Bible Society, 1994), 246–247.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 247.

²⁰ Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 116.

ἀδελφοί, of verse 14 with those mentioned in verse 15 would seem to be an uncertain connection to make.

Contradiction or Consistency

In Acts 1:4, we read, “And staying with (them), he commanded them not to be separated from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father which ‘you heard from me.’” At no time has the Acts of the Apostles recorded an order on the part of the Risen Lord to fill out the Twelve or to replace Judas, but rather to go back to the holy city and to “wait.” Nonetheless, the story barely passes from the Lucan note about their return to the holy city to our passage in which Peter gives a speech concerning the necessity of filling Judas’ position. The community then goes directly into prayer, and they proceed to cast lots in order to determine the successor of Judas Iscariot. It would seem reasonable to ask what would have been the motivation of the Apostles for taking such an initiative.

The choice of another to take the place of Judas is not simply a matter of rounding out the number of the Apostles from the odd number eleven to an even sum. There is something far more important involved that would seem to give them the assurance that they are following at the very least the implicit will of the Lord. The main issue would be the concept of the Twelve with respect to the eschatological Israel and witness to Jesus, as comes across powerfully throughout Luke-Acts. While the notion of the Twelve will be covered in further detail below, it may be said at this point that there is a particular Semitic/Hebraic significance to the number twelve as well as a particular theological and eschatological significance to the Twelve for Jesus, and hence for Luke, that made the choice of a replacement for Matthias necessary.

The importance of the Twelve in Luke-Acts and the reason for replacing Matthias is underlined by I. Howard Marshall: “In the Gospel, the Twelve had a special function as apostles to the Jews and could look forward to sitting on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Lk. 9:1-6; 22:28-30); the filling up of the number was probably meant to indicate that the task of witness to Jesus as the Messiah for the Jews was to be continued after the resurrection.”²¹ However, it is noteworthy

²¹ I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 65.

in this context that the Apostles see no reason to replace James after the comment concerning Herod in Acts 12:2: “and he did away with James, the brother of John, by means of (the) sword.” It is this fact that has led some to even go to the extreme of claiming that the whole episode in Acts 1:15–26 was illegitimate, as Marshall points out.²² However, this would tend to obscure the issue at hand, which comes forth clearly in Peter’s speech to the gathered community.

The fact that the Apostles do not see a need to replace James, the brother of John, is evidence that our pericope deals with an entirely different issue. The reason for the replacement of Judas is not so much linked to his death, but rather, to the actions preceding his death. It was not the fact that Judas died, but rather the fact that he committed apostasy that necessitated his replacement in the minds of the Apostles. This is confirmed during the course of Peter’s speech, most likely shaped and crafted by Luke, from the evidence of the way in which Hebrew Bible quotes are used. These quotations from Psalms 69:25 (LXX 68:26) and 109:8 (LXX 108:8) will give a Scriptural rationale for the understandably scandalous treachery on the part of their former companion, showing that all somehow fits into the divine plan, and will help to demonstrate to the reader that the Apostles are following what they understand to be God’s will. It is the second quotation from Psalm 109 that is particularly interesting in our present context. As Luke Timothy Johnson points out:

This is the only direct citation from Ps 108 [*sic*] in the NT, and it is interesting that the application works best because of the LXX translation. The Hebrew *pēhudātō yiqqah ’aḥer* is best understood in its context to mean, ‘may another seize his goods.’ The LXX’s rendering of *pēhudā* by *episkopē* (‘office/magistracy’) works very well for Luke’s purposes. It is used in 1 Tim 3:11 for the ‘office of overseer (*episkopos*),’ a position that Luke recognizes in Acts 20:28.²⁵

It is clear from this particular usage that the entire pericope is essentially “justified” through this citation of the Psalm.

²² I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 67.

²⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 36.

While it is true, as noted above, that the Risen Lord did not concern himself with a replacement for Judas during the forty days prior to his Ascension, nor did he give any such command to the disciples, they clearly act with the sense that they are being faithful to and fulfilling his will. In this regard, Marion L. Soards notes that “by citing scripture to establish the continuity of the past and the present, the speakers in Acts clarify the meaning of the present in terms of God’s own purposes. Thus, in Acts 1,20, the Psalms interpret Judas’ fate and indicate God’s will for the early Christian community to seek his replacement.”²⁴ Essentially, while the pericope may appear to be somewhat inconsistent with the very simply expressed desire of the risen Jesus that they return to Jerusalem and “wait,” in Luke’s presentation, the disciples act according to God’s will, hence the entire event reflects God’s own initiative for the community.

