

Matthew (Levi)

Matthew, the seventh apostle, was chosen by Andrew. Matthew belonged to a family of tax gatherers, or publicans, but was himself a customs collector in Capernaum, where he lived.

He was thirty-one years old and married and had four children.

He was a man of moderate wealth, the only one of any means belonging to the apostolic corps.

He was a good business man, a good social mixer, and was gifted with the ability to make friends and to get along smoothly with a great variety of people.

Andrew appointed Matthew the financial representative of the apostles.

In a way he was the fiscal agent and publicity spokesman for the apostolic organization.

He was a keen judge of human nature and a very efficient propagandist.

His is a personality difficult to visualize, but he was a very earnest disciple and an increasing believer in the mission of Jesus and in the certainty of the kingdom.

Jesus never gave Levi a nickname, but his fellow apostles commonly referred to him as the "money-getter."

Levi's strong point was his wholehearted devotion to the cause.

That he, a publican, had been taken in by Jesus and his apostles was the cause for overwhelming gratitude on the part of the former revenue collector.

However, it required some little time for the rest of the apostles, especially Simon Zelotes and Judas Iscariot, to become reconciled to the publican's presence in their midst.

Matthew's weakness was his shortsighted and materialistic viewpoint of life. But in all these matters he made great progress as the months went by.

He, of course, had to be absent from many of the most precious seasons of instruction as it was his duty to keep the treasury replenished.

It was the Master's forgiving disposition which Matthew most appreciated. He would never cease to recount that faith only was necessary in the business of finding God.

He always liked to speak of the kingdom as "this business of finding God."

Though Matthew was a man with a past, he gave an excellent account of himself, and as time went on, his associates became proud of the publican's performances.

He was one of the apostles who made extensive notes on the sayings of Jesus, and these notes were used as the basis of Isador's subsequent narrative of the sayings and doings of Jesus, which has become known as the Gospel according to Matthew.

The great and useful life of Matthew, the business man and customs collector of Capernaum, has been the means of leading thousands upon thousands of other business men, public officials, and politicians, down through the subsequent ages, also to hear that engaging voice of the Master saying, "Follow me."

Matthew really was a shrewd politician, but he was intensely loyal to Jesus and supremely devoted to the task of seeing that the messengers of the coming kingdom were adequately financed.

The presence of Matthew among the twelve was the means of keeping the doors of the kingdom wide open to hosts of downhearted and outcast souls who had regarded themselves as long since without the bounds of religious consolation.

Outcast and despairing men and women flocked to hear Jesus, and he never turned one away.

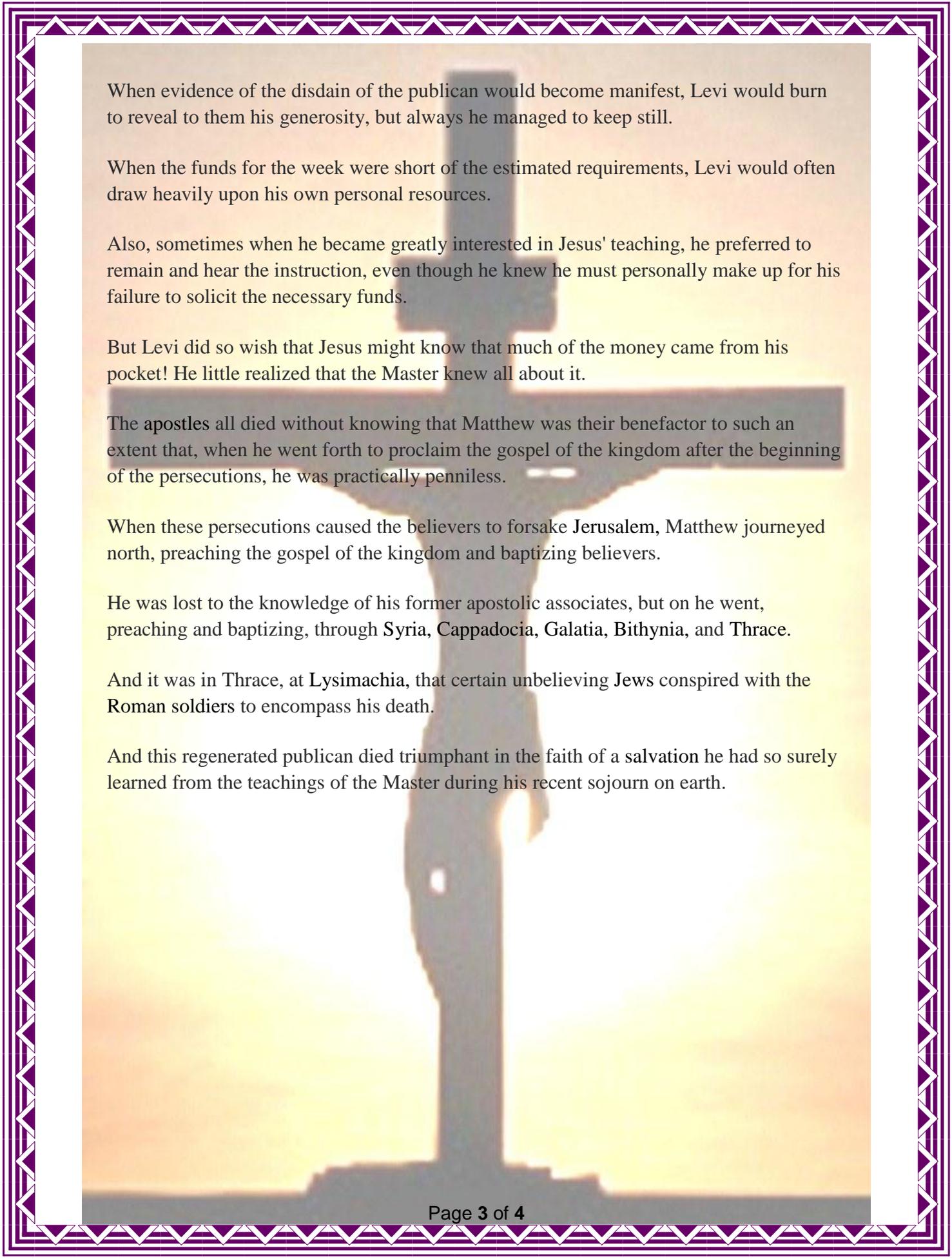
Matthew received freely tendered offerings from believing disciples and the immediate auditors of the Master's teachings, but he never openly solicited funds from the multitudes.

