

# JESUS CALLS MATTHEW



Christ to the World Ministries

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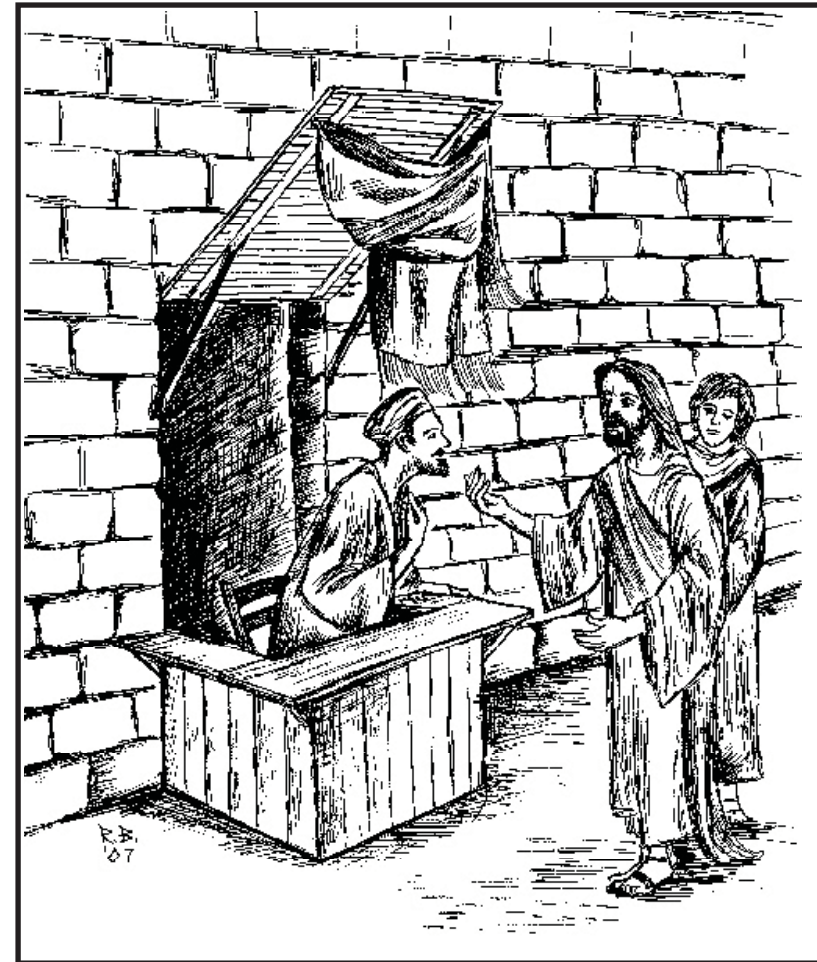
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**CHRIST TO THE WORLD MINISTRIES**

# Jesus Calls Matthew

**Read Luke 5:27-32 in your Bible.**

Peter, Andrew, James, and John, the earliest disciples of Jesus, would never have approved of Matthew as a disciple. These men were fishing partners, respected members of a Sea of Galilee business. They drew their catch from the lake and helped sustain their neighbors with its food while making a modest profit. But Matthew was a tax collector!

## **People Hated Tax Collectors**

Matthew was almost a traitor to his people—in their eyes at least. He collected taxes for the despised Roman government. Everyone who traded merchandise had to pay taxes. Even worse, the tax collectors made their living off the taxes. They had a contract with the Romans: They turned over to the Romans a certain amount of tax money. What they collected above that, they kept for themselves. The Romans did not care, so long as they got the amount of taxes that they expected from the traders.

Matthew also had an easy job, as the fishermen saw it. They worked day and night to draw fish into their nets. Matthew had a tax collection booth near the Sea of Galilee. It was close to the Roman road that passed through Capernaum. All traders had to pass by his booth. He never had to move! The traders were obligated to stop and pay their taxes.

But tax collectors were condemned as a part of Jewish society. People associated them with sinners—those who did not carefully keep the law of Moses. The rabbis declared that a tax collector in a family caused the whole family to be disgraced.

## **What Did Jesus See in Matthew?**

The four fishermen would have turned Matthew down as a disciple if Jesus had asked them. But Jesus did not ask. He saw qualities in Matthew that made him yearn to have him as a disciple.

Jesus was a keen observer of people. He must have passed Matthew's tollbooth several times a day when he was in Capernaum. Probably he observed actions in Matthew that revealed his wish for more than he had as a tax collector. Perhaps Matthew leaned forward to hear more clearly what Jesus was saying. Perhaps he laughed at Jesus' jokes. Perhaps Jesus saw in Matthew's eyes the yearning for a different life.

One day Jesus, walking with his disciples, came to Matthew's tax collection booth. This time Jesus stopped, looked Matthew straight in the eye, and said, *"Follow me."*

Matthew did not hesitate. He got up and followed Jesus. Probably the traders waiting to pay their Roman taxes stared in astonishment. Matthew did not care. He had found his life's mission: to follow Jesus.

## **Matthew Gave a Banquet for Jesus**

One of the qualities that Jesus admired showed up very quickly in Matthew. Before joining the band of disciples permanently, Matthew gave a great banquet for Jesus and his disciples in his own spacious house.

He invited all his friends. He invited other tax collectors and the people of Capernaum known as sinners. Matthew wanted his friends to get to know this marvelous teacher who was now going to be his own Master.

This banquet showed Matthew's comfortable financial means. Only men with a good income had houses big enough for a banquet. Matthew's home probably had rooms built around an open courtyard. Part of the courtyard was against a wall with openings to the street. The courtyard was ideal for a banquet. People passing by could look in and see the festivities going on.

Jesus was thrilled. Nothing was more pleasing to him than getting to know people who needed to know him. We can imagine his enjoying the feast. There probably was roast lamb, vegetables stewed in juices from the lamb, and flat loaves of bread. The guests had no tools with which to eat. Instead they dipped pieces of bread into the vegetables and juices and then ate. They tore pieces of meat off the roast. The banquet ended with dates and raisins. Everyone enjoyed the good wine. All through the meal Jesus engaged in conversation with these new friends.

## **Jesus Came to Call Sinners to Repentance**

But the religious leaders of Capernaum were not pleased. They thought it was a disgrace to eat at a table with tax collectors and sinners! They told Jesus as much.

But Jesus declared that his job was not to eat with righteous people. His mission was to call sinners to repentance. He rejoiced in his chance to eat with sinners and to show them the love of God. And he was proud of Matthew for arranging for him to have this privilege.

## **Conclusion**

Jesus' work on earth included calling people like you and me. We are free to answer his call and follow him. He will fellowship with us and enjoy our company. And we can rejoice in his love. You receive Christ as your Savior by turning from your sin and placing your faith and trust in him.

**Pray this prayer:** *"Dear God, I know that I'm a sinner. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead and is alive today. I now turn from my sins. I am placing my faith and trust in Jesus alone to be my Savior and to forgive me. I receive Jesus into my life as my Savior and Lord. From this day forward, I will follow Jesus. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for loving me and for coming into my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."*

**Welcome into God's family!** Share with others that you have received Christ as your Savior and Lord. Ask for baptism in a local church as a public expression of your faith. If there is no church near you, start a church by gathering a group of persons in your home and worship together on a regular basis. Read your Bible and pray each day. Tell others what Christ has done for you and what he can do for them.