Significance of the 120

In the opening line of our pericope, we read that there were “about one hundred and twenty” persons gathered. The figure itself is interesting because of its significance in Jewish thought and raises the question of how much such an idea would have influenced the author of Acts. One cannot help but notice the fact that the number is ten times twelve, the significance of which will be expanded upon below. Suffice it to say here that the number recalls to mind both the twelve tribes of Israel and hence, for the Christian, the twelve Apostles, which is exactly the point of the whole pericope. It is this consciousness that leads the Apostles to take the initiative in choosing a successor for Judas. As Annie Jaubert points out, “la signification du nombre Douze est certainement eschatologique: les Douze représentent la totalité du peuple d’Israël, les douze tribus.”²⁵

There is, however, another function of the number one hundred and twenty in the Judaism of the time that may or may not come into play in the present context. In *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury note that, “it can scarcely be an accident that this number is that of the Twelve multiplied by 10. It is remarkable

²⁴ Marion L. Soards, “The Speeches in Acts in Relation to Other Pertinent Ancient Literature,” in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 70 (1994), 74.

²⁵ Jaubert, 279.

that *Sanhedr.* 1. 6 enacts that the number of officers in a community shall be a tenth of the whole, and that 120 is the smallest number which can hold a ‘small Sanhedrin.’”²⁶ Max Wilcox, in referring to their work, comments that, “such a number could not include women and minors. But however we view the matter the figure of 120 looks intentional, whether or not it was historically accurate.”²⁷ The idea of the “small Sanhedrin” is most intriguing from the standpoint of the Semitic background to our pericope. The link with the number twelve is clear enough from a Jewish standpoint, but if Luke is presenting the disciples here as a “small Sanhedrin” capable of making this important decision, this background would be all the more strongly reinforced.

The possibility of a “small Sanhedrin” is, however, difficult to prove for two different reasons. In the first place, the appropriate verbs related to the communal action are all in the plural: ἔστησαν, προσευξάμενοι εἶπαν, and ἔδωκαν, but the subject is not directly expressed. It is probably not mere coincidence that the Western text puts ἔστησαν into the singular ἔστησεν, essentially making Peter the subject of this initial verb and hence, the driving force behind the action that will follow on the part of the community. This may reflect ecclesiological concerns²⁸ and is certainly consistent with the tendency of this scribal tradition to harmonize and clear up potential ambiguity, as demonstrated above.

In the second place, in the patriarchal culture of the ancient world in general and Israel in particular, this species of town “quorum” of one hundred and twenty could not involve women and children, as the above quote from Wilcox demonstrates, and herein lies the more serious difficulty. From the text of Acts 1:15, it is not clear that Luke was referring only to the men, despite Peter’s address ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, which is, as noted, a clearly Greek, rather than Hebraic or Aramaic form of address, hence, probably not original. While it may be argued that the author of Acts does intend to give a picture of a “small Sanhedrin,” scholars such as Conzelmann feel that the number one hundred and

²⁶ Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, *The Beginnings of Christianity* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1935), 12.

²⁷ Max Wilcox, “The Judas Tradition in Acts I. 15–26,” in *New Testament Studies* 19 (1973), 440.

²⁸ Lake and Cadbury, 14.

twenty, in fact, does include women.²⁹ Possibly the most that can be said is that the number cited in Acts 1:15 does, in fact, have a Semitic basis, but just how closely it ties in with the practice of localized Jewish leadership of the era is not quite so clear as is its recalling of the number twelve.

Peter's Speech

This first speech in Acts on the part of one of the Apostles brings up the question of the authorship not only of this particular speech, but of the speeches in Acts in general. Numerous commentators have noted that the speeches in Acts strongly reflect the hand of Luke.⁵⁰ Gustav Stählin puts the idea into perspective as such, “Man hat mit Recht gesagt: was der antike Dramatiker mit seinen Chören will und erreicht, das tut Lukas durch seine Reden.”⁵¹ Nonetheless, it is one thing to say that the speeches have been put in their final form or even substantially composed by Luke, and it is quite another to say that they have been created by him *ex nihilo* and therefore, have no historical value.

This is, in fact, a key issue with the speech of Peter in Acts 1:15–26. Peter stands, “in the midst of the brothers (and sisters),” and delivers a speech that details both the death of Judas and the need to replace him in the circle of the Twelve. In an examination of the Semitic background to Luke-Acts in general and to our pericope in particular, the discourse of Peter is very much a potential point of contention. As noted above, Peter's use of the term ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί in verse 16 is a Greek form of address, which signals strongly to a Lucan redaction as does verse 19, following up on the bloody end of Judas recounted in the previous verse: “And it became known to all the ones dwelling (in) Jerusalem, so that that field was called *in their own dialect* ‘Hakeldamach,’ that is, ‘Field of Blood.’” To reiterate, why would an Aramaic-speaking Jew from Galilee, so soon after the actual event, make a statement that reads like an old tradition, and why would he describe his own language and that of his actual audience as “their own dialect?”

