

### Pentecost III: Matthew 9:9-13: The Call of Matthew to Discipleship

- Vs. 9: All commentators are agreed on the fact that Jesus is here at Capernaum. Precisely what is meant by ἐκεῖθεν is not definitely known. Some think it means "from Jesus' house" while others think it means "from Capernaum". It cannot be settled. παράγων "as He was going along". It sounds as if Jesus' discovery of Matthew was accidental but nothing that Jesus did was accidental. He surely planned it thus. By the way, the parallels to this account are found at Mk. 2:13-17 and Lk. 5:27-32. καθήμενον indicates that he was busy at his work. τελώνιον "tax-booth". Mark and Luke call him "Levi", perhaps the name given at his circumcision. Very likely the name "Matthew" (the gift of the Lord) was adopted by him when Jesus called him. It is significant that at Mt. 10:3 Matthew calls himself "publican". Fahling, pp. 233-238, is excellent on taxation among the Jews, publicans, and Jewish aversion to publicans. The Jews detested the publicans because 1) They represented the dominance of a foreign power, Rome; 2) They were considered traitors to the Jews; 3) They often took more tax money than they were supposed to. These three in addition to the fact that no one likes to pay taxes. It cannot be determined whether Matthew was a principal customs collector or one of his subordinates. It makes little difference. Very likely Matthew had heard Jesus preach before or at least had heard about His preaching. Fahling remarks: "Long before the eventful day which forever decided his future life he had probably in his heart become a disciple of Jesus. But on account of his social standing, being a despised publican, he did not dare to hope for personal recognition, far less for a call to discipleship. He was mistaken." Stoeckhardt: "No doubt Matthew had heard of Jesus, but had not concerned himself about the great events that had taken place round about him, being steeped in his business of gathering taxes with all of his thinking and planning." ἀκολούθει μοι. This is Jesus' call. Stoeckhardt says: "That one call of Christ had worked this decisive change in Matthew." The Epitome, Art. XI, Election, Tappert 495.8 says: "This Christ calls all sinners to himself and promises them refreshment. He earnestly desires that all men should come to him and let themselves be helped (Mt. 9:2.9.13.22.29.35.37). To these he offers himself in his Word, and it is his will that they hear the Word and do not stop their ears or despise it. In addition he promises the power and operation of the Holy Spirit and divine assistance for steadfastness and eternal life." We don't know how much Matthew knew about Jesus prior to this occasion. But we do know that Jesus found and called Matthew, not vice versa. The call of Jesus drew Matthew. ἀναστὰς denotes Matthew's immediate response. He did as Jesus said. He became Jesus' disciple.
- Vs. 10: Lk. 5:29 makes clear what this vs. means. We are in Matthew's house, not Jesus' house. αὐτοῦ refers to Jesus. In fact, AV, LB, TEV, NIV, NEB, AAT, NKJV read "Jesus" for αὐτοῦ. ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ must mean in Matthew's house. We are no longer at the tax-booth. ἀνακειμένου "reclining" means that Jesus was a guest. καὶ ἰδοὺ tells us that something was remarkable. For Jesus to eat with a host of publicans and sinners was truly remarkable. ἐλθόντες "having gathered." It was not haphazard. Matthew arranged this. Mark adds at this point: καὶ ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ "and they were following Him." That must mean that they were attentive to Jesus' Word. They had come to know Jesus just as Matthew had done. They were many in number. According to Luke, Jesus was the primary guest. His disciples came with Him. But Matthew mentions the many publicans and sinners first. This is not a contradiction. Jesus came for just this kind of people, though deeply despised as hopeless people by the Jewish authorities and Jews.
- Vs. 11: ἰδόντες. How the Pharisees "saw" or "found out", we do not know. Perhaps they were on a veranda where they could plainly be seen. Perhaps the number caused such a stir that the Pharisees were notified. Surely the Pharisees did not join them. That was against their principles. In any case, they found out. Likely ἔλεγον means "said repeatedly". Note that they did not speak to Jesus first. They get at Jesus through His disciples. They want to discredit Jesus as a Teacher. διὰ τῶν means "on

what grounds, why?" Note only one article with both nouns. They classify publicans with notorious and known sinners. They imply that by eating with them Jesus was lowering Himself to their level or partaking of their sins. The context clearly indicates that quite the opposite was the case. Note that ἐσθίει is durative present "is customarily eating". Lk. 15:2 and 19:7 clearly indicate that Jesus often did this. They put ὁ διδύσκαλος ὑμῶν last for the sake of emphasis. They are asking: "What kind of a Teacher is this who would lower himself so much?"

