



World Christian Fellowship

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Apostles- Matthew Luke 6:12-16

Luke 6:12-16, *Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.¹³ And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles:¹⁴ Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew;¹⁵ Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot;¹⁶ Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.*

Group One:

1. Simon called Peter,
2. Andrew,
3. James,
4. John.

Peter, James, and John's names get mixed around in the list, Peter's is always first, but they are always in group one.

Group Two:

1. Philip,
2. Bartholomew — or Nathanael,
3. Matthew,
4. Thomas.

Always group two in every list.

The names of Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, and Thomas get mixed, but Philip is always the first name of group two.

Group Three:

1. James the son of Alphaeus,
2. Simon the Zealot,
3. Judas son of James,
4. Judas Iscariot.

Always the same in every list.

The names may be mixed a little bit, the two middle names, the names of Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James get mixed.

James the son of Alphaeus is always the first name in group four and Judas is always the last name of the twelve.

Matthew

Matthew is a familiar name. Lots of men are named Matthew. A familiar last name in the English-speaking world and a very common name.

Originally named Levi, but Jesus called him Matthew (similar to Simon, who Jesus named Peter).

It is simply a matter of him having a **Greek name** as Matthew and a **Hebrew name as Levi**, like how the Apostle Paul was also known by Saul.

Matthew, whose father was Alphaeus.

Mark 2:14, *As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.*

We do not know whether Jesus gave him the name Matthew or whether he changed it himself, but it is a shortening of the name Mattathias.

Matthew which means "the gift of God."

Levi means "joined in harmony".

Matthew wrote this lengthy gospel so we could assume that we would there learn a lot about Matthew. The fact of the matter is, we know very little about Matthew.

One thing we know, for sure, is that Matthew was very humble.

In his entire gospel he says nothing about himself except two sentences.

Matthew 9:9, *As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.*

This is an indication of his humility, this great gospel, and make only two comments regarding yourself, is a testimony to humility. The comments are simple.

That is all Matthew says about himself.

We will look at the life of Matthew through the writings of Luke.

Luke 5:27, *After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me."*

He was a publican, who were known as crooks of the rankest kind.

When the tax collectors came to John the Baptist the question was posed to him about what should be the evidence of their true repentance.

Luke 3:12-13, *Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" ¹³And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you."*

Be honest that is what John the Baptist told them since they were known as dishonest.

We see Matthew as one of those dishonest tax gatherers by the name of Levi.

Many people in ancient times, as they do today, have more than one name, two names. It was common.

Thomas was called Didymus.

Bartholomew was also called Nathanael.

His names were Matthew and Levi. He is best known to us obviously because of the gospel of Matthew by that name.

Matthew is a humble apostle, no question about it. In fact, in all the gospels we have no record that Matthew ever said anything.

Nothing that Matthew said was ever recorded in the gospels. It is also true that in Matthew's own gospel he only mentions himself twice.

Once in this incident when he names himself, telling the story about his conversion under the Holy Spirit's inspiration.

Another time in chapter 10 verse 3 when he includes his name among the list of the apostles.

He is a humble apostle.

I think he probably all his life was in awe of where he had come from and to what he had come. To become a gospel writer, to be given the privilege of writing the story of Jesus Christ in the most magnificent and glorious terms in which Matthew is used to write it, presenting Jesus as the great King.

Always a matter of wonder to him and maybe contributed to his speechlessness. He was the worst of sinners who was given the privilege of inaugurating the New Testament.

What about a tax collector?

For the Jews, this was the scum of humanity.

- This was the losers of all Israel.
- This was the lowest of the low.
- This was the traitor.

How deep will the Lord go?

Who will He save?

The worst!

It must have been inconceivable to scribes and Pharisees that Jesus would ever save a tax gatherer, let alone make him an apostle, unthinkable.

Taxation System of Rome:

Rome ruled the world and Israel was an occupied country. The Roman occupation involved a lot of things.

It involved a military presence. It even involved pagan kings, the Idumaeans such as Herod and Herod Antipas who ruled over Galilee.

The Romans also established taxation for their occupied countries, and they established a certain tax amount for Galilee. That tax was to be paid by various tax collectors to Herod Antipas who then paid it to Rome.

What Herod Antipas did, prescribed by the Roman law, was sell tax franchises to the highest bidder. It was a very lucrative business and if someone who was an unscrupulous person did not mind lying, cheating, stealing, and abusing people, then they would get in line to get a tax franchise.