While admitting the redactional elements involved in the speech, the nature of the choice of Matthias itself points to an underlying tradition

²⁹ Conzelmann, 25.

⁵⁰ Steven M. Baugh, “Phraseology and the Reliability of Acts,” in *New Testament Studies* 36 (1990), 290.

⁵¹ Gustav Stählin, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 24.

with which Luke worked. One may say at the very least that he “filled out” the tradition concerning comments made at the time by Peter to the group. To quote Wilcox in this regard, “However we see the matter it seems plain that this speech of Peter is not simply an invention of Luke, but incorporates traditional material of some kind.”⁵² In an article appearing in *New Testament Studies*, Raymond Albert Martin examines syntactical evidence that would indicate whether or not the Greek text of chapters 1–15 of the Acts of the Apostles evidences translational elements that might point to some species of Hebrew or Aramaic “Vorlage.” Specifically mentioning our very passage, he notes that:

The most natural conclusion would seem to be that in those sections where these translation Greek frequencies are most in evidence the writer is either himself translating Semitic sources or using with little modification Greek sources which are a translation of Semitic sources. The following subsections at least would seem to fall into this category: i. 15–26; ii. 1–4; iv. 5–12, 23–31; v. 17–42; vii. 1–53; ix. 10–19*a*, 19*b*–30; xi. 1–18; xiii. 16–41.⁵³

As noted above, the citations of the Psalms appearing in the text serve to justify the entire event. They demonstrate that the death of Judas and his replacement in the circle of the Twelve is a part of the divine will and therefore necessary. The key to this understanding is the use of the terms ἔδει in verse 16 and δεῖ οὖν in verse 21. The use of the verb δέω in these contexts places us into the realm of God’s will. In verse 16, the imperfect tense shows that the events concerning Judas listed in verses 17–20 “had to” happen, since they were predicted in LXX Psalm 68:26 (with appropriate Lucan adjustments from the plural to the singular) and LXX Psalm 108:8. This use is in contrast to the present δεῖ οὖν of verse 21, which, while keeping us in the same ambient of destiny, indicates that the choice of Judas’ replacement is the necessary consequence of the afore-mentioned events.⁵⁴

Scholars examining the speech of Peter in Acts 1:15–26 have focused on a number of possibilities of how Luke redacted the speech. Which parts better evidence the hand of the author and which parts demonstrate a pre-Lucan tradition going back to an Aramaic source are open

⁵² Wilcox, 458.

⁵³ Raymond Albert Martin, “Syntactical Evidence of Aramaic Sources in Acts I–XV,” in *New Testament Studies* 11 (1964), 52. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688500002939>.

⁵⁴ Lake and Cadbury, 12.

to discussion. Nonetheless, there does appear to be a tradition with which the author of Luke-Acts worked. One possible reconstruction of that original story is proposed by Marie-Émile Boismard and Arnaud Lamouille:

Dégagé de ces éléments intrusifs, le récit primitif redevient parfaitement cohérent. Pierre se lève au milieu des disciples (v. 15) et annonce qu'il faut (δεῖ) que s'accomplisse l'Écriture concernant Judas (v. 16): «Qu'un autre reçoive sa charge» (v. 20b). Il précise ensuite les conditions que doit réaliser le candidat (vv. 21–22), puis on procède à l'élection de Matthias (vv. 23–26). Tout le reste (vv. 17–20a) fut ajouté au récit primitif.⁵⁵

Σὸ κύριε

The prayer of the Apostles which precedes the casting of lots for Matthias is significant for at least two different reasons. First, as will be demonstrated in the following section, it helps to place us into the appropriate ambient for the ancient Jewish idea of casting lots before the Lord,⁵⁶ and second, the address *σὸ κύριε* is somewhat problematic. Since the focus of the next section will be on the actual casting of lots for Judas' replacement, this section will focus on the identity of the Lord to whom the Apostles address their prayer.

In both the New Testament and the Septuagint, the term *κύριος* is widely used. In the Septuagint, it is the more ordinary translation of the Hebrew tetragrammaton יהוה. It is used to refer to God in the New Testament as well, as Jesus himself does in Luke 20:37, "But that the dead are raised up, Moses also made known at the thornbush as he says, '(the) Lord, the God of Abraham and (the) God of Isaac and (the) God of Jacob.'" It is also a common reference to both the earthly Jesus and the Risen Christ, as in Peter's address to the crowds at Pentecost in Acts 2:36, "Therefore, let all the house of Israel surely know that God made him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified." Since this term is applicable in the New Testament to both God and to Jesus, the address *σὸ κύριε* is somewhat ambiguous in our present context.

⁵⁵ Marie-Émile Boismard and Arnaud Lamouille, *Les Actes des Deux Apôtres* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, J. Gabalda et Cie Éditeurs, 1990), 42.