4. Vs. 12: Jesus comes to the rescue of the disciples. It would seem that the Pharisees asked the disciples after they left Matthew's house. But then Jesus Himself approached and answered the question put to the disciples. It was a difficult and dangerous situation for the disciples. Note the word order in Jesus' answer. This sentence is an axiom, a proverb understood readily by all people. οἱ ἰσχυρόντες "the strong" in the sense of "the healthy". ἀλλά after a negative means "but quite to the contrary". ἔχω with adverbs means "to be". οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντες "those who are bad" in the sense of "the sick".
  
5. Vs. 13: The use of πορεύομαι as an imperative by Jesus is interesting. In Jn. 4:50 and Lk. 7:50 it means "Be on your way. All is well." In Mt. 10:7 and 28:7 it denotes commands to the regenerate. But at Lk. 10:37 Jesus tells the lawyer: "Go and do likewise" implying that he has not yet done so. Likewise, here in Mt. 9:13 Jesus is saying: "Go and do your homework. You have something to learn." μάθετε, the aorist imperative, "learn once for all" implies that they do not know. These Pharisees were really guilty of a double sin: a) They considered themselves better than publicans and sinners; b) They considered publicans and sinners unworthy of mercy. Jesus quotes Hos. 6:6. For an example of what this means see I Sam. 15:22. "Mercy I want and not (mere) sacrifice." The divinity of Jesus is implicit in this sentence. It is God Who is speaking. This sentence is used by Jesus again at Mt. 12:7. Jesus is saying to the Pharisees: a) You know not the primary teaching of the OT; b) The love of God is the heart of sacrifices. Separated from this love of God, sacrifices are dead formalism; c) True children of God, like their heavenly Father, are merciful (Lk. 6:36); d) You are still dead in your trespasses and sin. Franzmann notes: "He is the Lord their Healer (cf. Ex. 15:26; Hos. 11:3) who does not ignore their sin but deals with it effectually." Correct. The sacrifices of the Mosaic Law were to be performed on the basis of the mercy and love of God, pointing forward to Christ. The whole book of Hebrews testifies to this. If performed mechanically, apart from God's mercy and love, they became an abomination to God. Cf. Is. 1:10-15. Now follows an explanatory γὰρ. Jesus applies the obvious illustration in vs. 12 and gives His exegesis of Hos. 6:6. ἦλθον denotes His coming into the world, His incarnation, Jn. 1:14. God became man for just one purpose: to reveal the grace and truth of God, the saving God. καλέσαι is an infinitive of purpose and eliminates all synergism. Matthew did not "make a decision or a commitment." Matthew did not "find" Jesus. The opposite is true. Likewise concerning the other publicans and sinners who attended this reception, put on by Matthew. Contextually δίκαιους must mean "the self-righteous". δίκαιος, when used of mere men, is always forensic. Either he deludes himself by declaring himself righteous, which is a lie, or, he believes that God declares him righteous for Jesus' sake. A doctor does not heal healthy people. Christ does not call the self-righteous, those who reject Him. ἀλλά after a negative means "on the contrary". ἀμαρτωλοῦς, contextually, means "repentant sinners", "those who admit that they are sinners". Such Jesus calls to faith. That was what He did for Matthew. That was His purpose in eating with the publicans and sinners. The Pharisees were blind to this. But it would be wrong to say that Jesus did not care about the Pharisees. Surely what He said caused them to think. There is no record of their repenting. But Jesus willed it. For the word δίκαιους TEV has "respectable people" and JB and NEB have "the virtuous". That can be rightly understood, but it is better to keep the expression "the righteous" and to explain it contextually. The translation of LB on this verse is synergistic: "For I have come to urge sinners, not the self-righteous, back to God." καλέσαι means

a lot more than "to urge back". That sounds like they can do it themselves. By the way, note that Jesus purposely and emphatically repeats the word "sinners" in vs. 13 from vs. 11. They despised sinners. He invited them.

6. Both Luther, in the *Smalcald Articles* (Tappert 455, 71-74), and the *Formula of Concord* (Tappert 582, 69-70) quote Mt. 9:12 with reference to the Lord's Supper. We quote Luther in part: "If you are heavy-laden and feel your weakness, go joyfully to the sacrament and receive refreshment, comfort and strength. If you wait until you are rid of your burden in order to come to the sacrament purely and worthily, you must stay away from it forever." And *The Formula*, in part: "True and worthy communicants, on the other hand, are those timid, perturbed Christians, weak in faith, who are heartily terrified because of their many and great sins, who consider themselves unworthy of this noble treasure and the benefits of Christ because of their great impurity, and who perceive their weakness in faith, deplore it, and heartily wish that they might serve God with a stronger and more cheerful faith and a purer obedience. This most venerable sacrament was instituted and ordained primarily for communicants like this, as Christ says, Mt. 11:28; Mt. 9:12; II Cor. 12:9."