They also did not have to take their Jewish heritage very seriously because they would become a traitor of all traitors. They just not only abused their people but because they gave that money to Gentiles, unthinkable.

Somewhere along the line, Matthew had sold his birth right. Swapped away his heritage and his reputation and any social place at all and perhaps dishonoured his family.

Sentenced himself to a life of association with thugs and enforcers and other tax collectors by buying a tax franchise. The Roman government would establish an amount at the end of the year to be paid. Anything beyond that, the tax gatherer could keep. Matthew was one of those. There were fixed taxes, there were poll taxes and other taxes too.

All these kinds of taxes left room for robbery and extortion and exploitation. When they could not pay the taxes, they became loan agents who would loan you the money at 50 percent interest or more. If you did not pay, they would send their thugs to break your legs. It was a kind of mafia.

- They could stop people at any point in time.
- They could search their goods and they could tax their letters.
- They could tax their produce.
- They could tax what they bought at the market.
- They could tax them as export or import.
- They could do it all arbitrarily.
- They could enforce it with their thugs who would harm the people who did not pay.

Matthew ran that kind of operation. Obviously, the Jews were hated, and despised tax collectors and Matthew was one of them.

Matthew probably took bribes from rich people, abused the poor people and did it all under Gentile authority. The Jews believed that the only one they ever wanted to pay tribute to was God, so they despised all of this.

The tax gatherers were barred from entering the synagogue. Tax collectors cannot go and worship in their local synagogue.

Why?

Because they were considered unclean.

They were classified with unclean animals in the ceremonial law, classified with Gentiles. They could not come into a synagogue or they would desecrate the whole facility, to say nothing of contaminating anybody that they got close to.

They were forbidden to give testimony in a court of law because they were liars.

The Talmud said, *"You can lie and deceive a tax collector any time you want."* The rabbis gave the Jews the freedom to do that. It was survival. If you could con him, maybe you could get away with something.

The Talmud also distinguished two types of tax collectors in Jewish history.

1. Gabbai

The first type was called a gabbai, would be transliterating that word. The gabbai was sort of a general tax collector. They collected the regular taxes.

That would be the land tax, like a property tax and that would be income tax. Ground tax also included crops and grains.

There was a one-tenth grain tax. (10 %)

There was one-fifth fruit and wine tax. (20%)

The income tax was one percent.

That was kind of a fixed tax and the gabbai was sort of the big-time person who was over all those taxes.

Zacchaeus, by the way, was one of those and there was plenty of room in that system for extortion.

2. Mokus

Mokus were small-time tax collectors.

They dealt with all the day-to-day things.

- Duties,
- Import tax,
- Road tax,
- Poll tax,
- Bridge tax,

- Letter tax,
- Package tax,
- Market tax,
- Axle tax on carts,
- Wheel tax.

These Mokus were the criminals. They were the rankest of the tax collectors. They were the criminals of criminals.

There were two kinds of Mokus, great and little.

Great Mokus employed people and had a big franchise. They put people at all their tax stations. They were usually put on roads and they could stop the people who were moving around and tax them for everything.

Little Mokus just sat at the tax station. They were the hated of all hated people because they saw them face-to-face and told them, "I want your money and if you don't give me your money, you know, I will break your legs."

They were the "in your face" tax collector, heartless, cut-throat, brutal, criminal, the most hated by all. These people were at the bottom rung of the social ladder. The best that could be said about them was they were just a shade below the prostitutes.

here are some Jewish writings that say repentance for them was impossible and forgiveness could never happen. They were unforgivable.

Matthew was a little Mokus!

How do we know?

Luke 5:27, *After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me."*

"He was sitting in the tax station."

He was the worst.

He was the scum.

He was the unforgivable.

He may well have been the most hated man in Capernaum.

But Jesus noticed him.

He fixed His eyes on him and He had a divine appointment with him.

He walked over to him.

"Follow Me."

Amazing!

I am looking for to be an apostle.

Like Isaiah!

"Woe is me for I am a man of unclean lips who dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."

The Lord said, "You are exactly what I'm looking for, a man who understands how sinful he is."

Jesus knew the heart of this man.

An explicit command, "Follow Me."

He did not give him any suggestion.

If you can kind of clean up your act, then I will use you.