⁵⁶ Jaubert, 274.

The addressee is not as clear as would be the case with either $\sigma\upsilon$ κύριε θεέ or $\sigma\upsilon$ κύριε Ἰησοῦ.

Exegetes seem to be divided on the topic. For some, the addressee is God. Jürgen Roloff states quite forcefully, “Trotz der Anrede „Herr“, die sonst im Neuen Testament meist Jesus zukommt, kann kein Zweifel daran sein, daß nicht er, sondern Gott der Empfänger dieses Gebetes ist.”⁵⁷ Yet for others such as Rengstorf, the κύριος in the passage is Jesus, hence the prayer is directed to Jesus, the Risen Lord.⁵⁸ It is, in fact, quite possible that the addressee is the Risen Christ: “The epithet καρδιογνώστα suggests that this refers to Jehovah, but it is used in *Apost. Const.* iii. 7. 8 of Christ, and the apostles had been chosen by Jesus ‘through the Holy Spirit’ (i. 2), and therefore the use of the same word (ἐξελέξω) for the choice of a substitute for Judas may indicate that Jesus is intended.”⁵⁹

An analysis of the verb ἐκλέγω in the New Testament would seem to bear out the opinion of Lake and Cadbury. As one examines the use of the term, one finds that it is used clearly of God, as in 1 Corinthians 1:27, “But God chose the foolish of the world so that he might put the wise to shame, and God chose the weak of the world so that he might put the strong to shame.” Nonetheless, it is used of Jesus frequently. Whereas in Matthew 10:1, Jesus’ call of the Twelve involves the verb προσκαλέομαι, and in Mark 3:14, the verb used is ποιέω, in John (cf. John 6:70) and in Luke-Acts (cf. Luke 6:13 and Acts 1:2), the choice of the Twelve by Jesus is related through the use of the verb ἐκλέγω.

In the Septuagint, the verb appears frequently in reference to things and persons chosen by God, e.g. Jerusalem (cf. 1 Kings 11:13), David (cf. 1 Kings 11:34), the people (cf. 1 Kings 3:8), the Temple (cf. 2 Chronicles 7:16), Moses (cf. Sirach 45:4), Aaron (cf. Psalm 104:26), Abraham (cf. Nehemiah 9:7), Jacob (cf. Isaiah 41:8), Israel (cf. Isaiah 44:1), Zion (cf. Psalm 131:13), etc. While the scope of this paper is not to examine Luke’s Christology, which could come as much from a Gentile-Christian as a Jewish-Christian (i.e. more Semitic) understanding, it would seem appropriate to at least raise the issue here. Given the idea that the prayer may likely be addressed to Jesus, the use that Luke makes of the Septuagint in general (and in our text in particular), and the nuances

⁵⁷ Jürgen Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 34.

⁵⁸ Rengstorf, 47.

⁵⁹ Lake and Cadbury, 15.

attached to the term ἐκλέγω within the Septuagint, is Luke attempting to say something in a Christological vein?

Lake and Cadbury would seem to dismiss the idea of too high a Christology in the continuation of the previous citation:

Such passages as Acts ix. 14, 21, xxii. 16, vii. 59, 60, xiv. 23, show that the name of Jesus was invoked by his followers, and that he was regarded as able to help them; but it is doubtful whether they prove that he was prayed to in the same way as God. The invocation of Jesus by Jewish Christians may at first have been parallel to the later Christian invocation of saints, and the word ‘Lord’ is not in itself decisive.⁴⁰

Nonetheless, it may be conceivable that at least on a more primitive level, there is some type of Christological understanding that Luke is attempting to convey to us in this pericope.

The Casting of Lots

In the above section on **Contradiction or Consistency**, it was noted that there has been some controversy regarding the whole episode of the choice of Matthias. As Marshall notes:

Some commentators have argued that the recourse to the lot typifies the situation of the church before Pentecost when it did not have the guidance of the Spirit, and others have gone further and claimed that the church acted wrongly in choosing Matthias: it should have waited for the ‘twelfth man’ of God’s own choice, Paul, instead of giving God his choice between two others who are never heard of again.⁴¹

The casting of lots for Matthias has not only caused trouble from the standpoint of those scholars to whom Marshall alludes, but as Stählin notes, has also created some consternation over their very use: “Endlich hat die Anwendung des Loses bei dieser Apostelwahl Verwunderung, zuweilen Anstoß erregt.”⁴² The truth of Stählin’s observation is best exemplified in an article entitled “Acts 1: 23–26: Charismatic

⁴⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁴¹ Marshall, 67.

⁴² Stählin, 30.

Renewal and Common Moral Teaching on Divination,” in which the author, dealing with a specific issue involving the charismatic renewal, treats our passage and the idea of the casting of lots in the Jewish tradition from the standpoint of its “scandalous” nature.

