

=THE APOSTLES=

Lesson 4

The Apostle Matthew

POINT OF CONTACT: Find out from the class what kind of profession each plans to follow or what kind of profession their fathers follow. It's an interesting thing to see the different type men who followed Jesus Christ in the Bible. There were Peter and Andrew, who worked with the "Zebedee and Sons Fishing Company." There were James and John, who were the "Johnson Brothers," also in the fishing business. There was Paul, who was a well-educated student of the law and a member of the Sanhedrin. There were Philip and Nathanael, who were great horse lovers. Now we come to Matthew, whom we would call "an internal revenue agent." Let us notice some interesting things about Matthew!

- I. MATTHEW WAS BORN IN NAZARETH. Probably he knew Jesus during His childhood. This is very interesting to think about. Can you feature living in the town with Jesus while He grew up, seeing Him play on the streets and run around town? This, no doubt, was Matthew's privilege.
- II. MATTHEW'S NAME MEANS "A GIFT OF GOD." God is saying here that He is going to use Matthew as a perfect example of salvation being God's gift. Matthew was just sitting one day at "the receipt of custom" when Jesus came by and said, "Follow me." Matthew followed Him. He did nothing to earn his salvation; he simply followed Jesus. He observed no ritual, joined no denomination, lined up with no church, went through no sacraments; he simply followed Jesus. Here is, once again, a beautiful picture of salvation. (Teacher, go through the plan of salvation with the pupils, and if there are those who are unsaved, try to win them to Christ.)
- III. MATTHEW WAS A DIRECTOR OF INTERNAL REVENUE. He was a publican. Publicans were tax collectors. They were to meet certain quotas as stated by Roman government. Whatever they could collect from the people over and above that was theirs; hence, the people hated them. Matthew was a member of a group that was hated and cast out of social activities by the people. Jesus loves everybody. He loves the outcast; He loves those who are hated. Regardless of one's condition in life, Jesus loves him.
- IV. MATTHEW WAS WEALTHY. Because of his position, naturally he had much money. Just as the poor must be saved, the wealthy also need to be saved.
- V. MATTHEW LEFT ALL TO FOLLOW CHRIST. Read Luke 5:28. No doubt he had known Jesus much of his life—that is, as a personal acquaintance—or at least he had known of Him. Nazareth was not a huge city, and yet Matthew had never realized the purpose of Jesus' coming into the world. One day Jesus came to his office at the edge of town toward Capernaum on the Damascus Road. Here Jesus talked with Matthew. Matthew, no doubt, had heard about Jesus teaching in the synagogue, healing all manner of illness, healing Peter's mother-in-law, etc. Perhaps he had heard Jesus preach the great Sermon on the Mount. This day Jesus came into Matthew's office. Perhaps Jesus told him that He was the Messiah. Perhaps He went back to the Old Testament and traced the types and pictures of the Messiah. Included in this could be Adam's coat of skins in Genesis 3:21; Abel's blood offering in Genesis 4; the Passover in Exodus 12; the Tabernacle; the lambs, turtledoves, and pigeons; and all the other symbols of the coming of God's great sacrifice in the Lord Jesus Christ. After going through the entire story of the Old Testament pointing to the Messiah, perhaps then Jesus told Matthew that He was the Messiah. How Matthew's heart must have begun to beat faster! How excited he must have become! Had not he seen Jesus many times before? To think that He was the Messiah! Matthew believed that He was, and Matthew followed Him.
- VI. MATTHEW GAVE UP HIS BUSINESS. This was not an easy thing to do. Matthew was a success financially. No doubt he was one of the wealthiest men in town, yet he gave it all up to follow Jesus. Now why did Matthew give up his business? Perhaps it was because he wanted to spend full time in service for the Lord Jesus. It seems, rather, that he gave it up because the business was not the kind a Christian should have. He had obtained his money in the wrong way. (Teacher, teach the pupils here to choose a vocation in life from which they can make an honest living and through which they can

contribute to society and the welfare of man. Teach them the danger of choosing a profession with which to make money. Spend a few moments asking them what they plan to be or what kind of profession they would like to follow. Suggest that they follow one that would be pleasing to Jesus Christ, even though it is in the secular field, and one that would be honest in the accumulation of money.)

