

In this and the next couple of posts I will be talking about what we know was in Papias's five-volume book, now lost, Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord. As I previously indicated, the only reason we have any clue about the matter is that later church fathers quoted a few passages from the book. Would they had quoted more! But what they give us is very tantalizing.

The first passage I want to discuss involves the death of Judas Iscariot. To make sense of what Papias has to say, I need to provide some context.

Many people don't realize that Judas's death, after he betrayed Jesus, is not mentioned in three of our Gospels: Mark, Luke, and John. It is mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew, however, and just as important, in the book of Acts, written by the same author who produced the Gospel of Luke (so, well, let's call him Luke). What is striking is that the descriptions of Judas's death in these two accounts are at odds with one, even though there are, at the same time, some striking similarities.

Matthew's account (ch. 27) is the one more people are familiar with....

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