

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

MARCH 24, 2022

Today we explore information about Matthew, sometimes called Levi. His name means “Yahweh’s gift.” Matthew was born in Nazareth in Galilee, the son of Alphaeus. As a tax collector, Matthew made his home in Capernaum. This location made perfect sense because the North/South toll road, the Via Maris, ran through the city of Capernaum. No commercial traffic could move from East to West without traveling on that road. It ran the entire length of Israel. Tax collectors were particularly hated by Jews. First, Orthodox Jews did not believe in giving money to any entity other than their God. Second, tax collectors earned their living by what they could “take off the top” of what they had to give to the Roman government. They were considered traitors to their Jewish people.

Nevertheless, Jesus saw good possibilities in Matthew and called him to be one of his disciples. After he decided to follow Jesus, he invited Him to his home for a feast. This led the scribes and the Pharisees to criticize Jesus for eating with tax collectors and sinners. This led to the answer from Jesus, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Unlike many of the other disciples, Matthew could speak Greek and could also write in Hebrew. He became the author of the Gospel of Matthew, in which he wrote down the teachings of Jesus. The writing of that gospel is thought to be the most important text for the first and second century Christians. It contains all of the elements important to the early church: the story of the miraculous conception of Jesus, the importance of the Law and discipleship, and the teachings of Jesus. It begins with the genealogy of Jesus to show that Jesus was a son in the line of Abraham. That set forth the Jewishness of Jesus.

After the ascension of Jesus, Matthew spent much of his time in Palestine planting new churches and teaching. He also went to Ethiopia and other areas of Africa to work. Because Matthew had spoken against the king of Ethiopia lusting after the king’s niece, Matthew was ordered killed on the altar of the church as he conducted worship. He is buried in the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Angels, Saint Matthew, and Saint Gregory the Great, in Salerno, Italy.

We thank You, Lord for the witness of your disciple Matthew who brought Good News to two continents and served until his death. Amen. Pastor Louise