In commenting on the use of Urim and Thummim in the Hebrew Bible, the author, John Francis Maxwell, states that, “it was about this time, perhaps even during the exile, that the deuteronomist historians were recording (in Joshua and 1 Samuel), the above-mentioned accounts of the use of Urim and Thummim, not for imitation but for warning.”⁴³ Moving on to the account in Acts, after essentially questioning a literal interpretation of the text,⁴⁴ he writes that, “it was recorded by St. Luke not for imitation but for warning.”⁴⁵ This interpretation misses the point of the story, however. Luke is not so much warning us as he is giving us what is, apart from the imagery of the Twelve, the most Semitic element of the entire passage. The casting of lots, while certainly not limited to Jewish tradition,⁴⁶ had nothing whatsoever to do with a game of chance, but was rather, an acceptable means of discerning the will of God, particularly in the Hebrew Bible. In fact, “Das Werfen des Loses galt im Alten Testament und im Judentum als sakralrechtlicher Akt: Gott selbst wurde damit eine letzte, von menschlichem Einfluß freie Entscheidung eingeräumt,”⁴⁷ and the link with preparatory prayer in such passages of the Hebrew Bible (cf. 1 Samuel 14) demonstrates this belief.

The wording of Acts 1:15–26, particularly verse 24: “And having prayed, they said, ‘You, Lord, knower of the hearts of all, reveal which one of these two you have chosen,’” makes it clear that for the disciples, this was an event accomplished neither by a random “toss of the dice,” nor by their own willing, but rather, by the will and choice of the Risen Lord himself. The prayer places the entire episode into the realm of the sacral and the act of giving the choice over to the casting of lots, a frequent practice in Second Temple Judaism,⁴⁸ demonstrates a faith

⁴³ John Francis Maxwell, “Acts 1: 25–26: Charismatic Renewal and Common Moral Teaching on Divination,” in *Clergy Review* 67 (1982), 9.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁶ Claus Westermann, “Die Begriffe für Fragen und Suchen im Alten Testament,” in *Kerygma und Dogma* 6 (1960), 12.

⁴⁷ Roloff, 34.

⁴⁸ Murray Lichtenstein, Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, and Stephan Pfann, (2nd edition), “Lots.” Pages 217–219 in volume 13 of *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Edited by Fred Skolnik

that the Lord continues to guide and direct his fledgling community. Luke would seem, as is the case with his Hebrew Bible counterparts, not overly concerned with the technical details of the event (examples of which do appear, however, particularly in the Talmud⁴⁹). What is important is that the act itself is seen as demonstrative of the divine will.

Turning again to the Semitic background of this account, specifically the casting of lots (לִּטְוָה in the Hebrew, normally translated as κλήρος in the Greek, as in our pericope) for Judas' replacement, it must be admitted, as alluded to above, that this was a practice in many different places and cultures in the ancient world. It was unique neither to ancient Israel nor to Second Temple era Jews. William A. Beardslee focuses on the theological meaning of the casting of lots as a metaphor both in Qumran and in Jewish apocalyptic and states that:

Thus it appears possible that the tradition available to Luke used the term “lot” in the sense of “decision by the community, reflecting God’s decision”, as at Qumran; and that Luke has recast the story to make explicit the mechanism by which the divine will was revealed. If so, this procedure would be quite in keeping with Luke–Acts throughout, for the author frequently makes more explicit and visible the process by which God acts.⁵⁰

There are, however, certain dynamics involved in the wording of the story that point in the direction of an account of a literal lot casting. For example, referring to our text, Johannes Lindblom, in a work entitled “Lot Casting in the Old Testament,” has noted that “the same is the case when it is said, for instance, that ‘the lot fell (*nāphal*) upon Jonah’ (i 7; cf. 1 Chron. xxvi 14). To this mode of expression there are equivalents in modern idioms. In the NT the Hebrew terminology occurs in Greek form. In the narrative of the completion of the apostolate in Acts i 23ff. we meet the phrases ἔδωκαν κλήρους and ἔπεσεν ὁ κλήρος ἐπὶ Μαθθίαν.”⁵¹ The Greek wording in Acts is faithful to the Hebrew wording (cf. also the Hebrew of Ezekiel 24:6 and Nehemiah 10:34) concerning the “falling” of the lot upon Matthias. It is important to note in this regard, how-

and Michael Berenbaum. 2nd Edition. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 218.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁵⁰ William A. Beardslee, “The Casting of Lots at Qumran and in the Book of Acts,” in *Novum Testamentum* 4 (1960), 250. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1560274>.

⁵¹ Johannes Lindblom, “Lot-casting in the Old Testament,” in *Vetus Testamentum* 12 (1962), 167. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1516444>.

ever, that while there are a number of different stories of lot casting in the Hebrew Bible, there is no real description of the actual procedure, as mentioned above concerning technical details.

