

# Matthew - Called by Jesus / Committed to Jesus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Matthew chapter 9, verse 9. Jesus passed on from there.

As Jesus passed on from there,! He saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth,! And he said to him, follow me. And he rose and followed him.

Matthew profiles Matthew. Now, based on volume, the longest autobiography written is a six-volume book called My Struggle, written by a Norwegian author, Karl Ovek Nashgar.

The word count is approximately one million words, 3,600 pages long.

I have no idea what his struggles were, but clearly he struggled with brevity. But by stark contrast, volume one of Matthew's autobiography is no more than a brief paragraph, and we have just read it.

[ 1 : 29 ] Matthew 9, verse 9. Around 30 words, you might say no more than a snippet of his life story, but it is significant because here, Matthew profiles Matthew.

Here, Matthew writes just a little about himself. This is where Matthew tells us of how Matthew came to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, little is written, but I hope, as we'll discover over the next half hour or so, much is said.

It's also one of the shortest personal testimonies you are likely to read, but it does not lack substance. I want us this morning to notice that Matthew is both concise and comprehensive.

in the details he shares. We have here the vital statistics, and they are indeed a significant to note.

[ 2 : 41 ] There's also this. I often hear people say, I don't have a testimony that's worth sharing. Well, take some encouragement from Matthew, if you will, because a personal testimony need not be a lengthy and detailed account of how we came to faith in Jesus Christ.

The gospel writer Matthew writes a very short account, but it leaves a lasting impression on the reader, does it not?

So where are we going with this today? Well, we're going to assess here in verse 9, just this one verse, how this significant development unfolds.

We're also going to explore what we might glean from it, from a missional and theological perspective. So we're coming to this under two headings.

Matthew called by Jesus. Matthew committed to Jesus. So let's begin by looking at how Matthew was called by Jesus.

[ 4 : 00 ] Now, the first thing I want us to notice is that the Lord Jesus is always, always strategic in his work and ministry.

The Lord Jesus is always missional. You see that across the landscape of the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

What I mean by this is that we never see Jesus wandering aimlessly from place to place. Verse 9 begins, as Jesus passed on, or you might put it another way, or as Jesus went on from there, as he passed on from there.

That implies a predetermined divine plan, all of which revolves around fulfilling God the Father's redemptive purposes.

We have here the unfolding. It's a work in progress. We call it the plan of salvation, and it is being fulfilled here in a very personal way at a tax collector's booth.

[ 5 : 13 ] note, too, in John 4, 4, John tells us of how Jesus had to go through Samaria to engage with a much despised Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

So, in a very similar vein, Matthew is telling us here that Jesus had to walk by the Sea of Galilee. Luke tells us, Luke gives us more geography in his account of Matthew's incident.

So, he had to walk by the Sea of Galilee to engage with Matthew at this local tax booth. And it is there that Jesus calls the writer of this gospel, a tax collector whose name is Levi, surnamed Matthew, the name by which he is widely known, of course, in the early church.

So, what is so significant about this tax booth, this tax point? Well, this is Matthew's workstation that we're being introduced to here.

It's his office. The shores of Galilee and the surrounding areas are his province, his domain, his catchment area. Now, I want to emphasize that this is not, and it's very apparent to see this, of course, the evidence is before us, this is not an Acts 9, road to Damascus, explosive conversion account, far from it.

[ 6 : 53 ] There is very little drama about Matthew's story. And again, perhaps we can draw some crumbs of encouragement from that point, because is it not reassuring for anyone here today, whoever you are.

Maybe it is the case that you are waiting, waiting for the drama to unfold, waiting for an earth-shattering development to happen to you before you become a follower of Jesus Christ.

Well, let me say to you, I know in certain terms, that's not how it works. There are exceptions to the rule, but we are exploring the rule.

Across the landscape of Scripture, you will find that there are multiple conversions that are uneventful.

people. Let me take you back to the pages of the Old Testament to 1 Kings 19 9. It's that very significant moment where the Lord spoke to Elijah.

[ 8 : 09 ] How did that happen? Well, the Bible tells us that it wasn't in a hurricane force wind. No, God's voice is absent.

It wasn't in an earthquake, and it wasn't in the fire. It came in the sound of a low whisper, a still, small voice.

Maybe that's how God is speaking to you today. I pray that you will hear His still, small, low whisper, because when you do, it will be loud enough to rattle you.

This is the dynamic of Matthew 9. 9. It's all very ordinary. So you might say it's just another day at the tax collector's booth for Matthew. He's engaged in his work, pen to hand, applying and collecting taxes accordingly from those who are under his jurisdiction.