If you have got some talents, then I could use you.

He knew his heart. He could read his heart like a billboard. Matthew knew Jesus. It was his home base. Jesus' home base in His Galilean ministry was in Capernaum and the word about Jesus was everywhere, all over the place in Galilee by this time.

Jesus was well known as a miracle worker, as a teacher, as the one who announced that God would forgive the sins of the poor, prisoners, blind and oppressed.

Matthew had obviously come to the conclusion in his own heart that he was wretched and miserable, that he was a poor, prisoner, blind and oppressed. In spite of all the money that he was making, and the power that he exercised over people, he was very, very distressed and burdened by his sin.

Jesus must have looked into his heart, and not only did He see the sinfulness of Matthew, but He saw the hunger of his heart, and righteousness.

If the Pharisees and scribes were shocked, imagine how Matthew felt because Matthew knew more about himself than the Pharisees and scribes did.

For them he was just categorically scum.

To Matthew he was personally scum. But he had recognized his sin obviously because the Lord does not call people to follow Him who are not repentant.

Matthew may not have known that Jesus was God.

Matthew may have been a part of that larger group.

Some thought He was Jeremiah,

Some thought He was Elijah,

Some thought one of the prophets.

They were not yet fully sure who He was. We are still on that side of the cross and what is necessary is to be repentant over your sin to know that God offers forgiveness, which is the message Jesus preached. To cry out to God from the heart for that forgiveness.

Luke 18:13, *And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'*

Tax collector went home justified.

God was forgiving sinners on Old Testament grounds, who, exposed to the law of God, saw the wretchedness of their own heart, wanted deliverance from that wretchedness.

Saw themselves as the poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed and desperately wanted forgiveness, desperately wanted a washing and a cleansing and were crying out of their hearts for God to give it to them.

Jesus saw that in his heart and saw that he would have to trust God for forgiveness because he was so unworthy himself. Jesus forgave him on the spot and called him to be an apostle.

How do we know his heart was really like that?

Luke 5:28, *So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.*

That is not like the rich young ruler.

The rich young ruler went the other direction. He was not willing to recognize his own sins and submit to the authority of Christ.

Matthew drops everything. There is an utter disconnect.

Matthew was walking away from a career and there were lots of thugs in line to take his place and it would not be a day after he was gone before his spot would be filled, never to be recovered again.

We could say his devotion and his following of Jesus was a far more dramatic break than his fishermen fellow apostles. You could leave your nets, Jesus said, "Drop your nets and come and follow Me and I'll make you fishers of men."

But you know what, you can always go fishing again. There are going to be fish there. Nobody could keep you off the lake. They did go back and do that, John 21!

But once you left your tax place, that was it, maximum risk, career was over. So, in some ways it is a greater act of faith and devotion than that of the fishermen disciples who could always go back if they wanted to and did. He could never go back. He did not want to go back.

Matthew began the process of following which he continued through his whole life. The finality of the break, the breach and the continuity of the following indicates the sanctification of the event.

This is the proof of a real work of salvation by the following works.

- He made a decisive break and then a continuing pattern.

- He arose, that was the break, leaving everything behind.
- He continued to follow, that was the pattern.
- He was regenerated.
- He was a new creation.
- He had new longings, new aspirations, new affections, a new mind, a new will.

He was under the conviction of his sins, that he longed to get out of the thing that he was in, that he must have wanted God to forgive him because it is inherent in this.

Jesus calls him to follow and immediately he does.

Unlike the paralytic who sought Jesus, Jesus sought Matthew.

Jesus gave him forgiveness and He gave him salvation and He gave him righteousness, something that the perverted, apostate system of Jewish religion told him he could never have! He was desperate in his heart for forgiveness and he received it.

His response was immediate. The traitor, the extortioner, the robber, the outcast, the sinner became the apostle and the evangelist of Jesus Christ.

- Matthew lost a temporal career and gained an eternal destiny.
- He lost material possessions and gained a spiritual future.

- He lost earthly security and gained heavenly inheritance.
- He lost sinful companions and gained the fellowship of the living Christ.

He understood why Jesus came, to save sinners.

