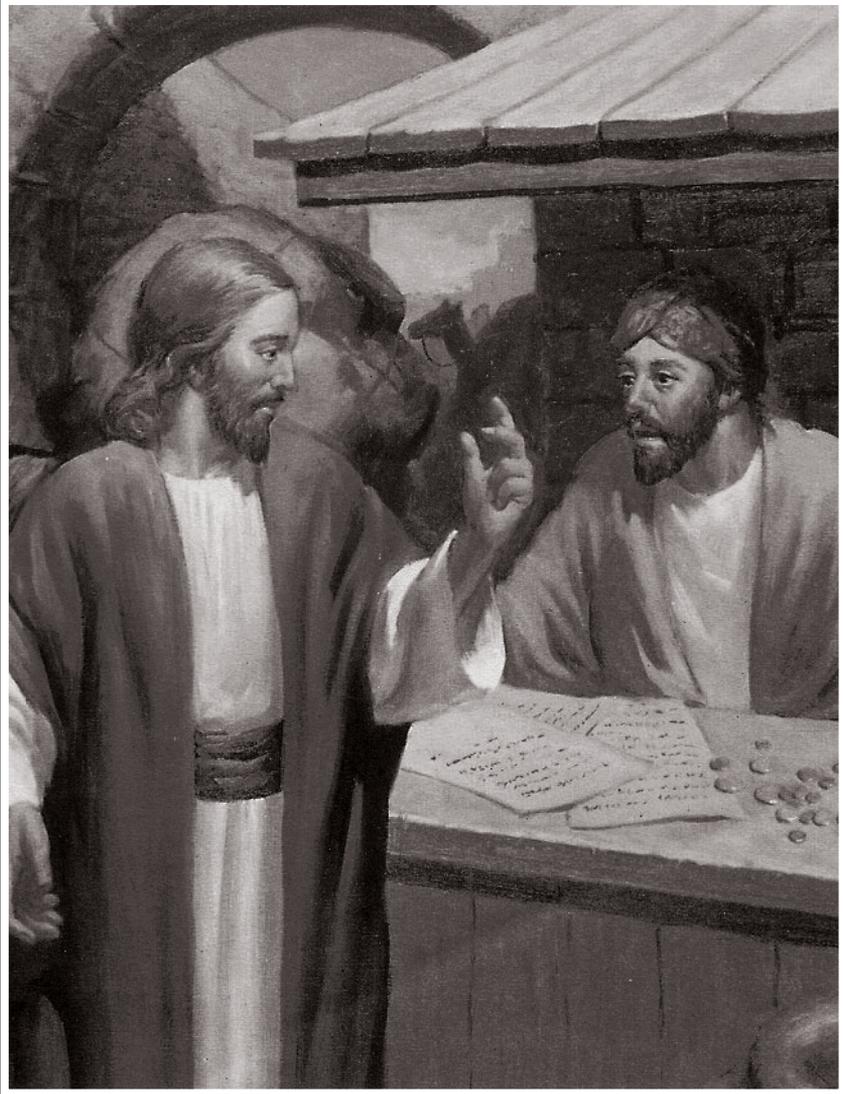
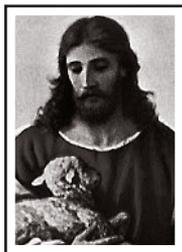


The Twelve Apostles of the Lamb



And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him.
Luke 5:27-28

Chapter Nine



The Apostle Matthew

At the time Matthew was called to be an Apostle, he was a successful tax collector for the Roman government. Matthew called himself a “*publican*” in Matthew 10:3, which was what Jews called tax collectors. This was considered a dishonorable job and disloyal to the Nation of Israel. That is why the Jews considered tax collectors in the same class as sinners, murderers, thieves and harlots. They thought anyone of their brethren who would take money from their family and give it to a heavy-handed government, would surely not be devoted to their God. Tax collectors were well educated in money matters and very shrewd businessmen who sometimes became dishonest and unfair when collecting taxes. Even though some publicans like Matthew, were not dishonest, the Jews looked upon all as hated sinners. So, for Matthew to admit in his Gospel that he was a publican showed that he was a humble man. He didn’t want to give the wrong impression of his past and wanted instead to show the transforming influence of the Lord’s spirit. *I Cor. 1:26-29 & Reprint 2260*

