



LESSON 47 - The Call of Matthew (Mark 2:13-17)

Mark 2:13-14 And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. **14**And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

In this account the man that Jesus calls is named Levi. (Later Mark refers to him as Matthew-- Mark 3:18.) In a parallel account in the book of Matthew (Mt 9:9-13) the man is called Matthew. So it is thought that these were two names of the same person. Matthew was a customs or tax collector (also known as a publican). He was one who paid the Roman government a sum of money for the right to collect money on the taxable goods brought into the area by the farmers, merchants and foreign traders. They made their money back (and much more) by charging the tradesmen excessive taxes on their goods. Tax collectors were hated by the people because of their corruption and greed and their association with the Romans. After all, they were taking money from their own Jewish brethren and giving it to the Roman government and keeping a lot for their own pockets. Most Jews considered tax collectors of that day to be betrayers, on the same level as robbers, murderers, harlots (Matt 21:31), Gentiles (Matt 18:17) and sinners (Matt 9:10).

It would be strange, don't you think, for Matthew to respond to such a call as Jesus gave, leaving his job and becoming a follower of Jesus without knowing Who He was? Had Matthew ever seen or heard of Jesus?

Yes, remember the verse in Acts 1:21-22, which gave the requirements to be an apostle of Jesus? **21**Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, **22**Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. This verse indicates that Matthew was one of those who was in attendance at the baptism of Jesus. Matthew would have seen Jesus there and heard John the Baptist announce that Jesus was the Messiah. So when Matthew is called to follow Jesus, Matthew already knew Who He was.

Luke 5:27 And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. **28**And he left all, rose up, and followed him. **29**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.

(The last sentence "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" gives part of a simple definition of an evangelist.)

Probably soon after, either that day or in the next few days, wealthy Matthew gave a great feast at his house to honor Jesus, and he invited many guests, including Jesus' disciples (Matt 9:10), and those who were of similar disrepute as Matthew. The scribes and Pharisees would not associate

with publicans and sinners, much less eat in their homes, so they questioned the disciples of Jesus as to why He would do such a thing. They thought it was terrible that Jesus would be seen and would socialize with sinners.

In response to their question, Jesus answered, "They that are whole don't need a doctor; just those that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." For a long time I thought that Jesus was saying that the Pharisees were righteous. Yet I knew that wasn't true. In looking at this more closely, I saw that Jesus was saying that people have to know and admit that they are sick before they will seek healing for their bodies from a physician. In much the same way, people have to know and admit that they are sinners, in need of repentance and forgiveness, before they will seek the healing of their spirits from the great Physician, Jesus, Who was sent from God to bring healing to all and in all.

The publicans (tax collectors) knew they were sinners and needed the forgiveness and the salvation that Jesus the Messiah brought. The Pharisees and scribes thought they had no sins and, therefore, thought that they had no need of repentance.

PRINCIPLE: A person must recognize, admit and repent of his sin before he can receive the forgiveness and healing that Jesus offers. Salvation cannot come to a person who will not confess his sins and repent of them. It requires that a person humble himself before God.

We know that Matthew did that, because he spent the rest of his life following the Lord Jesus and eventually wrote the Gospel of Matthew. The Pharisees and scribes did not humble themselves and repent. **(Matt 21:32 Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. 32" For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.)**

They rejected what Jesus told them from God the Father **(John 12:49-50 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.)**

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