

Orcutt Christian Church

A Grace Driven Church for Grace Needing People!

Worship with others in the Chapel

Acts of the Apostles - 13

Christ's Revolutionary Leaders

The FAQ's About Matthew

November 5, 2023

Communion: Carol Hill

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Acts 1:12-14, 26 (NASB)

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. [13] When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. [14] These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. ... [26] And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Luke 5:27-32 (NASB)

After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me." [28] And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him. [29] And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them. [30] The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?" [31] And Jesus answered and said to them, "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. [32] "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

I hope that In this series of sermons on Acts, you are becoming acquainted with some the world's great revolutionary leaders.

Today we focus on Matthew.

FAQ 1. Matthew Had Two Names

As we have seen Jesus chose the Twelve from the least likely of candidates.

I suspect that Matthew had more money and education than the rest, but in all likelihood, none of the Twelve were as notorious a sinner as He.

When Matthew gives his list of Jesus' apostles, he writes...

Matthew 10:3 (NASB)

Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;

Pay attention to when Matthew speaks of **James the son of Alphaeus**..

When Matthew speaks of his being called, he speaks of his occupation...

Matthew 9:9 (NASB-U)

As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.

However, Mark tells us...

Mark 2:14 (NASB-U)

As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.

We learn two things about Matthew in these verses.

Like so many others in the New Testament Scriptures, Levi Matthew has two names.

His given name by his parents was Levi, which is Hebrew. And it was as Levi that he was occupied as a Internal Revenue agent.

However, he also has a Greek name, probably given to him by his parents, and that is Matthew.

So we learn early on that Matthew has a brother among the Apostles, and his name is James.

The second thing we learn is that one of his brothers is also an Apostle.

James, the son of Alphaeus, was known as James the Less, to distinguish him from James the brother of John.

James the brother of John is referred to as James the greater, and we had a sermon on him some weeks ago.

There is lots of speculation as to why he is called James the Less, but truthfully we just don't know.

Levi means “**joined,**” and is a reference to his being a part of the tribe set apart to the worship and service of God.

Remember Levi, the son of Jacob?

Levi was the third child of Jacob and Leah, born in Paddan Aram after Jacob had been working for his uncle and father-in-law Laban for more than seven years of a 20-year employment.

Years later, Levi's descendants, the Levites, were set aside for tabernacle and temple service, an office they fulfilled for millennia.

So it is a good chance that Levi was from the priestly tribe of the Levites.

Matthew means “**Gift of Jehovah,**” and Jesus saw a man of tremendous spiritual depth who had become sidetracked by the enticement of money.

He was probably born in Galilee at or near Capernaum.

Unlike some of the other disciples it does not appear that Matthew was a follower of John the Baptist.

Did you know that God has another name for you and I.

John the Revelator says:

Rev. 2:17 (NASB-U)

'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

I hope you are excited about having a new name, because when you receive it, it will mean that you are one of those whom have overcome, and have received the hidden manna.

FAQ. Matthew Was A Pariah.

You probably know that a pariah is an outcast; somebody who is despised and avoided.

Now, why would I say Matthew is a Pariah?

Well, here he is a descendant of all those priests who have dedicated themselves to the service of God.

But, what is Levi Matthew doing for his chosen vocation?

Matthew says he is a tax collector.

Mark says he is in the tax booth.

Now if you are still using the King James Version, you will read in Matthew his list of the Apostles

Mt 10:3 (KJV)

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

If you read that in any other version, instead of Publican, you will read “tax collector.”

The Greek New testament, uses the word “**τελώνες, telones.**”

A “telones” is an official of the Roman government that collected taxes.

If you are wondering why the KJV uses the word “publican,” you have the same curiosity that I had.

I discovered that King James was having real problems increasing taxes.

He desperately needed more and higher taxes to pay down the Empires huge debt caused by his personal lavish spending.

James I has always been viewed as an extravagant king who gave no thought to finance – if James wanted something, he had it regardless of cost.

When James became king in 1603, he described himself as being

“like a poor man wandering about forty years in a wilderness and barren soil, and now arrived at the land of promise.”

The Crown obtained money from the numerous taxes levied on British subjects—from custom duties on all movable goods to taxes on landowners, merchants, and tenant farmers.

Everything was taxed, including vegetables being both sold and bought.

The people were up in arms over his excessive taxation. He knew if the new Bible he was funding had the phrase “tax collector” there would be outright rebellion.

So he demanded that the translators use another word to word for “**telones.**”

Matthew became Matthew the Publican.

Matthew was a customs officer in Capernaum, in the territory ruled by Herod Antipas.