When Matthew was a publican, he was known by the name of Levi. *Luke 5:27* But, he went by the name of Matthew (meaning “*the gift of God*”) when he answered the call to be an Apostle. Matthew’s father was Alphaeus, also known as Cleopas. It is assumed that Cleopas was the same disciple who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus after Jesus was resurrected. Matthew’s mother, Mary, was also a disciple of Jesus and must have been close to Jesus’ mother for when Jesus died, both Marys were at the foot of the cross together.

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She was also at Jesus' tomb when it was discovered that Jesus was missing. *John 19:25 & Mark 16:1* One of Matthew's brothers, James the Less, was also an Apostle of Jesus. Matthew had a brother Joseph who may have been a disciple of Christ, for he is mentioned in connection with certain events as if he was commonly known among the brethren. *Mark 15:40*

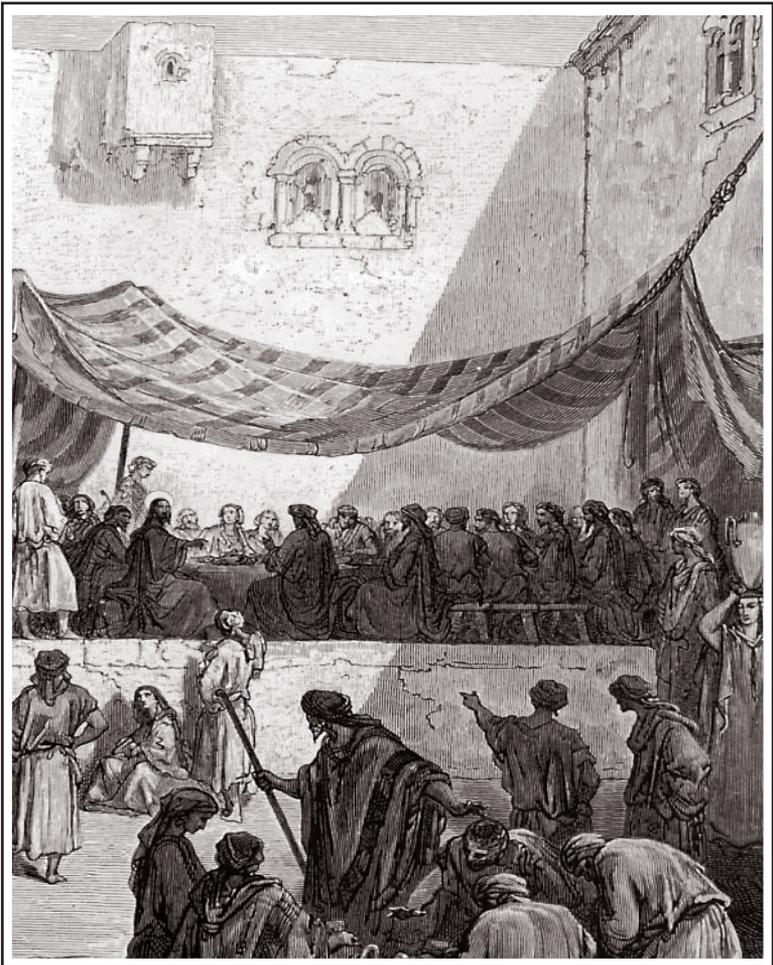
There may have been a family tie between Matthew and Jesus. It is claimed that Jesus' mother, Mary, and Matthew's father Alphaeus were sister and brother. This would make Jesus the cousin of Matthew and James the Less. If this family connection is true, then Matthew would have known Jesus personally before he was called to be an Apostle, and would not have been a stranger to the wonderful life, character and preaching of Jesus.

