



Applied Faith Men's Bible Study

South Hills Baptist Church

7350 Granbury Rd.

Fort Worth, TX 76123

The Apostles, Matthew and Simon

Lesson #6

Lesson #34 (overall)

Matthew

Matthew was a dishonest tax collector driven by greed, until Jesus Christ chose him as a disciple.

Matthew the Tax Collector

We first meet Matthew in Capernaum, in his tax booth on the main highway. He was collecting duties on imported goods brought by farmers, merchants, and caravans. Under the Roman Empire's system, Matthew would have paid all the taxes in advance, then collected from the citizens and travelers to reimburse himself.

Tax collectors were notoriously corrupt because they extorted far and above what was owed, to ensure their personal profit. Because their decisions were enforced by Roman soldiers, no one dared object.

Matthew the Apostle

Matthew was named Levi before his call by Jesus. We don't know whether Jesus gave him the name Matthew or whether he changed it himself, but it is a shortening of the name Mattathias, which means "gift of Yahweh," or simply "the gift of God."

On the same day Jesus invited Matthew to follow him, Matthew threw a great farewell feast in his home in Capernaum, inviting his friends so they could meet Jesus too. From that time on, instead of collecting tax money, Matthew collected souls for Christ.

Despite his sinful past, Matthew was uniquely qualified to be a disciple. He was an accurate record keeper and keen observer of people. He captured the smallest details. Those traits served him well when he wrote the Gospel of Matthew some 20 years later.

By surface appearances, it was scandalous and offensive for Jesus to pick a tax collector as one of his closest followers, since they were widely hated by the Jews. Yet of the four Gospel writers, Matthew presented Jesus to the Jews as their hoped-for Messiah, tailoring his account to answer their questions.

Matthew displayed one of the most radically changed lives in the Bible in response to an invitation from Jesus. He did not hesitate; he did not look back. He left behind a life of wealth and security for poverty

and uncertainty. He abandoned the pleasures of this world for the promise of eternal life.

The remainder of Matthew's life is uncertain. Tradition says he preached for 15 years in Jerusalem following the death and resurrection of Jesus, then went out on the mission field to other countries.

Disputed legend has it that Matthew died as a martyr for the cause of Christ. The official Roman Martyrology of the Catholic Church suggests that Matthew was martyred in Ethiopia. Foxe's Book of Martyrs also supports the martyrdom tradition of Matthew, reporting that he was slain with a halberd in the city of Nabadar.

Accomplishments of Matthew in the Bible

He served as one of the 12 disciples of Jesus Christ. As an eyewitness to the Savior, Matthew recorded a detailed account of Jesus' life, the story of his birth, his message and his many deeds in the Gospel of Matthew. He also served as a missionary, spreading the good news to other countries.

Matthew's Strengths

Matthew was an accurate record keeper.

He knew the human heart and the longings of the Jewish people. He was loyal to Jesus and once committed, he never wavered in serving the Lord.

Matthew's Weaknesses

Before he met Jesus, Matthew was greedy. He thought money was the most important thing in life and violated God's laws to enrich himself at the expense of his countrymen.

Life Lessons

God can use anyone to help him in his work. We should not feel unqualified because of our appearance, lack of education, or our past. Jesus looks for sincere commitment. We should also remember that the highest calling in life is serving God, no matter what the world says. Money, fame, and power cannot compare with being a follower of Jesus Christ.

Hometown

Capernaum

Occupation

Tax collector, disciple of Jesus Christ, gospel writer, missionary.

Family Tree

Father – Alphaeus

Simon

Simon is identified as a “Zealot”. By implication, this tells us far more about this man than we know about James son of Alphaeus. Zealots represented a factious group of men in Palestine who were fanatically opposed to Roman rule. They organized in A.D. 6 when a man called “Judah the Galilean” outlined their two guiding principles. First, they refused to pay taxes to Rome. They believed firmly that the land of Israel was a “holy land” and that what they produced and the resources they accumulated were never to be given to a foreign ruler—not even a portion of it.

Second, true Zealots never acknowledged the emperor as their master. To them Israel was a theocracy. They recognized the Lord God and Him only. He was their king. In no way would they worship the Roman emperor.

The Zealots were a powerful group. Known also as assassins, they took control of Jerusalem in A.D. 66, an action that eventually led to its destruction in A.D. 70 when Titus and his Roman army completely leveled and burned the city. Their last stronghold was Masada, a mountain fortress, which fell to Rome in May, A.D. 73. Before they were captured, most of them committed suicide rather than surrender to a pagan army.

A New Allegiance

The fact that Simon was a Zealot tells us a great deal about his basic personality and his philosophy of life. In some respects, he was like Simon Peter. Simon the Zealot was also tough-minded, but no doubt much more so than Peter. When he decided to follow Jesus

Christ and His teachings, Simon probably still belonged to this rebel group.

We're not told when he decided to leave these malcontents and become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Obviously, he changed his approach to life dramatically since Jesus taught His followers to be peaceful in their relationships with the Roman government. In terms of taxes, He encouraged everyone to "give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's (Matthew 22:21). Regarding abuse by Roman soldiers, He said, "If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles" (5:41). He taught His disciples to love their enemies and to pray for those who persecuted them (5:44).

Obviously, Jesus Christ changed Simon's motives and ways of doing things-but not his zealous nature. As with the apostle Paul, the Lord rechanneled this man's drive, ambition, and enthusiasm to serve God rather than men and himself.

In the same manner, the Lord wants all of us to be zealous because of our relationship with Jesus Christ. Just before the apostle Paul encouraged all Christians to submit themselves "to the governing authorities" (Romans 13:1), and to "give everyone" what they owed them (including taxes and revenues, 13:7), he had already exhorted them to "never be lacking in zeal, but keep" their "spiritual fervor, serving the Lord" (12:11).

But the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul have taught us to be loyal even to a pagan government, yet never to compromise our spiritual values. We must maintain our zeal to serve Jesus Christ. This does not mean we'll always be delivered from persecution, but in the most part, if we conduct ourselves properly and respectfully and do those things that are not contradictory to our faith, we'll be granted mercy even by pagan leaders (Romans 13:3-5; Per. 3:13).

Application/Activity

Both Matthew and Simon had to overcome their recent past to serve Jesus and become a disciple. One, Matthew, was his job and the deceit that naturally came along with it. The other, Simon, had to overcome the extreme beliefs of the group he had associated himself with. While maybe not to these extents, we all must overcome the pressures of this world that we face when we walk out of the church or the comfort of being with a group of believers. This week's activity is to identify the attitudes that we possess, while outside of our church family, that do not line up with God's Word. Examples would be racism, prejudice, road rage, inappropriate viewing habits be it television, Facebook, Instagram, etc. This requires honest self-examination. The second part of this week's activity is to go to God and ask for help in overcoming and eliminating these from your life. But do you really see these as a problem and do you really want to eliminate them from your life? These are questions for you and God. Good luck.

Thoughtco.com, The Apostles by Gene Getz

Property of South Hills Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas