

## A Friend of Sinners

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*Mark 2:13-17*

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## Writing of the Rabbis

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- Breach of a command: immediate and persistent prayer for forgiveness.
- Breach of a prohibition: repentance and the Day of Atonement
- An intentional sin: repentance, the Day of Atonement, and sufferings.
- Willful profaning of the Name of God: only death.

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## Opposition

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- 2:1—3:6
- Its Expressions
  - 1) Jesus' claim to forgive sins (2:1-12)
  - 2) Jesus' companionship with sinners (2:13-17)
  - 3) Jesus' unwillingness to keep their traditions (2:18-22)
  - 4) Jesus' violation of their Sabbath regulations (2:23-3:6)

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## The Sovereign Call of an Undeserving Sinner (13-14)

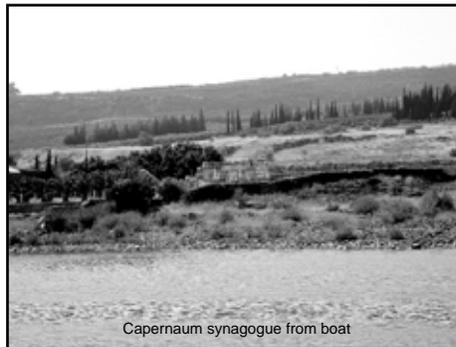
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- **13a** - And He went out again by the seashore.

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Capernaum area aerial from southeast



Capernaum synagogue from boat

## The Sovereign Call of an Undeserving Sinner (13-14)

- **13a** - And He went out again by the seashore.
- **13b** - and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them.
  - People kept coming to find Him and to hear Him.
  - And He kept teaching them as they came.
- **14a** - As He passed by, He saw Levi.
  - *Levi* (Mark & Luke).
  - *Matthew* (Matt. 9:9).
  - The same person...
    - 1) Matthew's gospel, reporting what is clearly the same account, calls this man, Matthew.
    - 2) When the names of the 12 are listed, the name Levi doesn't appear, but Matthew's name does.
      - Matthew is called "the tax collector."

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## Matthew – a brief bio

- Matthew means "gift of God."
- Jewish
- Lived in Capernaum
- the *son* of Alphaeus
  - James the Less, also called the son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15).
  - Unrelated
- Knew Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic
- **14b** - sitting in the tax booth



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## Roman Taxes

- A system called tax-farming
- Tax franchises.
  - At the top were Roman equestrians
    - Noblemen
    - bid for the right to collect taxes over entire provinces
- The Senate
  - determined a fixed amount due from each province
  - sell the right to collect that amount to the highest bidder
  - Surplus collected was income for the bidder
- The equestrian would subdivide the province and make a similar arrangement with *publicani*, or chief tax collectors (like Zaccheus).
- The chief tax collectors over districts, would in turn sell the rights for cities and so forth.

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## Two Categories of Taxes

- 1) Fixed taxes
  - A poll tax – money charged per head
    - All men: 14 – 65
    - All women: 12 – 65
  - A ground tax
    - 1/10th of all grain
    - 1/5th of the wine and fruit grown
    - Partly paid in kind, partly converted to money.
  - An income tax – 1%
    - Collected by a general tax-collector.
- 2) Customs and duties
  - Use taxes
    - Ederseim: on axles, wheels, pack animals, pedestrians, roads, highways; admission to markets; use of bridges, roads, dams, ferries, harbors, etc.
  - Import & Exports
  - Sales Tax on everything that was bought and sold
    - The *ad valorem* duty was from 2.5% to 5% on normal items.
    - On luxury items it could be up to 12.5%.
  - Collected by a custom house official
  - Main centers of taxation in Israel: Caesarea, Jericho, and Capernaum<sup>11</sup>

## Matthew's Strategic Location

- 1) The city of Capernaum
  - Population between 1,500 and 10,000 residents
- 2) At the dock on the north side of the Sea of Galilee.
  - Capernaum spread out along the edge of the lake about a quarter of a mile.
  - But it did not extend very far inland.
  - An ancient harbor extended along a 2500' promenade, supported by an eight foot wide seawall.
  - Piers extended about 100' into the lake

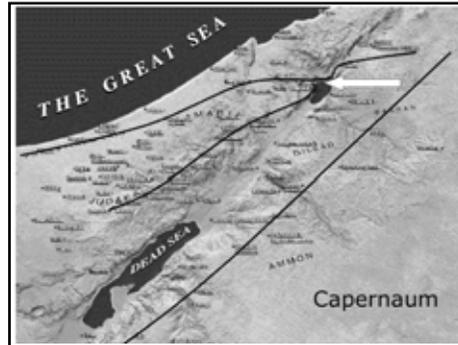
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### Matthew's Strategic Location

- 3) On the main international highway running from Egypt to Damascus.
  - Capernaum straddled that International Highway
  - Ran all the way from Egypt to Mesopotamia
  - Traffic going north or south would go through this crucial junction.

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### Matthew's Strategic Location

- 4) At the border between Galilee and Decapolis.
  - An important customs station on the border between the territory of Herod Antipas and Philip the Tetrarch (Matt. 9: 9).

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### Palestine in NT Times



### Matthew's Character

- Irreligious
  - excommunicated from the synagogue
- A traitor
  - complicit with foreign oppressors
- Dishonest
  - Extortionist
  - Mishnah also forbids Jews from taking any money from tax-collectors
  - Disqualified from being judges or even witnesses in court
  - Talmud lists customs officials as the moral equivalents of murderers and robbers.
  - Jews were allowed to lie to tax-collectors with impunity.
  - If a tax-collector so much as touched your house, it became unclean.

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### The Sovereign Call of an Undeserving Sinner (13-14)

- 14: And He said to him, "Follow Me!"
- Matthew had been exposed to the truth about Jesus.
  - 1) Through Jesus' previous ministry in Capernaum (Mark 1:21—2:12).
  - 2) Through Jesus' teaching there by the sea.
    - Cf. 1:13
- 14 - And he got up and followed Him.
- Luke 5:28 – And he left everything behind, and got up and *began* to follow Him.

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### An Example of Perfect Salvation

- Heard the truth
- Called to follow Christ
- Responded in faith

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### The Point

- There is no sinner beyond the reach of the grace of Jesus Christ.
- 21st century equivalent
  - drug dealer; mafia; gangster; terrorist
- Cf. 1 Tim. 1:13-16

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Michelangelo's *David*

