

## JESUS SAW MATTHEW

**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.*

Years later, the apostle Matthew records the time he met the Lord Jesus. He was a tax collector, a publican. Not only Jews, but every nation under the yoke of Rome, hated tax collectors. James Strong defines a publican in this manner: “*a tax gatherer, collector of taxes or tolls, one employed by a publican or farmer general in the collection of taxes. The tax collectors were as a class, detested not only by the Jews, but by other nations also, both on account of their employment and of the harshness, greed, and deception, with which they did their job*”. Matthew means “gift of Jehovah”, but clearly, he was more like the “curse of Jehovah” for everyone who met him. He was obviously used to receiving hate, threats and abuse from Jews which he normally dished out to them. The Devil wants some people to expect everyone to hate them so they can continue in their own hatred of others. No one ever invited Matthew to their homes or affairs. To choose a job where you work for the arch enemy of your people and extort taxes from the poor, is to permanently separate oneself from the nation of Israel. But one day, one merciful day, he saw a man coming towards him. This man did not have any hatred toward Matthew, only profound love. His name was Jesus.

**Ezek 16:8** *Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.*

**Ezek 16:9** *Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil.*

His name was also Levi. The other Gospel writers never called him Matthew the publican, but by his respected name, Levi. “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” (Mark 2:14). Perhaps Matthew was ashamed of his job and could not bring himself around to use this respected and holy name, Levi. After all, Levites were attached to the Temple and dedicated themselves to reconciling the people with God. “At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day” (Deut 10:8). Matthew was ashamed because he was not attached to God but to money. He had betrayed his glorious heritage and served the Roman colonizers and facilitated their exploitation of the

people of God. Now, mercifully, the God of Israel came in flesh and saw Matthew sitting where he should not be sitting. Jesus made him the “gift of Jehovah” again. Hallelujah! When we are addicted to things, we are unable to separate ourselves from, thank God Jesus still sees the Matthews of this world. Jesus had the power to separate Matthew from the money and the Romans and make this man his Levi. Do not be fooled by the simplicity of the verse in Matthew 9:9. It takes supreme, supernatural force to separate a publican from such a job. We can be sure Matthew cried when he wrote this verse. Do you remember where you were sitting when Jesus saw you with love and issued the command that tore you from the cursed job or activities you were slave to? Please note that Matthew chose to place the story of his own conversion after a powerful miracle the Lord performed.

***Mat 9:6** But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.*

Matthew wants the readers to know that Jesus performed a miracle in his life. He was like the man who was powerless due to his sickness and was confined to bed. Jesus forgave Mathew his sins and gave him the power to rise from his bed of sickness at the receipt of custom. “Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:34-36). Let us not forget that Matthew lived in Capernaum the same town as the Lord Jesus. They must have met several times earlier. Remember there were tax collectors who troubled the Lord also. Some people come to church and hear the witness of the word of God from Christians, but there comes a special day – the day of their salvation. When that day arrives, Matthew will certainly leave his old world. One look and a few words from Jesus are sufficient. Don’t tire of your Christian witness and example. There is a day marked in the calendar of Jesus for every Mathew, James, Peter, John etc.

***Isaiah 49:8** Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;*

When the Lord sees individuals, he does not see a publican, fisherman, persecutor or physician. He sees a man named Mathew, Peter, Paul and Luke. Jesus does not see as humans do, thankfully! Don’t see yourself through the eyes of humans, you will end up either exaggerating your importance or undervaluing God’s love for you. In the eyes of Jesus,

everyone is a soul that he loves and died for. Jesus did not see a hated tax collector keeping immaculate records for the Romans, but Matthew who would write the first Gospel or account of the life of the Lord Jesus himself. Ananias saw a dangerous man in the apostle Paul who would devastate the church, but Jesus saw the apostle Paul, the greatest of all missionaries. “But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). There is much similarity between the call and conversion of Zacchaeus and Matthew.

***Luke 19:2*** And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

***Luke 19:5*** And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

Jesus loves to call sinners to repentance. They do not need any convincing that they are sinners. They just need to know how to receive deliverance, and Jesus is the deliverer. Significantly, the Lord also loved to invite himself to the houses of publicans and sinners to the chagrin of the self-proclaimed righteous. Why was this his habit? In those days, anyone who entered the house of a publican was considered beyond the pale – a sinner too with little or no discerning. You see the Lord did not wait until his death to be classified together with criminals and sinners – he always joined their company and associated with them, despite his sinlessness. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Cor 5:21). When Jesus calls someone to leave their world of sin, they do so instantly – the conversion is total, as was the case with Matthew.

***Matthew 9:10*** And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

See how smart the Lord is! He went to Matthew’s home to meet more publicans and sinners. No wonder the Lord was found quite often in such homes. That is where they hang out, if you will. Befriend a drug addict for Jesus and you will soon be introduced to the friends of the drug addict. Jesus entered Matthew’s house and that of Zacchaeus to sanctify their dwellings. God knows that our houses need his cleansing and sanctifying presence. The family members, friends and neighbors need the visitation of the Lord to ensure the spirit of greed and extortion never comes to these houses again. Jesus wants to go home with every sinner immediately.