



Matthew

Transformed People: The Twelve Apostles
(B.L. Newberry, Spring 2020)

Matthew within the Twelve (1 of 2)



Luke 6:14-16

Peter
Andrew
James
John

Philip
Bartholomew
Matthew
Thomas

James (the less)
Simon
Thaddeus
Judas Iscariot

- Matthew is the third apostle in group two. We know little of Matthew beyond his conversion story. Yet that story gives us great insight into his character.
- Matthew is also called Levi, son of Alphaeus [[Mark 2:14](#), [Luke 5:27-29](#)]. It is possible that he is also the brother of James the Less, as he is also a son of Alphaeus [[Matt. 10:3](#), [Mark 3:18](#)].
- The name Levi is a reverential name in Jewish culture. Matthew itself is also Hebrew meaning “gift of God”. It is clear that Matthew was of Jewish heritage.

Matthew within the Twelve (2 of 2)



Luke 6:14-16

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- Matthew is from Capernaum and is likely the most notorious sinner of the twelve (at least in the eyes of others). He is a tax collector by trade and was grouped with harlots [**Matt. 21:31**].
- It is likely he was a “Mokhes” tax collector. The Mokhes collected duty and transportation taxes. They could extort money by arbitrarily setting tax rates. Matthew was likely a minor (or little) Mokhes that worked in the office.
- Being a tax collector would result in him being banned from the synagogue and, essentially, cut-off from his people and his religion. Rabbinic law offered no forgiveness to tax collectors.

A Side Note on Tax Collectors



- The gospels specifically discuss three tax collectors.
 - Zaccheus, likely a Great Mokhes [**Luke 19:2-10**]
 - The praying tax collector [**Luke 18:10-14**]
 - Matthew
- It is interesting to note that all three of these find forgiveness and redemption.
- Scripture says that publicans (tax collectors) readily repented at the teaching of John the Baptist [**Matt. 21:31-32**].
- **What does this tell us about the value of people? Do we ever write off groups thinking they are beyond redemption?**

Matthew's Calling



What we know of Matthew comes from his calling:

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. [**Matt. 9:9**]

After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. [**Luke 5:27-28**]

Key Points to Note:

- Matthew left everything for Jesus, including significant wealth
- Matthew was likely searching for redemption ... his choice was immediate!

Matthew's Character

All in from the beginning



- Being called by Jesus was an incredibly unexpected event for Matthew. He was, after all, the lowest of the low and cut off from worship. His immediate impulse was to share the event with everyone he could.
- Matthew immediately hosts Jesus and invites all of his associates, regardless of status. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." [Matt. 9:10-13]
- **What are the lessons for us?**
- **Did the Pharisees not "need" Jesus?**

Matthew's Character

A Passion for Scripture



- It is clear from the gospel account he wrote that Matthew had great knowledge of the scriptures. A few key features:
 - There are more OT references in Matthew than in Mark, Luke and John combined
 - Matthew quotes from the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets - every section of the OT
- Matthew would likely have been an educated individual (as a tax collector) and apparently spent considerable time in scripture even when he was not allowed to worship publically.
- **We are blessed to have easy access to scripture and study aids today. Yet are we taking full advantage of what we have been given?**

Stories of Matthew's Late Life

(Mix of historical and Biblical sources)



- Little is known of Matthew's mission work. What sources do exist are conflicting and unreliable.
- Tradition generally says that he ministered in Judea and “the East”.
- How and where he died is also greatly debated. Conflicting accounts state he was burned, stoned, stabbed, or beheaded. John Foxe's Book of Martyrs states the following (the most popular tradition): “The scene of his labors was Parthia and Ethiopia, in which the latter country he suffered martyrdom, being slain with a halberd in the city of Nadabah, A.D. 60.”