- VII. IMMEDIATELY MATTHEW BEGAN TO WITNESS. Read Luke 5:29. This is a wonderful story. Matthew is now a Christian. He wants others to become Christians, so he throws a feast and invites all the publicans to come. Let's picture the feast: Matthew is at the head table. The great crowd of publicans and sinners is before him. Matthew's old crowd has gathered. Why has Matthew called the old crowd? After a brief meal, he stands to tell them that he has called them to announce his resignation. A buzz goes through the crowd—"Matthew...resigning?" "Ridiculous!" "I can't believe it!" they say. Matthew quiets them and then explains why he is resigning. He tells the story about knowing Jesus all of his life. He tells the story of how Jesus came recently and told him that He was the Messiah. He goes on to tell them how he believed and has left all to follow Christ. Then it would not take too much supposition to think that Matthew told them that he hoped they, too, would receive Christ as Saviour. In other words, he was witnessing right away. There is no one who can be a better soul winner than a new Christian. He knows where the unsaved are; he knows where the old crowd is. How about your old crowd? Have you gone to the old crowd and told them about the Saviour? (Teacher, lead the class to think back to the old crowd with whom they used to run. Are they saved? If not, suggest they go back, witness to them, and try to get them to come to church to hear the Gospel of Christ.)

No doubt Matthew then said, "I want you to meet the One Who has changed my life." He turns to the door, and in walks Jesus of Nazareth, his Saviour! What a wonderful thing Matthew did! What a wonderful opportunity for the presentation of the Gospel!

- VIII. THERE ARE THOSE WHO THINK THAT ZACCHÆUS WAS SAVED BECAUSE OF MATTHEW. It was Zacchæus who climbed a tree to see Jesus when He came to town. See Luke 19. Jesus pointed up to the tree and told Zacchæus He was going to come to his house to eat, and Zacchæus was saved. Why was Zacchæus willing to climb a tree to see Jesus Christ? Perhaps he was one of the publicans who had been in the feast with Matthew that night and had gotten a glimpse of Jesus Christ. Perhaps Zacchæus had said, "I, too, would like to have what Matthew has. If I could see this Jesus one time and talk with Him!" Perhaps it was because of Matthew's testimony that Zacchæus finally became a Christian.
- IX. MATTHEW WAS CHOSEN TO BE ONE OF THE TWELVE. This is interesting, isn't it? No religious training, no special preparation at all—he just was saved and followed Christ. God can use anybody. (Explain this to the class very carefully Sunday.)
- X. IN ACTS 1:13 MATTHEW IS AT PENTECOST. He is not a leader of the apostles. He was a leader before, a rich man; but now he contents himself to be a follower. Here is a man who was willing to take a little seat for Jesus Christ. Let us do our best for Him but be willing to be followers if God so chooses.
- XI. IN HIS LATTER YEARS, MATTHEW WENT TO AFRICA, ESPECIALLY TO ETHIOPIA, AND THERE PREACHED THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. (Say a few words here about people who in their latter years serve the Lord and are faithful in God's work and God's program.)
- XII. THERE IN AFRICA MATTHEW WAS STONED AND KILLED WITH A HALBERD. In other words, he was a martyr for the cause of Christ. As he gave his life for Christ, no doubt he wandered back in his mind to that little tollbooth where Jesus had entered and told him that He was the Messiah. A long and fruitful life had followed, and now Matthew comes to the end of the way. When Christ stood to meet him and welcome him home, I am sure Matthew thought the best deal he ever made was when he left all and followed Jesus.