He belonged to the class of bureaucrats called **portitores** serving serving the Roman government.

As a portitore he would be a educated man, and he would be fluent in Aramaic, Greek, Egyptian and Latin.

He would be knowledgeable in bookkeeping, and business math

So this son of Levi works for the Roman occupational government.

No Jewish parent ever wanted their child to grow up to be a tax collector for Rome.

By adopting the profession he not only aroused the ill-will of his fellow countryman, but he no doubt broke the heart of his parents.

His Hebrew name, Matthew, means “**Gift of Yahweh.**”

And, his name suggests he was supposed to be in ministry to God and God's people.

But Levi became not a priest but a tax collector, to the heartbreak of his parents.

By a decree of Caesar, taxes were levied by tax collectors in Judea, and paid directly to the government.

The government set a basic amount to be collected, and the collector could pad it with what he wanted to be paid.

The tax collector could inspect the goods of travelers and levy a tax on anything they chose.

There was a purchase tax on all that was bought and sold.

There was bridge money to be paid when a bridge was crossed.

There was tax on using the main roads.

There were taxes on using the harbors.

Taxes had to be paid when a market was used.

Taxes had to be paid when a traveler entered a walled town.

If a man was traveling on a road, he would have to pay a tax for using the road, a tax on his cart, on its wheels, on its axle, and on the animal which drew the cart.

There was a tax on crossing rivers, on ships, on the use of harbor quays.

And all tradesmen of certain trade guilds had to pay taxes.

The tax collectors were so distrusted that they were prohibited from testifying in a court of law.

Banks disdained their business.

And the Pharisees refused their charitable gifts.

The situation was so bad that the Jews considered any sort of evasion, including outright lying, ethical in order to avoid paying taxes.

That's called "situation ethics" today.

It was easy for an unscrupulous man to make himself rich.

But even if the tax collector were honest, his fellow Jews still despised him because they were considered as being a traitor who had sold out to the Romans.

The Roman occupation troops were hated with the same kind of scorn that the Jews in the 20th century felt toward the Nazis.

Tax collectors were held in such low esteem that they could not serve as witnesses in court and were even excommunicated from the synagogues.

He was excluded from all religious contact, because according to the Pharisees, there was no hope for a man like Matthew,

Perhaps of all the people in Capernaum, Matthew was the most publicly unacceptable candidate to be a disciple of Jesus.

He was a man who was despised by the Romans because he was a Jew.

And he was despised and rejected by Jews because he was considered a traitor.

He was not allowed to worship God or present sacrifices for forgiveness of sin.

He was considered worse than a Gentile or a dog.

That is why '*tax collectors and harlots*' and '*tax collectors and sinners*' are always grouped together.

It is really important to see what Jesus does.

Luke 5:27 (NASB)

After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth,

The word that is translated that Jesus "**noticed**" Matthew is a word that conveys more than a passing glance, it was "*a calm, continuous contemplation...*"

Such a look from Jesus probably made Matthew nervously wonder, "*What does Jesus want from me.*"

What Jesus noticed was a deeply religious man, a man of high intelligence, a man with great talent, and great potential.

When John the Baptist was approached by the pariah's, the outcasts, the sinners, and tax collectors, Luke says

LK.3:12-13 (TLB)

Even tax collectors--notorious for their corruption--came to be baptized and asked, "How shall we prove to you that we have abandoned our sins?" 13 "By your honesty," he replied. "Make sure you collect no more taxes than the Roman government requires you to."

Jesus saw beyond a life disfigured with sin and “noticed” a future author of the gospel, an evangelist and rescuer of souls.

FAQ 3. Matthew Was A Decision Maker

You don't come to follow the Master Jesus Christ without making a decision.

Mark tells us

Mk 2:14 (NASB)

As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.

And, notice that Matthew's response to Jesus was immediate with total commitment.

Luke 5:28 (NASB-U)

And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him.

He didn't say a word.

He was speechless at the unexpected love and grace.
Here was one who saw in him the divine image of God.
He left everything behind
He literally got up from his desk leaving behind his tax receipts, his documents, and the money he had collected.
When Matthew began following Jesus, it means that there was no quavering with him.
He was not a double minded man.
He put his life on the line.
Luke informs us that Levi, like Peter, Andrew, James and John, the fishermen, left everything and followed Jesus.
But, for Matthew, his leaving everything behind had more impact than it did for the fishermen.
For Matthew, following Jesus was a substantial sacrifice
There was no turning back.
One did not give up collecting taxes for the Romans on a whim and expect to ever return.
And, Matthew did follow Jesus for the rest of his life.
Matthew, “the gift of God,” committed his entire life to follow Jesus.