Luke 5:32, Jesus said, *“I’m not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance,”*

That is the commentary on what just happened with Matthew. He is one of those sinners that Jesus have come to call to repentance. The work of the Spirit of God was going on in his heart, producing the kind of conviction that brings about a true longing for forgiveness and a pure faith in his heart was generated by the Holy Spirit by which he was prepared for the gift of salvation which Christ gave him, manifest in the break with the past and a walk in a new life.

Luke 5:29, *Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.*

Now if you give a big reception, we could assume you had a big house. This is another indication that he was wealthy. He may well have been the wealthiest of all the disciples at the beginning.

Obviously, he left it behind. But he gave a big reception.
This is another indication of what has happened in his heart.

“No true Christian ever goes to heaven alone.”

Immediately having experienced the forgiveness of sin and the transformation of his heart, he wanted to gather around him everybody that he knew in his world and expose them to the Saviour.

Matthew gives a big reception for Jesus. The Son of God incarnate is going to have a reception.

Who are we going to invite?

The scribes, the Pharisees, the religious elite, and maybe some of the Sadducees?

Maybe some kings and princes?

Maybe some upper-class people?

No! Not at all!!

We are going to give a big reception for Him in his house and there is a great crowd of tax gatherers.

Why?

That is the only people he knew, all the people who worked in the tax business, all the bad people.

Others, Matthew calls them sinners. Some crowd, gabbais and mokus from everywhere. They all knew each other. They had heard about Jesus, the miracle worker.

They all probably assumed that they will never get anywhere closer to Jesus since He is a very religious Person.

He speaks for God.

He preaches good news from God.

He heals people.

He would never heal us,

He would never be interested in us,

We are the Robbers and scum.

On the contrary, here one of their own becomes converted, he throws a huge gala celebration, Jesus is the guest of honour and he invites the only people who exist in his social world.

This had to be the most stark occasion any of these people had ever attended: Thieves, thugs, hit men, enforcers, drunks, prostitutes, all kinds of criminals, outcasts, personally dining with the Son of God. His kind of crowd, you know.

“They were reclining at the table with Him.”

Why?

It is a long dinner.

They did not just sit in a chair and polished it off in 10 minutes.

They reclined, they talked, and they ate. There are about ten dinner scenes in Luke because so much profound conversation took place in that setting.

Jesus is there, Matthew is there in the new joy of his conversion, the disciples are there, and then all the scum of the world. Cannot imagine what the conversation was like.

But this is the mission field!

Your workplace is your mission field! Do not forget that!!

Being a Christian a long time is you have a shrinking acquaintance with this group.

The longer we know the Lord, the more we get isolated from the people that we are supposed to reach. We become surrounded by Christians, and that is good, we love the precious fellowship of the saints.

It is those new Christians whose friends are the unbelievers and who have that fresh zeal to reach them. This was the party to celebrate Matthew's end of an old life, beginning of a new life. But more than that, it was an evangelistic dinner and Jesus was the guest of honour.

He rejected the righteous.

Luke 5:30, *And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"*

Obviously, they were not invited to that group.

They would not go in the house.

These are unclean people.

But they knew it was going on, they were probably spilling out of the place, they could probably hear what was going on in the town. They were still there from the incident with the paralytic. So, they cornered the disciples, probably outside afterwards asking them.

Why do you eat and drink with the tax gatherers and sinners?

What are you doing, this is outrageous behaviour?

What are you doing with these people?

They must have thought that Jesus and His disciples at least had some intention to keep the law, some intention to follow the prescriptions.

Scribes and Pharisees were so attached to the letter of the law and they were resenting Jesus because Jesus unmasked them and as it goes through the story of His life.

But they were just shocked, outraged that Jesus and His disciples would associate with this crowd.

Why are you doing this?

They were the moral majority.

God's not looking for a moral majority. He is looking for a holy minority. They were concerned with externals. They were concerned with what you see on the outside.

They were moral, they were not holy.

They were void of grace and they were void of salvation.

They were without God.

Jesus was turning His back on the moral people and making sinners a holy people.

Why do you eat and drink with the tax gatherers and sinners?

They vent their outrage on the disciples.

They indict the disciples with the idea that truly righteous people would never hang around with this crowd, never.

All through the ministry of Jesus this conflict goes on and on and on because Jesus identifies with the sinners and these people perceive themselves as the righteous.

Jesus overheard their statement.

Luke 5:31, *Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.*

His answer is from analogy:

Doctors do not go to healthy people, but they go to sick ones.

