

9:8

And as Jesus passed forth from thence, from there, **He saw a man**. How powerful is that? He sees everything. What's so special about that? It was special to this man.

He saw a man named Matthew, Matthew waited nine chapters to tell us about how he fit into this.

sitting at the receipt of custom. "tax office". When people would cross over the Sea of Galilee into Jewish land, they would come over into Capernaum and the IRS was already there. They were ready to collect duties and tariffs and taxes and excises. The wealthy Hebrews would bid out for the opportunities from the Romans to collect taxes. It so happens that the best tax collectors from the Jews were Jews. And so the Romans knew that and they figured that the best way to get this done would be to hire a Jew. A Jew that was religious enough that everyone would know he was a Jew, but godless enough that he didn't mind taking from God's people.

Matthew. He started out a wealthy man or else he could not have afforded this franchise. The franchise fee was so high that only the wealthy could afford it, but low enough that the wealthy could pay it off within a couple of years of owning the franchise. Everyone hated publicans. This is not your typical tax collector. This is the type just like Zacchaeus (Luke 19), who actually was kind of a middle-man.

And He saith unto him, come here, **Follow me**. And Matthew is so modest writing about the account of his own conversion that he doesn't write what Luke includes for us. Luke says in Luke 5:42, "He left all and followed Him." Matthew doesn't include that. It might have made him feel, "Look at everything I left for Jesus." And so sometimes what Matthew doesn't say speaks as loudly as what he does say. Matthew doesn't want to be the star of this show and so he just says, "He got up and followed Him."

And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat, or at a meal, **in the house**. And again, Matthew is so modest here he doesn't tell us what Mark tells us. And Mark tells us it was Matthew's house. What he doesn't say is incredibly loud. Matthew leaves everything and then after leaving everything, money and everything, he leaves. With whoever wants it; whoever can live with it. And yes, even the Romans who would come back and find him not there. What a risk. His income is gone and what is he doing? In the very same afternoon he's making a meal at his house.

behold, many publicans. Oh my goodness. There are empty tax offices all over the city. And entire guild of thieves is empty on a Sunday. And where are they? They're eating.

This goes well with 9:2. We have a need for friends to bring their friends to Jesus. When we see Matthew being a follower of Jesus, it's only natural for him to introduce his friends to Him.

And sinners. In the very purest of senses he's using a word that refers to people who sin and are good at it. And Jesus now is sitting at meat, at a meal, in a house with people who are publicans and those who are just as bad as them. We might call them sinners.

If you wonder what we mean by sinners then I'll take you to a story in another gospel where a woman is washing the feet of Jesus and a man named Simon is thinking in his heart, and says, "If Jesus knew what kind of woman this was who is touching Him He would not allow it because she is a sinner" (Luke 7). The implication is that this woman makes her money sleeping with men of wealth. She sins...and is good at it.

And so in an afternoon, all the wealthy tax collectors and franchisees of Rome are sitting at a meal with Jesus and so are their escorts. A room full of wealthy, lost people and their purchased girlfriends.

And they came and sat down with Jesus and His disciples. This was a sort of "reclining." Around a table you'll have people almost lying down on one side and reaching over their heads to the table—leaning backward upon the person behind them when wishing to speak to them.

Now perhaps you understand what it means when the rich man saw Abraham and Lazarus “on his bosom.” What were they doing? Reclining at a meal in paradise. Or,

*John 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, **which is in the bosom of the Father**, He hath declared Him.*

9:11-13

When the Pharisees saw it they said unto His disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. 13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice. He quotes from Hosea chapter 6. It's really kind of ironic and funny that He's telling Pharisees who are friends with the scribes that they should learn anything. “Go and learn.” Jesus looks at the student of the Old Testament and says, “You know what you need to do? You need to go back and read Hosea 6. Go and learn what this means.” Well, they're the teachers. He's telling the teachers, “You need to be learning.”

We've been in this weekend now for five chapters. Perhaps this whole weekend is being included because it's the weekend in which one of the most notable apostles was converted. I mean look at Matthew 10:2, “Now the names of the twelve apostles are these...”

