

*9As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.*

*10Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. 11When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?" 12But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. 13"But go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

Disillusionment.

Here I go reading between the lines again.

Matthews call. It's described for us by at least one first person witness. Matthew himself. Mark and Luke both also include this important event.

I'll read from Mark and Luke. Both are short accounts.

*Mk. 2:14 As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.*

*Lk. 5:27 - 28 After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me." 28And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him.*

And, finally, Matthew's account. *9As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.*

If Matthew could have left this out, he would have.

Matthew's only purpose was to hold up such a giant picture of Jesus, we

can't see the man holding up the picture. He's hidden behind it. And that's how he likes it.

We don't have one conversational word recorded that Matthew said. Zip.

And so my question is this. Who is it that comes to mind if I asked considering all of the New Testament writers, who is mightiest in the scriptures.

Most of you would immediately think of Paul. Author of 13 books of the New Testament.

But I would submit to you, that Paul, student of Gamaliel, mighty in the scriptures, combined with all of the other authors could not take on Matthew with one hand tied behind his back.

Who was this man?? And what was a man of his renowned learning doing in a tax booth in Galilee.

In John 3, Jesus has a conversation with Nicodemus; *9Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?" 10Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?"*

I think perhaps the teacher of Israel, through things that will remain a mystery to us until we meet him in heaven, was displaced. He was sitting in a tax booth 95 miles north of the religious center of his nation, excommunicated from the cultural and religious life of Israel, a traitor collecting taxes for Rome.

I find this fascinating. And I'm going to throw my guess out there and tell you that \$2.95 and my guess will get you a venti coffee at Starbucks.

The only conclusion that makes sense is that Matthew, whose name was previously and formally Levi, son of Alpheus, was trained at the feet of someone like Gamaliel, became mighty in the scriptures, and looked at the spiritual condition of the nation surrounding him, and said, if this is all there is, I'm out of here.

Collecting taxes for Rome was about as polar opposite of being the kind of Pharisee that Paul describes in Phillipians as you could get. Sort of like Jonah buying a ticket to go to Spain. Polar opposite. But there he was. In Capernaum, in a tax booth, collecting taxes from his countrymen, for Rome.

What did he know about Jesus, before the events of this day, this call?

Again, we don't have the full story. But there must have been something there.

Jesus is also polar opposite of the religious establishment in Israel. And He does miracles. And He claims to have the authority to forgive sins.

Look back on your own life and think about the events that preceded your salvation. How God worked in your life. Broke down barriers. Eliminated stumbling blocks. Then one day He called you and it was like, YES! Why did you wait so long!

Disillusionment?; Over. I think the moment Jesus eyes met Matthews, before a word was spoken, Matthew was all in. A kindred spirit.

What did Matthew walk away from? BTW I think Levi was his old name when he was an up and coming rock star in the nation of Israel. I think Mark and Luke call him that out of respect. I think Matthew became his name when he walked away from it all. Disillusioned.

And I think he kept the lost boy name as a constant reminder that he was, and is, less than nothing except for the grace of the Lord who called him. Another guess. We can ask when we get there.

Jesus comes along one day, and says, "follow me". And it says Matthew walked away from it all, to follow Him. What was the cost? What did he walk away from.

He was a publican. A tax collector.

Rome had placed these folks strategically all over their holdings in order to collect a percentage tax for Rome.

The publicans had to be intelligent. They had to be able to keep accounts. Write reports. That sort of thing.

And these offices, were purchased like a business opportunity. Collect X percent for Rome and keep .X percent for yourself. It was a way to get rich.

First you had to sell your soul to Rome. When you did that you were excluded from the national and religious life of Israel. You had no avenue for cleansing of sin or for righteousness. You were like a leper. Unclean with no possibility for you to be cleansed. Welcome to hell. Enjoy your money. Whore.

Then, there was the cost to purchase the franchise. I'm speaking in modern terms, but that's what it was. You bought the position for a sum of money. So there sat Matthew - Levi, about as far away from where you'd expect to find a biblical scholar, as you could imagine.

That's what Matthew walked away from. And I'm sure in the world of Publicans where you waited for attrition by death to move up a notch to the next better place to have a booth set up, it was big news. Everybody moved up a notch. Matthew walked away from his post! Why?? To follow Jesus.