But verse 9 really is a turning point. So what is the turning point in this verse? Well, it revolves, of course, around the Lord Jesus.

[ 9 : 27 ] We see Him walking along, He's passing by, and it's not by coincidence. Coincidence is not a word you'll find in the vocabulary of divine providence.

This is by divine appointment. Jesus is seeking out disciples, and He calls Matthew. I want us to notice here how Jesus singles him out, just as He called Simon and Andrew and James and John back in chapter 4, with the exact same formula, and it's a recurring formula on the pages of the gospel.

You will find it time and time again, just two words, follow me. But much, much more than just two words, there's something very personal, something very persuasive, and indeed powerful about this formula, as we'll see in a moment.

So, let's ask the question, what do we know about Matthew? Well, at this stage, not a lot other than his father's name.

Mark tells us in Mark 2 that Matthew, Levi, is the son of Alphaeus, but Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the three gospel writers who profile this incident, tell us that Matthew is a tax collector, and that's arguably not the best introduction by way of public perception, at least back in the first century world.

[11:06] Think of Matthew as a New Testament, a New Testament, Naaman. Who was Naaman? 2 Kings chapter 5, verse 1, we're introduced to this high-profile figure, a man of status.

He's introduced as the commander of the army of the king of Syria, a great man, the Bible tells us, highly regarded, a man of valor, indeed a mighty man of valor, but, but, he was a leper.

You see, Matthew has the leprosy factor. Yes, he has a respective pedigree, but he was a tax collector.

The King James version uses the word publican. He was a publican, a man much despised who farmed public revenue with greed and unfairness.

Names stick, just like Naaman the leper, so, Matthew the tax collector is not without stigma.

[12:32] Indeed, just like the leper, we meet back in chapter 8, in the previous chapter, it's how the chapter begins, Jesus cleanses a leper, well, just like the leper, a Jewish tax collector like Matthew was labelled ceremonially unclean, thought of generally as a filthy, meddling, middleman, of ill repute.

Think of Matthew as a traitor who has very few friends. Here is someone who collaborates with Rome, collecting taxes on behalf of the empire, that's his day job.

He's less than patriotic, we see him working here under Roman duress, offering a toll booth for Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee.

You see, Matthew is also frowned upon by the religious leaders, the scribes and the Pharisees, who are always prowling around.

They see him as a defector and as an apostate. The taxation system back then was corrupt and was considered fraudulent at the best of times.

[13:49] Many tax collectors pocketed commission, inflation, inflated payments from the taxes themselves.

Cue Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector of Jericho. He's profiled in Luke chapter 19, so you might say, Matthew, Zacchaeus, birds of a feather.

So whether Matthew did or not, whether he was an embezzler or not, he would have been tarred with the same brush as his fellow tax collectors, a fraudster, a swindler.

This negative state of status went before him. He couldn't shake it off. He was guilty by association. the Jews who, this is a Jew who interacts with Gentiles, non-Jews, and is hated by his fellow Jews, branded unclean.

His home is even labeled unclean. We'll say no more about that because tonight we're going to be spending time in Matthew's home. Then, then, along comes Jesus.

[15:07] We're going to pause at this point because it is significant, is it not, that Jesus does not pass him by. We don't see Jesus tutting, shaking his head in judgment at Matthew. Neither does he give him a wide berth or a disparaging glance as many others would have. I want us to notice something very, very significant twofold in this verse. Matthew tells us that Jesus saw Matthew. In the original language of the New Testament, in the Greek tongue, this word saw means so much more than just a passing glance. This word means that Jesus noticed Matthew. Jesus observes Matthew. Jesus pays attention to Matthew. This word saw implies scrutiny. This is the language of a fixed gaze. Matthew is the focal point, and he has the attention of the Lord Jesus.

[16:27] But not only that, I want us to notice too that Jesus said. this implies very, very clearly that Jesus spoke directly, spoke audibly, and with clarity to Matthew. This implies direct eye contact. And isn't the Lord Jesus to the point? With forthright, upfront language, he calls Matthew, just as he called the Galilean fishermen we read of back in chapter 4. And all of this is in the imperative mood. The verb follow me is imperative, is it not? His calling is radical, it's compelling, it's absolute, but it's also effective and it's effectual. just two words, follow me. Here we see something of the word of his power.