For example, as regards the specific use of the Urim and Thummim, the sacred lots, “that the identity of the Urim and Thummim was already lost in the third century before the Christian era is evinced by the translation of the terms in the LXX. The Alexandrian translators have taken the plurals as abstract plurals, and have translated in accordance with their presumed roots.”⁵² Similar uncertainty is evident about what precisely the ephod means,⁵³ which seems to also be involved in cases of “inquiring” of the Lord in the Hebrew Bible (cf. 1 Samuel 30).

In the final analysis, the story of the casting of lots for the choice of Judas’ replacement is an excellent example of the Semitic background of the early Christian community. The method used in order to select Matthias to take the place of Judas and reconstitute the circle of the Twelve Apostles shattered by the apostasy of one of their own reflects the fact that Jesus’ disciples were Jews steeped in the traditions and customs of their people. The author of Luke-Acts may have reworked and filled out the story, but he hands over to his Hellenistic audience and to us, the modern readers, a somewhat enigmatic, yet fascinating tale that he has himself received from the earliest days of Christianity.

Importance of “The Twelve”

Ultimately, this is the crux of the matter. It is the idea of “The Twelve,” with its entire Semitic/Hebraic/Jewish nuance, around which the entire pericope revolves. The concept of the number twelve in Judaism is obvious. Even a merely cursory knowledge of the Bible, Hebrew Bible or New Testament, puts into relief the Jewish sense concerning the twelve tribes of Israel and gives the reader an idea of their importance. The Book of Revelation, just to cite one New Testament work, could hardly be more clear on the concept (cf. Revelation 21:9–21). As one examines Acts of the Apostles 1:15–26, this whole ambient comes swiftly to mind. At this stage in our investigation, it would seem

⁵² Edward Robertson, “The Urim and Thummim; What Were They?” in *Vetus Testamentum* 14 (1964), 69. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1516765>.

⁵³ Hans Heinrich Schmid, “גֹּרָל gōrāl lot.” Pages 310–312 in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Volume 1. Edited by Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann. Translated by Mark E. Biddle. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 310.

prudent to begin by treating the idea of the number twelve in more depth in order to bring out even more clearly just how important this conception was to Judaism and to the early Christian community.

The number twelve seems to have had a great deal of significance throughout the ancient world in general. It appears to have gained its importance due to the influence of ancient Babylon, so immersed in astrological traditions, particularly through the division of the year into twelve months.⁵⁴ Given the power and influence of ancient Babylon, this was bound to have had ramifications in the Ancient Near East. Heinz O. Guenther, in detailing the power of Babylonian astrology and the hold that it had on the surrounding area, puts much of the issue into perspective as regards ancient Israel:

Astrological principles had forced themselves upon the Canaanite religion, upon Persian Mazdaism, as well as upon Egyptian sun worship. Small wonder, even Israel could not elude their powerful grip. The appearance of the number twelve within Israel's tribal structure is an unmistakable sign of it.⁵⁵

There were, however, unique features of the number twelve in the ancient Hebrew conception. While noting the divisions of the year into twelve months and the link with ancient amphictyonies tied to sanctuary observance,⁵⁶ the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* points us in a key direction as regards the Jewish nuance to the idea of the twelve:

The institution achieved universal significance to the degree that the system of twelve tribes in Israel perhaps derives from such an early union. The distinctive feature in this case is that even after the decay of the original federation with the disappearance of some members and the fusion of the others into a political society, the system of twelve tribes remained

⁵⁴ Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, “δωδεκα.” Pages 321–328 in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Volume II. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Translated by Geoffrey William Bromiley. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 321.

⁵⁵ Heinz O. Guenther, *The Footprints of Jesus' Twelve in Early Christian Traditions*. (New York: Peter Lang, 1985), 65.

⁵⁶ Rengstorff, “δωδεκα,” 321–322.

the basis and also the expression of the Hebrew and later the Jewish consciousness of fellowship.⁵⁷

It was in this theological viewpoint that Jesus and his disciples were steeped and into which the early Church was born. Again to quote Guenther:

It is important to note that the post-Easter Christian community, due to its Palestinian origin, participated fully in Israel's number symbolism. In New Testament times, the figure of twelve pulsated in the veins of contemporary culture and religion. The preoccupation of the Christian community with this figure is anything but surprising in the light of the number's own long history in Israel.⁵⁸

Given the above understanding of the number twelve in Jewish history and tradition, it would seem wise to turn now to the use of this symbolism in Luke-Acts in general and in Acts 1:15–26 in particular. Luke's strong linking of the Twelve as THE Apostles is universally noted, as is the way in which they provide continuity between Jesus and the Church.⁵⁹ Verses 21–22, part of Peter's speech, state quite clearly the definition of Apostle for Luke, a definition that rules out even Paul:⁶⁰ "Therefore, it is necessary (that) one of these men going with us in all the time (in) which the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us – beginning from the baptism of John until the day (on) which he was taken up from us – become a witness of his resurrection with us." It is certainly telling that there are only two names put forward for the vote, "Joseph, the one called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias."

