

THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST MATTHEW (LEVI)



clean break
from sin?

**Mat-
thew dis-
plays signs
of humility.**

Matthew (called "Levi" in Mark and Luke's gospel), prior to his conversion, held one of the most loathed jobs of his day. He was a tax collector. Yet, such a despicable career was no barrier from Jesus who "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:13).

Though the Biblical record of this apostle is brief, it contains some vibrant lessons about the writer of the first gospel.

Matthew follows wholeheartedly. Some claim to follow Jesus while clinging to the pleasures of their past lifestyle. Yet, we never see Matthew back at the tax office after he makes the choice to follow Jesus. Instead, Luke's account says Levi "left all, rose up, and followed Him" (5:28). This outright break from one's past ways is what Jesus desires. Later, He says, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Have you made a

As Luke notes, Matthew "left all" to follow Jesus. Is it not interesting we do not read this from Matthew's own pen? To Matthew, the great story was not really about himself. Instead, it was about what Jesus did for him! Many try to use their own "testimony" to bring people to Jesus. Yet, Matthew simply shares the goodness of Jesus to bring people to Jesus!

In addition, after Matthew's conversion, he goes to great expense to give his friends the opportunity to learn from Jesus themselves. Yet, again, it is not Matthew who praises himself. He never even mentions they are in his own home. Instead, in the gospels of Mark and Luke, we learn Levi "gave Him a great feast in his own house" (Luke 5:29). What a great opportunity for Matthew to brag on his own evangelistic efforts or shining example of hospitality! Yet, Matthew allows others to praise him while simply giving Jesus the glory in his gospel

(see Proverbs 27:2).

Matthew is an example in hospitality and evangelism. As

mentioned, Matthew opens his home so his friends may hear the gospel. Some may have been intimidated to hear Jesus in a synagogue. As we read of the whispers of the Jews belittling the "tax collectors and sinners" we can understand their uneasiness (Matthew 9:11). Thus, it may have been more comfortable for them to hear Jesus in Matthew's home. So, Matthew goes from the "toll booth" to a "home Bible study" after his own conversion! Some think the only place you can teach the lost is in a church building. Why not try it in your living room?

Matthew used his abilities to do the Lord's work. As Barclay writes, "Here is a shining example of how Jesus can use whatever gift a man can bring to him. It is not likely that the others of the Twelve were handy with a pen. Galilean fishermen would not have much skill in writing or in putting words together. But Matthew had; and this man...used that skill to compose the first hand-

book of the teaching of Jesus, which must rank as one of the most important books the world has ever read."

Further, Matthew, like all of the apostles would be called by Jesus to "go into all the world and teach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). As Matthew sat at his toll booth in Capernaum, situated on a major road from Egypt to Damascus, he likely met people from various backgrounds. His knowledge of their customs and ability to communicate with these people would have better equipped him for the Great Commission before him.

Ultimately, Matthew is a demonstration of God's love.

Tax collectors were often suspected of extortion, even by John the Baptist (Luke 3:13). They, like Zacchaeus, were often guilty of excessive taxation and false accusation for the sake of bribery (Luke 19:2-8). Yet, even the greediest of men cannot reach beyond the scope of the love of Jesus. He came to show wicked men how to be good men. If Matthew did it, you can too. *Joshua R. Welch*