He did all his financial work in a quiet and personal way and raised most of the money among the more substantial class of interested believers.

He gave practically the whole of his modest fortune to the work of the Master and his apostles, but they never knew of this generosity, save Jesus, who knew all about it.

Matthew hesitated openly to contribute to the apostolic funds for fear that Jesus and his associates might regard his money as being tainted; so he gave much in the names of other believers.

During the earlier months, when Matthew knew his presence among them was more or less of a trial, he was strongly tempted to let them know that his funds often supplied them with their daily bread, but he did not yield.



When evidence of the disdain of the publican would become manifest, Levi would burn to reveal to them his generosity, but always he managed to keep still.

When the funds for the week were short of the estimated requirements, Levi would often draw heavily upon his own personal resources.

Also, sometimes when he became greatly interested in Jesus' teaching, he preferred to remain and hear the instruction, even though he knew he must personally make up for his failure to solicit the necessary funds.

But Levi did so wish that Jesus might know that much of the money came from his pocket! He little realized that the Master knew all about it.

The apostles all died without knowing that Matthew was their benefactor to such an extent that, when he went forth to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom after the beginning of the persecutions, he was practically penniless.

When these persecutions caused the believers to forsake Jerusalem, Matthew journeyed north, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and baptizing believers.

He was lost to the knowledge of his former apostolic associates, but on he went, preaching and baptizing, through Syria, Cappadocia, Galatia, Bithynia, and Thrace.

And it was in Thrace, at Lysimachia, that certain unbelieving Jews conspired with the Roman soldiers to encompass his death.

And this regenerated publican died triumphant in the faith of a salvation he had so surely learned from the teachings of the Master during his recent sojourn on earth.

Accomplishments of Matthew:

He served as one of the 12 disciples of Jesus Christ. As an eyewitness to the Savior, Matthew recorded a detailed account of Jesus' life, the story of his birth, his message and his many deeds in the Gospel of Matthew. He also served as a missionary, spreading the good news to other countries.

Matthew's Strengths:

Matthew was an accurate record keeper. He knew the human heart and the longings of the Jewish people. He was loyal to Jesus and once committed, he never wavered in serving the Lord.

Matthew's Weaknesses:

Before he met Jesus, Matthew was greedy. He thought money was the most important thing in life and violated God's laws to enrich himself at the expense of his countrymen.

Life Lessons:

God can use anyone to help him in his work. We should not feel unqualified because of our appearance, lack of education, or our past. Jesus looks for sincere commitment. We should also remember that the highest calling in life is serving God, no matter what the world says. Money, fame, and power cannot compare with being a follower of Jesus Christ.

Hometown:

Capernaum

Referenced in the Bible:

Matthew 9:9, 10:3 Mark 2:14, 3:18 Luke 5:27-29; 6:15 Acts 1:13

Occupation:

Tax collector, disciple of Jesus, gospel writer and missionary

Family Tree:

Father - Alphaeus

Key Verses:

Matthew 9:9

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. (NIV)

Luke 5:29

Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. (NIV)

Click link below to read more about Matthew

<http://christianity.about.com/od/newtestamentpeople/a/JZ-Matthew.htm>