FAQ 4. Matthew Shared His Faith in Jesus

What Matthew did was extraordinary.
Think back to the time you made your decision to be a follower of Jesus.
What did you do the day you made your decision to follow Jesus?
The Psalmist preaches:
Psalm 107:2 (NASB-U)
Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary

Matthew wanted to “*say so*” to as many people as possible. Having experienced the joy of having his sins forgiven, he wanted to tell others the good news and he chose a novel way of doing so.

Matthew threw a feast.

Although other gospel accounts tell us that Jesus attends a banquet, Luke is the only gospel writer that informs us that feast that Jesus attended was a celebration put on by Matthew.

Luke 5:29 (Msg)

Levi gave a large dinner at his home for Jesus. Everybody was there, tax men and other disreputable characters as guests at the dinner.

You would think that everyone would be celebrating right along with Matthew and his guests.

But word got around about all the laughter, the fellowship, and the joy of being in the Redeemers presence.

Luke 5:30 (NASB-U)

The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?"

Why did Matthew invite tax collectors and other lowlifes to this feast?

Because they were the only kinds of people that he knew.

Whom do you invite to share in the sacrament of Communion in worship of the Savior who rescued you from the “*lake of fire*?”

We want you to invite the people you know.

Matthew invited all the lowlife to a feast in honor of Jesus.

The reason of the feast is very apparent.

Matthew's friends and associates have to be astounded by his decision to leave his lucrative business and follow Jesus.

The occasion gave him the opportunity to explain his decision and more importantly to introduce his friends to Jesus, and let them learn for themselves what kind of Person could have produced such a dramatic change in Matthew's life.

We all have heard testimonies of individuals who made it sound like they were having a great time with booze and drugs and etc. until Jesus came along and spoiled the party for them.

But Matthew gave a celebration to mark the change Jesus has made in his life.

To the religious leaders, those Pharisees and their scribes, people were divided into two groups, "**righteous**" and "**sinners.**"

The "righteous" were those who kept the rules, did the right things and associated with the right people.

The "**righteous**" saw themselves as right with God because of what they did not do, where they would not go, and with whom they did not associate.

Doesn't the complaint of the Pharisees sound like "sour grapes?"

The real question is never really stated.

They are really asking ...

"Why are your disciples able to enjoy life, while we merely endure it?"

The comparison is not very favorable.

The sinners are celebrating and the religious leaders are complaining.

The sinners are happy, the Pharisees are sad.

The misery of the Pharisees attracted no one.

The questions we need to ask are; “What kind of picture are you giving of being a Christian?

Are you content to go to heaven alone?”

The fact is that you and I are more closely related to the tax collectors and sinners than we are to the Pharisees and their scribes.

It is too easy for Christian believers to forget that they are sinners- yes forgiven, but still, in themselves, weak and vulnerable.

It's way to easy for a congregation to become an elite club that few on the outside want to join even if the could.

The radical regenerating work of Christ sours when redeemed people lose sight of their continuing need to follow in the steps of the Savior.

We need moment by moment refreshment through our relationship to the One who gives life, hope an Joy.

The church can easily become a self-righteous subculture with no room or sympathy for “sinners.”

Notice how Jesus answers the criticism of the Pharisees...

Luke 5:31-32 (Msg)

Jesus ... spoke up, "Who needs a doctor: the healthy or the sick? [32] I'm here inviting outsiders, not insiders—an invitation to a changed life, changed inside and out."

Jesus scandalized the Pharisees by indicating there are no good people and bad people – only those who know that they are bad and those who do not.

The scribes and Pharisees saw Levi and his friends as condemned “sinners,” but Jesus saw them as spiritually sick “patients” who needed the help of a physician.

The first step toward healing the “sin sickness” is admitting that we have a need and that we cannot heal ourselves.

Those who think of themselves as having it all together spiritually, as the Pharisees do, did not feel they had need of His help.

But these people, who Jesus is associating with did not suffer from the delusion that they were without spiritual needs.

Jesus had come to call those who would acknowledge that they were “sinners,” not those who thought they had no sin.

FAQ 5. Matthew Wrote The First Gospel Record

In Matthew’s gospel when he lists his name among the Twelve chosen by Jesus he attaches the label, the tax collector.

It is a characteristic of his humility that he added the record of his unflattering past to his name.

We can be certain that when Matthew got up from his tax table, he never dreamed that he would record the first gospel account of the life of the LORD Jesus.

His gospel written around 45 AD met the need of the early Christians for a written record of the life of Jesus.

But to whom did he write?