Given the ecclesiological development in Luke's presentation of the Apostles as the Twelve as opposed to other texts of the New Testament, it would seem reasonable to ask to what extent did Luke present tradition and to what extent did he exercise his own creativity? That the tradition of the Twelve which Luke received stemmed from Jesus himself would seem to be very hard to deny. As Rudolf Pesch notes in his

⁵⁷ Ibid., 322.

⁵⁸ Guenther, 74.

⁵⁹ Seán Freyne, *The Twelve: Disciples and Apostles* (London and Sydney: Sheed and Ward, 1968), 234.

⁶⁰ Pervo, Richard L., *Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 54.

commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, “Daß Lukas die Konzeption von den (nur) »zwölf Aposteln« nicht erfunden, sondern nur ausgearbeitet und für das allgemeine kirchliche Bewußtsein durchgesetzt hat, geht deutlich daraus hervor, daß sie schon in der Tradition vor ihm angelegt und auch in derjenigen neben ihm bezeugt ist.”⁶¹

In *Luke and Scripture*, Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, focusing on Luke 22:24–30, help to put into perspective the tradition surrounding the Twelve with which Luke worked not only in the Gospel, but also in the Acts of the Apostles. They reiterate and make more precise the idea of Pesch cited above, putting the background of Luke’s ideas regarding the Twelve into one aspect of their rich Hebrew Bible perspective: “The reference to the apostles sitting on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:30; cf. Matt 19:28) is part of an early eschatological concept, one that is based on Daniel 7 and Psalm 122. Luke received it, of course, as a piece of dominical tradition most likely preserved in Q.”⁶² These texts, which explicate Luke 22:30 as well as its parallel passage in Matthew 19, are important, because it is on the strength of the Lord’s promise to the original Twelve that the importance of the Twelve as the Apostles (a term reserved almost exclusively for them in Luke–Acts) rests for Luke.

As Evans and Sanders develop their examination of the idea of the “twelve thrones” from Luke 22:30 (“so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel”), they emphasize the effect that both Daniel 7 and Psalm 122 had in rabbinic exegesis and on the Jewish mindset, the ambient in which Christianity was born. They make mention particularly of the messianic interpretation of Daniel 7 on the part of the rabbis and the rabbinic tradition that the patriarchs would receive thrones in the final judgement.⁶³ Toward the end of the chapter, they touch upon our own passage directly:

There is no question that Luke 22:30 (//Matt 19:28) is based on Daniel 7 and Psalm 122. Not only is this dominical saying ultimately based on these scriptural traditions, but I think that it also reflects the essential aspects

⁶¹ Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986), 95.

⁶² Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, *Luke and Scripture* (Minneapolis: Fortune Press, 1995), 155.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 157.

of their interpretation in early Judaism. Luke's combination of dominical materials suggests that he understood and agreed with this interpretation. He not only anticipates Jesus' enthronement but the enthronement of the apostles (twelve apostles when Judas is replaced by Matthias) who with Jesus will rule over the restored house of Israel.⁶⁴

There is a great deal of richness to Luke's theology in general and to the tradition of the number twelve within Judaism that he inherited and upon which he built as well as in the actual choice made by the historical Jesus himself. Another author cited above places the force of Jesus' choice of the twelve in a slightly different vein, that of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. According to Seán Freyne, the choice of the Twelve by Jesus would be linked to the idea that "according to Second Isaiah, the Servant would restore the dispersed of Israel, and we have argued in an earlier chapter that this expectancy for messianic times prompted the original choice of the Twelve by Jesus."⁶⁵ Whatever the Scriptural reference, be it that pointed out by Evans and Sanders, that of Freyne, or any other, the fact of the matter is that the Hebrew Bible is a veritable goldmine of rich references to the twelve patriarchs, the twelve tribes, and all of the concomitant ideas associated with the theme in ancient Israel.

Jesus' choice of the Twelve, so powerfully situated in his own personal and collective Jewish background looks not only backwards to the history of Israel bound up in the twelve patriarchs and the twelve tribes, but more importantly, as the works of Evans and Sanders and Freyne demonstrate, forwards to the eschatological future of Israel. It is the will of Jesus to which the Apostles, in Acts 1:15–26, attempt to be faithful through the reconstitution of their "damaged" number by the casting of lots for Matthias. This eschatological idea of the Twelve comes across clearly in an article by Paul Gaechter: "Die Bedeutung der Zwölf als Zwölf liegt also darin, daß sie in Analogie zur Stellung, welche die zwölf Patriarchen für das irdische Israel als die leibliche Nachkommenschaft Abrahams hatten, die Stellung des Fundamentes und Ausgangspunktes für das neue, geistige Israel einnehmen sollten."⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Ibid., 170.

