

## **The Twelve Apostles**

### **Lesson 6 Study Notes**

#### **“Matthew: The Apostle Who Wrote a Great Gospel”**

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**Text: Matthew 9:9-13.**

**Mark 2:14-17.**

**Luke 5:27-32.**

Introduction: I have chosen to look at all three accounts of Matthew's call to be an apostle, we note that Mark and Luke refer to him as Levi, and so that is his given Hebrew name, but by Matthew's own account he calls himself Matthew. By this we learn that men saw him as Levi, but after his surrender to Christ he saw himself as a changed man by the name of Matthew.

As noted in our earlier studies we believe him to be a brother to James the Less. Both men are referred to as the sons of Alphaeus.

In all likelihood, none of the Twelve was more notorious as a sinner than Matthew. Matthew was a tax collector—a publican—when Jesus called him. Tax collectors were the most despised people in Israel. They were hated and vilified by all of Jewish society. They were deemed lower than Herodians (Jews loyal to the Idumean dynasty of Herods) and more worthy of scorn than the occupying Roman soldiers.

Levi would make a great feast at his house and invite all his lowlife friends and give Jesus an opportunity to give a lesson of His real mission. The Physician came not to they who whole but He came to help those who were sick.

When Jesus affirmed that He came, not to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners, He indicated that He would find His jewels in most unlikely places. How He loves to mend the broken earthenware of life, and to transform even rebels into kings and priests. Wherever Jesus went preaching it was "the publicans and sinners who gathered themselves together for to hear him." Later on, another most unlikely convert was to write "that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many nobles are called." (Lockyer)

#### **I. A Hebrew Son.**

One fact we learn as we study these twelve apostles, they were all Jews and would have been familiar with the Old Testament teachings.

While we learn practically nothing about Matthew himself from the gospel he wrote, his knowledge of the history and noble traditions of his race appears on almost every page.

His very name, Levi, related to the priestly order, indicated his membership in the tribe set apart for the worship and service of God. His birth name was Levi, which means "joined," a reference to the adherence to Aaron for priesthood ministry.

After receiving the call from Jesus his name was changed to the Greek name Matthew, thus Matthew would become his Christian name. I am glad as the old songs says, "a new name written down in glory and its mine".

Probably a Galilean and born at or near Capernaum, Matthew was the son of Alphaeus and Mary, the latter possibly being a relative of Mary the Virgin. Matthew's pious parents must have been heart-broken when their Levi chose a profession of ill-repute, as orthodox Jews deemed that of a publican to be.

## **II. A Roman Tax Gatherer.**

Levi did not become a priest, but he became a "publican".

It is interesting to note that three tax collectors are specifically mentioned in the Gospels, and each one of them found forgiveness. There was Zacchaeus, in Luke 19:2-10; the publican mentioned in Luke 18:10-14; and Matthew.

There are two kinds of tax collectors, the *Gabbai* and the *Mokhes*. The *Gabbai* were general tax collectors; who collected property tax, income tax, and the poll tax. These taxes were set by the official assessments. The *Mokhes*, collected a duty on imports and exports, goods for domestic trade, and virtually anything that was moved by road. They set tolls on roads and bridges, they taxed beasts of burden and axles on transport wagons, and they charged a tariff on parcels, letters, and whatever else they could find to tax. Hmmm they're still around today.

There were two kinds of *Mokhes*, the Great *Mokhes* and the Little *Mokhes*. A Great *Mokhes* stayed behind the scenes and hired others to collect taxes for him. Zacchaeus was apparently a Great *Mokhes* for he is mentioned as a chief tax collector. Matthew was more likely a Little *Mokhes* because he manned a tax office and dealt with people face to face. He would be the one people saw and would be resented the most.

All who undertook this odious work had their reward in that they could extort for their own benefit more than the Caesars demanded. It was for this reason that they were known as leeches, seeing they were allowed to gorge themselves in their task.

When you look at Matthew's choice manned a tax office and dealt with people face to face. He would be the one the people saw and would to become a tax collector, we see what he lost.

1. He sold his home circle.
2. He sold his country.
3. He sold his conscience.
4. He sold his faith.

Emerson is credited with this statement: "The worst of money is that so often it cost so much to get it."