So maybe, maybe Matthew is including this passage to show us how it all led up to his conversion. We find out in 20:28 that the “Son of Man did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and He gave His life a ransom for many.” So how does Jesus “save His people from their sins?” He does so by giving His life a ransom. That means that there's a lot of people out there that are hostages. Hostages to sin. Contextually, remember, they are not sitting down and reading this with a cup of coffee after they let the dogs outside. No. This is a one-sitting book. A congregation of believers is reading this perhaps, and they found out His name in chapter 1 and why He's called “Jesus/Joshua,” and why in chapter 20 He promises He's a ransom. Think about that.

And now he says, “Not only will I tell you about the day I became a follower of Jesus; I will even tell you what happened that evening.” Let's talk through this for a minute. Matthew is not on the boat going to Gadara or coming back from it. Matthew's not on the boat. And before we get on the boat there is a certain disciple who is told to follow Jesus and he doesn't. That would be called a rough day. When a disciple won't even follow the Master. And I think the lesson for us is that “you never know what will happen overnight.”

Is it natural to assume that this tax collector was well known enough to have known about the discussion on the beach the night before? I don't know. What prompted Matthew to get up and leave everything to follow Jesus? I don't really have an answer.

There's nothing in the passage that tells us the Pharisees were in the house. How did they know what was going on? There's nothing in verse 10 that says, “And Jesus and His disciples sat down with Matthew, the publicans, the sinners and the Pharisees.” No. Pharisees wouldn't be caught dead in the house but oh, how they love to spot those who are. What are they doing? Can you see them? Oh, how miserable they are, but my, are they are good at keeping tabs on people.

Ok, so are you willing to say that it is people who know they are sinners in need of repentance with whom He is sitting? After all, He calls them sinners, and to the Pharisees He says, “These folks need Me because I'm a doctor and they're sick.” And sick people are, well... sinners. So if you are willing to say Jesus hangs out with sinners, I will go with you that far, as long as you'll go with me when I tell you the reason He goes to eat with sinners is to get them to repent. Not to dilly-dally with them and build a relationship with them, no. We need sinners to become repentant sinners, and then they look like Matthew. They get up and leave everything.

“Well, we just need to be more like Jesus.”

I agree. Let's call more sinners to repentance.

“Jesus wouldn’t judge.”

Really? Because He just called a house full of people **sinner**s. here’s some judging happening there. Otherwise Jesus would not be having this conversation. He’s not eating with the scribes and Pharisees because the truth is they see themselves as righteous. You can never be a repentant person because you’ve never repented, because you’ve never been a sinner. And that goes well with the theme of Matthew, doesn’t it? Because Jesus saves sinners (Matthew 1:21), and the real problem with the Pharisees is they can’t be saved. No good Pharisee ever gets saved. No good scribe ever gets saved. You have to become a sinner.

13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice features a double rebuke by treating them first as learners and then secondly as beginners, as if they’ve never read the verse in Hosea. It’s interesting how Jesus shows us that we need not have identical situations, with the narrative, to have an accurate reflection of God’s character. I don’t know that we could call Jesus sarcastic but I’m leaning that way because you notice He didn’t take the time to explain the context of Hosea 6 to them. He knew that citing one Scripture out of one chapter of the Old Testament would teach them that God hasn’t changed. He would still prefer mercy to sacrifice. He’s not saying, “Don’t sacrifice.” He’s saying, “If you’re going to give Me just one, give Me mercy.” So it’s not a different God somewhere that changes between Malachi and Matthew. It’s one God. God’s character hasn’t changed,” in 700 years at the point of this writing. God still wants us to give people second chances. Mercy. Giving favors of forgiveness. But please remember that it only occurs through the door of repentance. No **mercy** for the unrepentant. No doctors for the well.

This is the first time since Jesus has quoted Scripture, since He combatted the devil in Matthew 4, think about it, how big of a deal is this? We find Jesus quoting Scripture twice so far in Matthew, once against Satan, the other against the scribes. How very similar. They must be of the same spirit. The devil loves to destroy lives and the Pharisees would rather the sinners stay sinners and the sick stay sick. If they only knew that there’s no doctor for them and no Savior for them. How unfortunate.

And here we have a man that has been saved for a few hours finding a way to get his friends around his new Master. And I suppose one of the biggest marvels of this is you have a man from the tribe of Levi following a Man from Galilee from the tribe of Judah. How empty Matthew must have felt about what was going on back there at Jerusalem. Nothing seems to be going on of value up at Jerusalem. Life seems so empty and so he leaves all to follow Him.