

Character Study: Matthew

A Change of Devotion

Various Bible Passages

What's happening?

- Matthew was the son of Alphaeus, and is at times referred to in Scripture by his Jewish family name "Levi" ([Mark 2:14](#)). When speaking of himself, he used the name "Matthew" (meaning "gift of God").
- Matthew was a publican, which made him very unpopular with his fellow countrymen. A publican was a Jewish person who agreed to work for the Romans by collect taxes from the Jewish people. The job was admirable to those who were greedy because they could overtax people for personal profit. Consequently, publicans, such as Matthew, were viewed as traitors (note who they were acquainted with in [Matt. 11:19](#)).
- When Matthew encountered Jesus, Jesus called to him and said, "Follow me" ([Matt. 9:9](#)). He willingly gave up his lucrative job to follow the Lord. Out of celebration and to honor Jesus, he hosted a banquet in which he invited his old co-workers and acquaintances. When Jesus was criticized by the Pharisees for being with "publicans and sinners," He stated, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." ([Luke 5:29-32](#); [Matt. 9:10-13](#); [Mark 2:15-17](#))
- Matthew went on to write the Gospel bearing his name, in which he emphasized to a Jewish audience that Jesus was in fact the Messiah and King of which the Old Testament prophesied. He continued to preach Christ for over a decade, before being condemned to death by the Jewish Sanhedrin (judicial council). Tradition says he was burned at the stake.

What's God doing?

> Matthew loved money, but God changed his devotion. He embraced Jesus' perspective on wealth, as recorded in his writing ([Matt. 6:19-33](#)). God took the unlikeliest sinner and transformed him into a man of faith!

What's to learn?

→ There are many things in life that can grab our devotion. For Matthew, it initially was the love of money. However, the pursuit of wealth was not what the Lord had in store for him. His devotion shifted upon meeting Jesus. He saw that following Him and His will was the only path worth pursuing, and that anything less was selfish. Can we say that the direction of our life is directed by our devotion to Christ as well?