The whole thing from start to finish was countercultural. A non-culture, parallel with the established culture of man made religion in Israel. Jesus was outside. Hated. Excluded. A threat to the religious and cultural establishment. As was Matthew. We'll see the resultant clash in the rest of the passage.

So, how much did Matthew really know. Matthew had walked away from religious Israel. Abandoned in disillusionment. Perhaps. My guess. But there's all this learning in the background. And here comes a man that can mesmerize crowds with His sermon on the mount.

And to a guy who walked away in dis-illusionment, He's saying all the right things. And then there's the miracles.

I know I'm reading a LOT into this, and you'll have to forgive me, but I think Matthew - Levi was ripe for the picking. When Jesus passed by, and probably read his mind, and said, "well, come on then", I don't think it took Matthew a nano-second to decide. He left the cash box and the receipt book and never looked back.

Matthew is the only gospel recorder who writes anything like the words in ch. 13:44 - 46 I'll read these to you a thousand times before I'm through.

*44"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, 46and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

To Matthew, in his tax booth, disillusioned with the phony religion of Israel, mighty in knowledge and wisdom and learning of the real religion of Israel, Jesus is that treasure! He is the pearl that you sell everything else for, so you can have HIM.

*10Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples.*

The next scene. A party for the counter-culture. A party for the nobody's. A party for the social scum. Matthew's house!

This is a mini view of a scene Jesus describes of a future feast.

Luke 14:16 - 24

*16 But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; 17and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' 18"But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a*

*piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.’ 19“Another one said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.’ 20“Another one said, ‘I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.’ 21 “And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’ 22“And the slave said, ‘Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ 23“And the master said to the slave, ‘Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. 24‘For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.’”*

We use the term, beating the bushes when we talk about searching for whatever treasure we're searching for. This is where it came from. The masters slaves were beating the bushes for one last person to come to the banquet.

That was the social class described in vs. 10. **And it is us.** I hope you didn't come here this morning feeling like the King would be lucky to have someone like you at His banquet

In Israel, you had normal society that would do their best to follow all the ceremonial washings and the sabbath. They had a priesthood and made sacrifices for their sin. They would follow a yearly cycle of festivals and cleansings and washings required to be in some kind of right standing according to the levitical requirements before God.

And then you had the renegades. Women of the night. Sinners. Tax collectors. People who had walked away from established religion. Sold out, for whatever reasons.

And Matthew, who has followed Jesus, throws a party for all his friends, the folks that he loves, so that they can meet Jesus. This is the Riff Raff. These are the people who don't count. Don't matter. Excluded. Outside. Ceremonially unclean.

For Jesus to enter Matthew's house was to *become* unclean according to

the pharisees. But remember, the leper didn't make Jesus unclean, Jesus made the leper clean. That's how it works when He enters a room.

And Jesus doesn't stop there! He reclines at table. He's having a meal. It's a party and Jesus is immersed in the counter culture. And the disciples have joined in.

*Vs. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?"*

The pharisees are aghast. One minute he's blaspheming, forgiving sinners, and the next minute He's keeping company with . . . sinners.

For the prescriptions of their culture, this man is out of control. Over the top. Untenable. In Mary Austin english; this is not to be borne.

The pharisees would never go in Matthews house. They'd never stoop to becoming unclean, like him, by associating with him. So they wait outside for one of the disciples, and they lodge their displeasure.

*"Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?"*

Hypocrites. When they're trying to trap Him they always start by calling Him "teacher". But here he's not their teacher. He's "your teacher" You other low life sinners. Your teacher. Associating with filth.

Culture clash. Us, and them. The upright, and the foul. The clean and the stench.

*Vs. 12 But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick."*

They were not "in" Matthews house, but they were within hearing distance of Jesus. They wanted to be sure He could hear their accusation. He did.

*"It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick."*

Who's Jesus talking about here? Just the outcasts he's dining with? No. There is irony here. Every one of us is "sick". Every one of them was "sick" with sin, including and moreso, the righteous. Listen to Isaiah.