[17:41] This much discriminated against tax collector who is barred from the synagogue, there is no place reserved for Matthew in the temple, it's an exclusion zone as far as he is concerned, because of who he is and what he does, he is unclean, he is vile, he is a despicable Jew who is barred from all of the above. You are not welcome here, Matthew, but how encouraging, how uplifting, how reassuring to read of what unfolds next. The living temple in the person of Jesus Christ comes to Matthew. Yes, he calls this much reviled character and does so without discrimination and without prejudice. Jesus of Nazareth is the definitive good Samaritan. We see him here while others pass by and look the other way. Jesus looks directly at Matthew and engages with Matthew and with compassion and with tender mercy he speaks directly to him and draws his attention to himself. Isn't that beautiful? Matthew highlights, doesn't he, that Jesus is particularly interested in individuals.

[19:15] His ministry is full of personal encounters. Maybe some of us need to take note of that today. He pursues Matthew as he pursued you and I as followers of Jesus Christ. He finds Matthew and others like him and he touches and transforms their lives one after another. I mean, if we just go back to the previous chapter, chapter 8, verse 1, navigate your way through it. It's incredible. First of all, he brings cleansing to a leper. Then we have the encounter with the centurion's servant. Then Peter's mother-in-law. Then two demon-possessed men. And then as we transition into chapter 9, the paralytic. there's a personal perspective to the gospel. Jesus continues to touch and to transform one life after another until he gathers all the lost sheep of the house of Israel one by one as one flock in one fold under one shepherd.

[20:36] So I want you today to take encouragement from Matthew. Jesus continues to call individuals like you and I with the same vocabulary, the same formula, follow me.

And this discipleship formula has lost nothing, nothing of its thrust 2,000 years later. This same Jesus may well be calling you today from a very personal perspective.

And if he is, you too will sense that it's personal, it's persuasive, and it's powerful. I want to remind you today that Jesus sees you.

He knows you. And he is speaking to you now through his word, through the message of the gospel as he passes by.

And you would do well to listen. Take encouragement too. if you struggle today with negativity.

[ 21 : 43 ] The gospels tackle negative perception head-on. You may well be afraid of how you are perceived by others. Maybe your past haunts you.

Maybe there's some dark matter there that you have trouble erasing. your life is full of trigger points. Matthew may well have been an embezzler or label such.

How does he shake it off? Well, perhaps he had tried but has probably resigned to being branded a publican. But Jesus intervenes where others might ignore and snub Matthew, write him off and he calls them to himself.

He does so mercifully. He has mercy on him and he will have mercy on you too. Stand next to Matthew if you will.

This is life changing. He may be calling out to you today come to Jesus because he says whoever comes to me I will never drive that individual away.

[ 23 : 02 ] And then there may be some of us who are inclined to shelve to procrastinate and to say tomorrow will do or I'll revisit this next Sunday.

Today if you hear his voice the Bible says do not harden your hearts do not harden your hearts yes it's a matter of the heart which takes us to the heart of the matter secondly!

briefly Matthew committed to Jesus how does Matthew respond? well in just a few words it's what you might call a one-liner Matthew himself tells us Matthew rose Matthew got up and followed him followed Jesus he does so with submission he does so with obedience he does so with self-denial he commits and he does so by faith and he does so immediately the radical effectual call of Jesus is met here by unconditional obedience it's so important for us to note that he rose there and then he stood and relinquishes his position severs his ties with the taxation system that's his main source of income and he follows

Jesus what does this tell us it's the core of discipleship Christian discipleship to follow one must forsake that is the essence of faith forsaking all I trust him Matthew does that in fact Luke tells us in his account in Luke 5 28 that Matthew left everything behind and got up and followed Jesus what does all of this convey to us from a theological perspective well the key word must be grace sovereign grace irresistible grace faith and repentance all of the above yes we see here some key aspects of the doctrines of salvation Matthew is not explicit but he is implicit so here in verse 9 it's not insignificant that moments ago

Matthew was seen sitting welded to the tax collectors booth and now he's on his feet in response to the words of Jesus just two words follow me he rose and followed Jesus sitting speaks of someone who is inactive standing pursuing Jesus speaks of someone who is suddenly proactive so there's more than a change of circumstances being alluded to here there's a radical shift of emphasis from negative to positive it's quite compelling indeed it captures something of the dynamic of the 40th psalm and on a rock he set my feet moments ago languishing in the pit now he has found his feet in and through the

[ 26:50 ] Lord Jesus Christ his getting up implies conviction conviction of what well surely of a sin of a felt sense of compulsion to follow the sinless one he recognizes this Matthew that he is a sinful man in need of a savior indeed he has a heightened awareness of this and he's on his feet what's going on in his head at this point I think we can answer that question his mind is enlightened in the knowledge of the one who is calling him his will is renewed in this moment and you're saying it can't happen that quickly it can and it does and it's what's unfolding here because in these decisive moments Matthew is fully persuaded and made able to follow Jesus Christ never underestimate what