In spite of the fact that he could not attend services in the synagogue, Matthew knew the Old Testament very well, perhaps even better than the Pharisees.

He quotes the Old Testament ninety-nine times in his gospel, which is more than Mark, Luke and John combined.

Matthew understood the way in which Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament.

More references appear in his gospel to this fact than in any of the other three gospels.

Matthew gives the only version of the story about the man who found a treasure hid in a field and sold all he had to purchase it.

Matthew knew from personal experience what that meant. He, too, had forsaken his profitable and lucrative career and had followed Jesus.

Why would Matthew write the very first Gospel account in Hebrew?

Jerome, the Roman Catholic historian of the fourth century says:

"Matthew, also called Levi, Apostle and aforesaid tax collector, composed a gospel of Christ at first published in Judea in Hebrew for the sake of those of the circumcision who believed."

And Jerome says copies of Matthew's Gospel written in Hebrew still existed in his day.

Augustine said Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew while the other gospel writers wrote in Greek.

Matthew wrote in Hebrew although Aramaic was the popular language of the time.

We know that Matthew really knew his Old Covenant Scriptures.

We know he believed in God and looked for the Messiah.

And when the Messiah stood in front of him, Matthew dropped everything to follow Jesus, and with joy he introduced all his friends and associates to Jesus.

FAQ 6. The Matthew of History

The Catholic and Orthodox Churches believed in his martyrdom.

The legends and myths abound about Matthew.

He embraced his life, his devotion and maybe his final verse could might as well be his epitaph.....

Mt 28:20 (NASB)

teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

The **Salerno Cathedral** is the main church in the city of Salerno in southern Italy

Begun in 1076, the Cathedral was consecrated by Pope Gregory VII in 1084.

Catholic tradition is that the arm of Matthew was brought to the Salerno Cathedral about 16 years later, and then was re-named as The Cathedral of San Matteo.

The Catholics have no idea where the arm came from, but they choose to say it was the arm of Matthew.

Where Matthew ministered, and how he died is simply not known.

What is known is that Matthew was the best educated of the Apostles, a gifted writer, and an ardent disciple of Jesus.

He was well equipped to witness to tax collectors, people in high places of authority, and was a vessel well chosen to write the Gospel that bears his name.

It's a tremendous joy for me, and I trust for you as well, to find out that these men chosen as the personal agents of Jesus Christ, these men that we imagine so often to be stained glass saints with some kind of holy perfection that has eluded the rest of us, are nothing more than people just like we are.

Isn't it encouraging to know that God is in the business of using all kinds of people to do very, very high level, divine, spiritual and eternal tasks, and to do the everyday, mundane things required in Kingdom building.

People just like you and I.

I often hear folk of the Orcutt Christian Church lamenting because there are so few of us who worship here.

But where are the hero's found?

We tend to think the church hero's are found in all those super churches that number into the thousands.

But, Brothers and Sisters, we have hero's right here in your midst!

Some of you, perhaps, remember from your days of High School literature reading **The Charge of the Light Brigade**.

The Charge of the Light Brigade was a disastrous charge of British cavalry led by Lord Cardigan against Russian forces during the Battle of Balaclava on 25 October 1854 in the Crimean War.

It is best remembered as the subject of a famous poem entitled *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, whose lines have made the charge a symbol of warfare at both its most courageous and its most tragic.

The major port city of Crimea today is held by the Russians, and used to resupply the war against the Ukrainians.

In 1854, 600 British cavalry attempted to fight the Russians who had taken possession of Crimea.

The heights were manned by veteran Russian soldiers standing behind a vast circle of cannons.

The command went forth –

Forward the Light Brigade, charge for the guns.

The soldiers knew they were totally outmanned, they knew that there was no way they could win.

They knew that someone had blundered, in the command but **theirs was not to reason why, theirs was to do or die.**

And Tennyson, the poet says,

*"Half a league, half a league, half a league onward
all into the valley of death marched the six hundred.
Cannon to the right of them, cannon to the left of*

them. Cannon in front of them, volleyed and thundered. Stormed at with shot and shell. Boldly they rode and well. Into the valley of death. Into the mouth of hell.. .rode the six hundred."

These 600 British Calvary have remained in history as heroes.

Not because they won, but because they were so few against so many.

It speaks of courage and devotion to duty.

Do you have courage to share your faith with others?

What about your commitment to Christ?

That was Matthew.

A man of courage, integrity, commitment, and honor.

Totally devoted to his Lord and Savior.

But, he is no more a hero than any of you who stand fast, displaying courage in face of terrible odds, remaining devoted to your service to the Messiah.

Prayer and Invitation