## Isaiah 1

*1The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.*

*2Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth;  
For the LORD speaks,  
“Sons I have reared and brought up,  
But they have revolted against Me.*

*3“An ox knows its owner,  
And a donkey its master’s manger,  
But Israel does not know,  
My people do not understand.”*

*4Alas, sinful nation,  
People weighed down with iniquity,  
Offspring of evildoers,  
Sons who act corruptly!  
They have abandoned the LORD,  
They have despised the Holy One of Israel,  
They have turned away from Him.*

*5Where will you be stricken again,  
As you continue in your rebellion?  
The whole head is sick  
And the whole heart is faint.*

*6From the sole of the foot even to the head  
There is nothing sound in it,  
Only bruises, welts and raw wounds,  
Not pressed out or bandaged,*



What is more distressing than a sick person who neither knows or cares that he's sick.

*Vs. 12 But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.*

The sarcasm just drips. I hope that when we're in heaven there will be instant replay's of scenes like this. Wouldn't you love to watch Jesus throw out this sarcasm at some holier than thou pharisee that's completely foul and thinks he's in line for a position in the trinity.

Think again about the beatitudes. Mt. 5:3 - 9

*3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

*5 "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.*

*6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

*7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*

*8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

*9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*

Who was closer to redemption? These sinners Jesus was dining with, or the pharisees who thought they were OK because of all their phony baloney religion. Exactly.

*"It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.*

One of my favorite books in my library, actually, borrowed from my mom, is one written by G. Campbell Morgan titled; ***The Great Physician.***

He got his title right here.

This is now the second time that Jesus has referred to himself as a physician. The first being in Nazareth when his homey's who watched Him grow up, took offense at Him. *Physician heal thyself*. Physician, you need the cure, not us. We're fine.

Here again He uses the metaphor of a physician. One who diagnoses that which is ailing a person, and prescribes a cure.

Jesus uses it sarcastically because these pharisees think they're perfectly alright, and they are farther away from the Kingdom of God than the rest of the sick.

The sickness is sin. The cure is Jesus. Hard to be cured when you don't recognize your own sin. When you think the sinless Son of God is the sinner and you are not . . . you're in a bad place.

They thought their false religion of works had made them righteous. They thought obsessing over what is work and what is not, on the Sabbath, had put them in a position where God revered them.

But listen to what Jesus says next;

*13 "But go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

Over and over and over in the gospels, Jesus references His argument to the authority of scripture; *"But go and learn what this means:*

*Matthew 12:3,5,7 But he said to them, Have you not read what David did, when he was ...5Have you not read ...7Have you not read*

*Matthew 19:4 And he answered and said to them, Have you not read, that he which ...*

*Matthew 21:42 Jesus said to them, Did you never read in the scriptures,*

*The stone ...*

*Matthew 22:31,32 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that ...*

*Mark 12:26 And as touching the dead, that they rise: have you not read in the ...*

*Luke 10:26 He said to him, What is written in the law? how read you?*

*John 10:34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law,*

Clearly, Jesus who is the Living Word, respects the authority of the written word. He argues based on what is written. The book is authoritative. Or is it?

### The Guardian newspaper, Friday April 17th 2015

Is there a real threat to the religious liberty of Christians in the west? If a Belfast bakery refuses to ice a customer's cake with a gay marriage message it believes is contrary to the Bible, and then is taken to court, is this a threat to religious liberty? In the US, the claim of "religious liberty" is fast becoming a standard Republican talking point, and we can expect to hear much more of it as the primary season advances.

Democracies can certainly persecute unpopular minorities. No one doubts, for example, that homosexuals were discriminated against in both law and practice throughout most of the 20th century and that this discrimination was both unjust and widely approved, as it still is in Russia and large parts of sub-Saharan Africa today. It's at least possible that conservative Christians might at some stage end up as despised and disadvantaged a minority as some of their **victims** have been in the past.

Whether it is in fact happening is a different question. Many of the cases of supposed discrimination amount to Christians wishing to retain a right they had until recently to discriminate against others. **They claim then that it would violate their consciences to do or say certain things which society as a whole has determined are moral.** This won't do. Conscience cannot provide "a get out of jail free" card, neither metaphorically nor, should it come to that, literally. We all have consciences but there is no guarantee they will lead us to the same conclusions. This fact is literally tragic, as the Greeks knew. Nonetheless, any society has to **privilege** some ethical viewpoint and some virtues.