⁶⁵ Freyne, 245.

⁶⁶ Paul Gaechter, "Die Wahl des Matthias (Apg 1, 15–26)," in *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 71 (1949), 332.

The idea of an eschatological future for Israel, evident in a variety of biblical texts, such as the passages cited by Evans and Sanders, and even more evident in Jewish apocalyptic and rabbinic literature, was ultimately a belief in the care and love of the God who had chosen Israel out from among the nations (cf. Deuteronomy 7:7). Philippe Henri Menoud places the Twelve in this perspective as he notes that:

[I]ls sont les représentants du peuple de Dieu qui, à la fin des temps, doit être reconstitué dans sa totalité et son unité. Il s'ensuit, d'une part, que le cercle des Douze doit toujours être complet, et, d'autre part, que la mort (sans apostasie) d'un des Douze ne crée pas de vacance dans le cercle apostolique, puisque la fin de l'existence terrestre d'un apôtre n'est pas le terme de son ministère.⁶⁷

Essentially, Menoud points out not only the uniqueness of the Twelve and their need to be reconstituted after Judas' apostasy, but also that the lack of a replacement for James, the brother of John, later on in Acts reflects not so much a later disinterest in the Twelve on the part of Luke, but rather a sense that they now live in the eschatological hope present in their Jewish vision of the end-times and Jesus' promises in that regard contained in the Q saying of Luke 22:30.

Conclusion

The choice of Matthias in Acts 1:15–26 is a fascinating study that leads us not only into the very heart of the theology and ecclesiology of Luke-Acts, but it is also a wonderful example of the Semitic background out of which the early Church community arose. The reader of Luke-Acts comes across this tradition in many different facets of the pericope, but above all in three of the different points of the text explained above: the speech of Peter, the casting of lots, and the idea of the Twelve.

In the speech of Peter, there are elements that point us clearly in the direction of a strong Lucan redaction. The reader notes the Greek form of address, the translation of an Aramaic term to an Aramaic-speaking audience with the comment, "in their own dialect," and the quotations

⁶⁷ Philippe Henri Menoud, "Les additions au groupe des douze apôtres, d'après le livre des Actes," in *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 37 (1957), 75.

from the Hebrew Bible that seem to work best in their edited Greek form. Nonetheless, there is also evidence of some earlier tradition, most likely Aramaic, that underlies the more essential elements of the speech. This would certainly be more in keeping with what would have likely occurred during those first post-Resurrection days of the early Church.

The casting of lots, while strange from our modern point of view, would not have carried the same notion of a “game of chance” that it does in today’s day and age. In the ancient world in general, and in the Jewish world in particular, this was considered a legitimate way of leaving a decision up to God, who would reveal his will in this manner.⁶⁸ The amount of biblical citations in which one finds the idea of casting lots before the Lord is sufficient to demonstrate this fact. The casting of the lots after a prayer on the part of the Eleven also has important precedent in the Jewish tradition.

Finally, the idea of the number twelve/the Twelve is the most richly traditional idea of all from a Semitic standpoint in general and a Jewish standpoint in particular. The concern for replacing Judas would seem to come out of a felt need to complete the circle of the Twelve in league with the eschatological significance of the promise of Jesus in Luke 22:30. Jesus’ choice of the Twelve as a defined, particular group stems clearly from his Hebrew roots, with all of the ancient significance of the patriarchs, the tribes, and all of the future, eschatological nuance that they carried in later Judaism and in Jewish apocalypticism, leading up until the Judaism of Jesus’ own day. The Semitic concept of the number twelve runs so strongly throughout our pericope, that even the number one hundred and twenty brings it swiftly to mind.

In the final analysis, the choice of Matthias reads, despite its redactional elements, as a very real and “earthy” account of the earliest days of the Church. It helps us to understand a little better the concerns of that early community and the background out of which these people came. They were first and foremost Jews who never saw themselves as anything but Jewish. Their ideas were Jewish, their history was Jewish, their continued presence in the Temple (attested to in later passages in the Acts of the Apostles), and the way in which they act in

⁶⁸ Werner Dommershausen, “גורל, gōrāl.” Pages 450–456 in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Volume II. Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Translated by John T. Willis. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 452.

our pericope testify to their Jewishness. The choice of Matthias in Acts 1:15-26 serves not only to recount an episode from the time between the Ascension and Pentecost, but also gives us a privileged insight into the thought processes, concerns, and beliefs of Jesus' earliest circle of disciples.

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