Could the Pharisees argue?

By their own admission they were the sickest of the sick. If the Pharisees and scribes could see how sick they were and see how sinful they were, then why could not they see how important it was that the physician go to them.

What was it then in a man like that, that caused him to drop everything?

You would think he was a materialist.

You would think he was the worst of the worst.

You would think religion was not that important to him if he would link up with idolatrous Romans.

Matthew was a Jew and whatever his tortured soul may have experienced because of the profession that he had chosen to be in. As a Jew deep down inside, he knew the Old Testament.

We know he knew the Old Testament because in his gospel, the gospel of Matthew, he quotes the Old Testament 99 times. That is more times than Mark, Luke and John combined. He had tremendous familiarity with the Old Testament.

He may have had to sort of pursue his understanding of the Old Testament on his own, since he could not go to the synagogue which means he could not go and hear the exposition of the Scripture, so perhaps he was a student on his own.

The Old Testament is divided for the Jews into three parts, the law, the prophets, and the holy writings.

Matthew quotes out of all of them!

So, he knew all the sections of the Old Testament, was very familiar with it. Therefore, he knew and understood messianic prophecy. That comes through as well in his gospel.

He believed in the true God.

He knew the record of God's revelation, called the Old Testament.

He understood the coming of Messiah. So that when Jesus came, he knew about Jesus because sitting on the crossroads in a tax booth he would have heard information all the time about this miracle worker who was banishing disease from Palestine and casting demons out of people and doing miracles.

The reputation of Jesus had grown greatly. When Jesus showed up and called him to follow Him, there was at least enough faith in Jesus as the Messiah, or as the prophet of God to drop everything and follow.

So down in his sort of ambivalent heart, there was a love for his God, in spite of his association with Rome. He certainly was outcast from the Jewish system, but he had a heart for God and an openness for the truth and a desire to follow this prophet of God who might well be his Messiah.

So, we know this about Matthew, he knew the Old Testament, believed in God, he looked for the Messiah. He dropped everything when he met Him, followed Jesus and immediately in the joy of his new-found relationship, embraced the outcasts of his world and introduced them to Jesus.

That is really all we know.

But really, it is enough to tell us that the Lord picks the rankest sometimes for the highest callings!

Tax collectors were absolutely despised by their own culture because they worked for the Roman government. He left behind the source of his riches. He left his position of security and comfort for traveling, hardship, and eventual martyrdom. Matthew left his old life for a new life with Jesus.

Matthew Personal life

Irenaeus of Lyon (late second century) tells us that Matthew preached the gospel among the Jews.

Clement of Alexandria adds that he did this for 15 years. Eusebius maintains that, after writing the Gospel attributed to him in Hebrew, Matthew then went to other countries. Several writers mention an "**Ethiopia**" as one of the lands he evangelized, but locate this country south of the Caspian Sea, not in Africa. Others speak of Persia, Macedonia, and Syria.

An account of Matthew's death in the *Acta apostolorum apocrypha* is considered legendary and probably originated in the third century.

The Acts of Matthew begins with a vision given to Matthew of the child Jesus. Matthew asks Jesus concerning the whereabouts of **King Herod I**, and is informed that this evil king now dwells in Hades/Gehenna in eternal flames. At Jesus' command, Matthew goes to "**Myrna**," called "the city of the man-eaters," where he is to visit the church founded by Saint Andrew. After exorcising the king's wife and the son of a powerful demon, he meets **Bishop Plato** and performs various miracles, converting many of the heathen. Matthew's rod grows into a great fruit-bearing tree which feeds the multitudes of Myrna.

The king, however, is outraged that his wife has become Matthew's disciple and resolves to have him burned to death. The fire intended to consume Matthew is miraculously turned against his persecutors and their gods. The king still does not relent, but after several more miracles, he destroys all his idols and issues a decree that henceforth "there should not be many gods, but one, and one only, the God in the heavens." After **Bishop Plato's** death, the king, whose name is also Matthew, takes his place.

A version of this story which appears in The Golden Legend preserves the less happy ending that the king, after his wife had

determined to live the rest of her life in celibate chastity, dispatched a swordsman to slay Matthew. The executioner "came behind Matthew as he stood at the altar with his hands raised to Heaven in prayer, drove his sword into his back, and so consummated the apostle's martyrdom."

There are several conflicting accounts about his death.