In the west we privilege conflicting but broadly liberal values. **We no longer privilege the authority of the Bible.** So, once we have determined that discrimination against homosexuals violates the principle of equality – and that is the **settled position in both law and public opinion now** – the fact that some people are compelled by their consciences to disagree does not exempt them from behaving as if it were true. There cannot be a special exemption for **mistaken beliefs** held on religious grounds when these harm others.

What I wanted you to see there is that the west no longer recognizes the Bible as authoritative. The Bible holds no privilege any more. Society as a whole is who determines what is moral. Not the Bible.

A settled opinion in both law and public opinion trumps the Bible. And if you disagree with public opinion based on what the Bible says you are culpable for *mistaken* beliefs. No excuse any longer for that. Society is finished with giving you a pass for believing the mistakes of the Bible. IF you do that, and act on it, you must now be punished.

Fasten your seat belts christians. You're in for a bumpy ride. If you mistakenly believe the Bible and it's wrong ideas, you are culpable for discrimination and harm to others, and you must pay.

Jesus quoted the book. Jesus based his teaching and his arguments on the book. *It is written. Have you not read.*

Again vs. 13 *“But go and learn what this means: ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

Go and read your bibles pharisees.

The passage is from Hosea 6:6

Hosea 6:5,6 *Therefore I have hewn them in pieces by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth; And the judgments on you are like the light that goes forth. 6For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*

Remember when your mother said "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me."?

Sorry Mom. You were wrong. The words of this book can hew you in pieces. The words of this book can slay you. That's why the world hates it so. The words of this book expose sin. The world gets violent when you have the audacity to believe there's such a thing as Sin, or Judgement.

God cut his people in pieces. Why? vs. 6. The one Jesus tells the pharisees to go have another go at.

*6For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings*

God doesn't want the outward show. He wants the inward love. Loyalty. An intimate knowing. A love relationship. Based on the Grace of a God who forgives us of our sins. Love and adoration for a God who loved us and died for us.

Matthew would give up everything he worked for his whole life to have 5 extra minutes with Jesus. Matthew's in love. With the Saviour.

These pharisees that tithe their mustard seeds have no love for God. Their hearts are bankrupt. They stand outside accusing Jesus for loving sinners.

*for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners*

More sarcasm.

You don't need a doctor. You're well.  
You don't need a saviour. You're righteous.

What do you tell a world that is furious with you for telling them they're perishing in their sin?

How dare you have the audacity to tell me I'm a sinner! How dare you

harm me by telling me there is a God who has a book and the book has some black and white standards in it. And I don't measure up to God's standards. How dare you!

The parallel of Jesus and the pharisees with the world described in the paragraphs from the Guardian newspaper are inescapable.

The world turns everything upside down. Jesus becomes the sinner. The enemy. The outcast. The sinners become the righteous. The pharisees are the righteous and Jesus is the problem.

Our world has done the same thing. I'm the sinner. I'm the bad guy to be punished, if I love you enough to tell you, you're broken.

Isaiah 5:20 says; *Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!*

A day is coming, and I think very soon, when time will be up for this world that calls evil good, and good, evil.

Revelation 22, just a few verses before the end of this book, says something frightening;

*10 And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. 11"Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy. 12"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done....*

Today, the offer is still open. You can, like Matthew, see the infinite value of the Son of God, and leave this world behind in order to follow Him. I urge you to do *that*.

Because a day is coming, and soon, when the offer of grace is over. And after that, only the judgement described in those verses in Revelation is possible. *11"Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong;*

*and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; Time for repentance will be over.*

The world will be judged based on the words written in this book. This book that they have declared to no longer have any position of privilege. Trumped by the morality of mass opinion.

*1 Then I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, there was a flying scroll. 2And he said to me, "What do you see?" And I answered, "I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits." 3Then he said to me, "This is the curse that is going forth over the face of the whole land; surely everyone who steals will be purged away according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears will be purged away according to the writing on the other side. 4"I will make it go forth," declares the LORD of hosts, "and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name; and it will spend the night within that house and consume it with its timber and stones." Zechariah 5*