## **III. A Sacrificial Convert.**

Matthew as a publican had opportunity to have and may have had a lucrative income. It is quite possible that he had been a listener to the Sermon on the Mount; there Jesus taught that ye cannot serve God and mammon.

**Matthew 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (wealth)**

**Matthew 9:9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.**

We can consider that Matthew doing his job of collecting taxes would have heard the talk of the stranger from Galilee and the impact that he may have had on others lives had no problem believing that Jesus was worthy of leaving all and following Jesus. As a matter of fact, it is an honor that any sinner hears and invitation from the Master to follow Him.

Richard Glover, in his most profitable commentary on Matthew, suggests many marvels associated with the Master's call and the Publican's response. Here is the outline, worthy of development by a preacher: 1. Its Solemnity. It calls to sacrifice of wealth, occupation and habits, for an unknown and perilous future. 2. Its Mercy. For none would have fellowship with a publican - yet Jesus offered Himself as the Savior and Friend of such a sinner. 3. Its Promise. Apart from Christ, Matthew was on his own. Christ's call to follow Him was a promise of salvation, fellowship, guidance and protection. 4. Its Light on Transformation. Yesterday, Matthew was a companion of sinners; today, a disciple; tomorrow, a prophet of the kingdom. 5. Its Honor. The call testified to the way Jesus honored a sinner to become His fellow-worker, and an apostle. 6. Its Essence. At the heart of the call, Follow Me, is the surrender to a Person, not a creed. Obedience to, confession of, and fellowship with Christ are all involved in the Master's command. We read that Matthew arose, left all, and followed. Telling his own story, Matthew ignored the sacrifice.

#### **IV. A Grateful Host.**

Having experienced the joy of sins forgiven, he sought to tell others the good news, and he chose a novel way of doing so. Now that the revenue dues had been left behind for someone else to collect, the transformed tax-collector arranges a feast on a grand scale and begs Jesus and the disciples, and also a great company of his fellow-collectors to come. Matthew himself puts it, "Behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples" (9:10). Luke is more descriptive and says that "Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them" (5: 29).

**Luke 5:29-32. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. 30 But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? 31 And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. 32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.**

We can only admire the missionary spirit of Matthew making a feast in his own home and inviting all his friends and fellow workers to meet Jesus. The incident gave Jesus a platform to state his own mission for coming into the world. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

1. A place of honor given to Jesus in Matthew's home.

2. A people invited to hear what they needed most in their lives.
3. A platform for Jesus to preach the great truth of the gospel.
4. A pernicious group who wanted no help only to accuse Jesus of wrongdoing.

#### **V. A Humble Apostle.**

***Matthew 10:3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;***

When Matthew list his name with the disciples, he calls himself Matthew the publican.

But it was a characteristic mark of Matthew's true and honest spirit that he added the record of his unflattering past to his name: He wanted it never to be forgotten or overlooked that he had been a sinner.

A characteristic feature of the writers of the gospels is their silence as to many details respecting their own personal history. Nowhere do they make themselves prominent. Their theme was not themselves, but Christ Jesus their Lord.

Matthew, more than the rest, kept his own person and thoughts in the background, telling us nothing, directly or indirectly, about himself. He wanted the One who had done so much for him to be exalted.

#### **VI. A Gifted Author.**

When our Lord chose Matthew, he secured a choice biographer. Trained to systematic methods, and gifted with his pen in connection with his old trade, Matthew was to learn how his Lord would consecrate these faculties to higher use.

Of the four Gospels, Matthew is the one Jewish gospel, written by a Jew for his brother Jews, and reveals how he was immersed in the Jewish thought of the Old Testament. To him the Christ of history was the Christ of prophecy. Further, his gospel is Galilean, and more than the other evangelists, dwells upon the Galilean work of Christ. Matthew alone quotes the great promise given by Isaiah, "Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up" (Isa. 9:1,2; Matt. 4:15,16).

Matthew writes to present to us the King. And the Book of Matthew can be sum up as follows:

1. The Presentation of the King. (1:1-4:11)
2. The Proclamation of the King. (4:12-7:29)
3. The Power of the King. (8:1-11:1)
4. The Progressive Rejection of the King. (11:2-16:12)
5. The Preparations of the King's Disciples. (16:13-21:11)
6. The Presentation and Rejection of the King. (20:29-27:66)
7. The Proof of the King. (28)