God can do for you from the moment you walk in this door and you leave after the benediction has been pronounced! look at Matthew to use the vocabulary of Puritan theology we see him closing in with Jesus by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone he's not unlike Lydia is he whom we meet in Acts chapter 16 the Lord opens Matthew's heart here just as he opened the heart of Lydia to pay attention to what is being said and just like Lydia Matthew's heart is no longer his own when the

Bible speaks of the heart more often than not it alludes to every fiber of our being the entire person he gave everything Luke tells us everything every fiber of his being is now under the jurisdiction of the Lord Jesus Christ and Levi got up Luke tells us yes he got up he left everything behind and followed Jesus isn't it interesting when we compare Matthew with the fishermen from Galilee the fishermen brought their boats to land Luke tells us left everything and followed him but they would return to the sea of Galilee to their boats from time to time Matthew would never ever return to his tax collector's booth he turns his back on Caesar for Christ the world behind me the cross before me no turning back so we're going to close but

I do want to question one thing did he really leave everything behind he would have at least taken one item with him his own personal possession and that's important to note he's not taking what doesn't belong to him his pen yes his pen because Jesus has a plan and a purpose for Matthew this tax collector's financial spreadsheet is now history but he will continue to be a record keeper but we are going to transition from a spreadsheet to a scroll this is how it ends because ultimately Matthew will be commissioned to pen a detailed gospel account of the birth the life the ministry death and resurrection of the

Lord Jesus and in there will be just a snippet of how he came to know the Lord Jesus Christ himself yes record keeping and attention to detail will be Matthew's strong point and here we have it here today the gospel of Matthew this is his legacy it's remarkable one verse what does it convey to us that this bad news tax collector will become a good news storyteller under the superintendence of God the Holy Spirit this record keeper will write a full account of Jesus ironically you might say specifically for Jewish readers the ones who despise him the most his mission it will be to prove yes that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah and Matthew will stop at nothing to proclaim on these pages the kingdom of God so the very skills that he had sharpened as a tax collector will now be used effectively in the kingdom note to follow he forsook the booth is history would he ever regret severing his ties with it no neither will you today should you abandon your symbolic booth and follow

[ 32:44 ] Jesus Christ whatever it is that may be holding you back take encouragement from Matthew you see like like Matthew your gifts your talents can also be put to effective use in the kingdom one last thing back in 2017 Dean and I had the privilege of spending some time with Kenny John McKenzie in Uganda two weeks for one day Kenny John and I flew with a Canadian pilot on a math plane his name is Matt a remarkable man as I sat in this very small cockpit with Matt I asked him what he did before he became a Matt pilot he said well I was a pilot and I said what did you fly he says I flew with Air Canada but I said what did you fly he was reluctant to disclose this information to me but I pushed him further

Matt was a high profile pilot of shall we say a very large Boeing and here he is at the cockpit of a Cessna 208 12 seater plane his skills his talents transferred into the kingdom for the greater good of God's kingdom and its extension across Uganda and more besides Galenian fishermen were called to become fishers of men if we are to follow Jesus it must be with the unconditional submission of Matthew nothing less will do so can I appeal to you come if you will into the school of the discipleship of

Jesus Christ with the obedience that comes from faith we see it in Matthew he leads by example will you not follow his example amen gracious God grant us to follow you give us to see our need to do so in the here and now to do so unreservedly unconditionally for we ask these things in Jesus name amen well let's sing the great redemption song of scripture psalm 130 the Scottish Psalter rendering on page 421 psalm 130 it's the Scottish Psalter rendering Lord from the depths to thee I cried my voice

Lord do thou hear unto my supplications voice give an attentive ear the psalm concludes and plenteous or full redemption is ever found with him and from all his iniquities he Israel shall redeem to the praise of God Lord Lord from the times to thee I cry my voice Lord do thou voice give not I'll tend to hear.

Lord, who shall stand with Thou, O Lord, Just mark in equity, But yet with Thee  
Forgiveness is, Thou fear Thou mayest be.

[ 37:25 ] I win for God, My soul doth ween, My heart is in His word.

More than the light, For morning war, My soul doth ween, The Lord.

I sing for Thine day that to watch, The morning light to see.

Let Israel open the Lord, For with Him mercy be.

And plentious redemption, Is ever come with Him, And from all His delinquities, The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit remain with us all. Amen.