Capernaum was a busy fishing port on the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus often preached there to the many citizens and merchants. It was in Capernaum that Matthew lived and worked. By the time Matthew was called to be an Apostle, Peter, Andrew, James and John were already followers of Jesus. One day while Jesus was preaching in Capernaum and Matthew was busy collecting taxes from the Jews, Jesus came to Matthew and said, "*Follow me.*" How thrilled and honored Matthew must have felt! The Pharisees always looked down their noses at Matthew as they walked by. Matthew probably thought about this snobbery of the Pharisees, "*If this is what it is like to be a religious man, I will have no part of it!*" But Jesus' loving character by contrast would have made Matthew see the true heart of a devout man. Matthew probably thought, "*This man offers forgiveness and discipleship to publicans and sinners like me. Of course I will follow him!*" *Reprints 2590-2591 & 4587, & Mark 2:13,14*

Now, Matthew was a man of influence and money, but as soon as Jesus called him, he was not ashamed and wanted to announce to his family, friends and business associates his decision to leave all and follow Jesus. He arranged a banquet at his home and invited them all so that they might share his Saviour and experience the joys and blessings he felt in his

The Apostle Matthew

heart. Matthew was a kind and generous friend and a good Christian example, witnessing to them about Jesus. *Mark 2:15* Not only was Matthew willing to share, but also his wife supported him in his decision. For her to assist in putting on an elaborate banquet showed her desire to help Matthew in whatever way she could. *Reprint 2591* Of all the writers of the Gospels, it was only Matthew who quoted Jesus as saying, “*Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*” Thus, Matthew did not put his trust in riches, even though he had much wealth. He used the abundance that he was provided to provide for others. *Matt. 6:24*



The Twelve Apostles of the Lamb

Since the people assembled at the banquet were all publicans and sinners, the Pharisees came along and used this as an opportunity to criticize Jesus. Their hearts were always finding fault. But Jesus turned this around to show the Pharisees and others that they were not as holy as they thought. Jesus ate with the publicans and sinners because he wanted to build them up and give them the hope of God's forgiving grace. *Mark 2:16,17* But the Pharisees still tried to get the people to think that Jesus was no better than a sinner. They accused him again by saying, "*The disciples of John the Baptist and we Pharisees fast. Are we not more religious and devoted than you and your followers?*" Jesus answered, "*How can the bride fast and be sad when she is with her bridegroom? They will not always have him here, so now is the time to rejoice and celebrate with him.*" *Mark 2:18-20* This was a parable which the Pharisees could not understand, for they were blinded by their pride and arrogance. Although they boasted of fasting, they had lost sight of the purpose for doing so. Fasting, or going without the normal portions of food, is a method of teaching discipline and clearing the mind so it can meditate on God. They had made fasting into a ritual and tradition to make themselves feel more holy than others. When someone is so pleased with himself that he can't see his own sinfulness and yet criticizes others, he is considered a hypocrite. And that is just what Jesus called the haughty scribes and Pharisees.

Not much is written about Matthew beyond these references in the Gospels. History states that Matthew ministered to the Jews in Judaea and Galilee for about fifteen years after Pentecost or perhaps until the destruction of Jerusalem. It is certain that Matthew directed his ministry to the Jews, for his Gospel of the earthly ministry of Christ quotes the Old Testament prophets more than any of the other three Gospels. Matthew's skill at being a record keeper made him quite capable of drawing together the facts of Jesus' life and the Old Testament references to him. So that the Jews would become convinced of Jesus' authority as their King, he proved that Jesus was the Messiah by quoting

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their prophets. This would not have been as important to the heathen Gentiles who were unfamiliar with the Law and the prophets. *Reprint 1046* But when the message of the Messiah was constantly shunned by the Jews, and foretold destruction came to Jerusalem, Matthew is said to have moved on to Persia where his message was more well received. Eventually, however, the preaching of God's word to these heathen countries stirred up hatred in the hearts of the rulers and it is said that Matthew was put to death for preaching the Gospel.

Matthew's ministry for Jesus was one of self-denial and cross bearing. Anyone who would leave all and follow Jesus would surely live such a life. *II Tim. 3:12* His writings show his humility, zeal and loving admiration for his Master. Matthew was indeed worthy to be called one of the *Twelve Apostles of the Lamb*.

