

Character Studies: The Apostles



MATTHEW / LEVI

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Nickname/Other:

Matthew (Greek Matthaios)— is considered his personal name, however some say that Matthew is the name that Jesus gave him much like Peter from Simon. Others have argued that Matthew is his Greek name and his Hebrew name is Levi as the Apostle Paul (Greek) was known as Saul (Hebrew).

- Matthew only refers to himself in the Gospel of Matthew as “Matthew.” (Mt 9:9; 10:3)
- The Gospel of Mark uses both Levi and Matthew (Mk 2:14; 3:18) respectively.
- The Gospel of Luke uses both Levi and Matthew (Levi – Lk 5:27, 29) and (Matthew - Lk 6:15)
- The Gospel of John makes no reference to Levi or Matthew.
- The Acts of the Apostles references only Matthew (Ac 1:13)

Levi (Greek Leuis) – some have argued that Levi is not his name, but his tribe, the “Tribe of Levi”

Matthew, Mark, and Luke have parallel accounts of Jesus’ meeting and calling of Matthew.

General Information:

We have no record of Matthew’s birth or death. He like the other Apostles, lived during the time of Jesus.

Hometown/Region: Capernaum of Galilee of the Roman Province (Mk 2:1-17)

He was a Publican², A tax collector who collected revenue for Rome.

¹ Apostle St. Matthew, Museo de El Greco, Toledo

² a tax collector, or a publican—someone who was commissioned by the Roman government to collect taxes from the indigenous people for Rome. The captive Jews considered these tax collectors as a betrayal to the people. Historians tell us that the Publicans had very little accountability, all they needed to do was collect a specific rate for each person. They were not held to scrutiny of over taxing, which would fall into their own pockets. Therefore, abuse among the publicans was common knowledge, and the Jews hated the publicans for that reason. As a result, publicans were considered the lowest-of-the-low. When tax collectors repented and were baptized by John the Baptist, they asked, “Teacher, what shall we do?” and he told them: “Collect no more than you are authorized to do” (Luke 3:12–13).

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Family:

Son of Alphaeus (Mk 2:14)

Note: On an interesting note, many consider that he and the other James were brothers as they both were known as the “son of Alphaeus.” (Mt 10:3; Mk 2:14; 3:18; Lk 6:15; Ac 1:13)

MINISTRY INFORMATION:

Major Accomplishments during Jesus’ Ministry:

Matthew, as a tax collector would most likely would have been fluent in Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin and Greek

Matthew’s salvation/calling (Mt 9:9; Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27)

Matthew left everything to follow Jesus (Mt 9:9)

Threw a banquet for Jesus (Mt 9:10; Mk 2:15; Lk 5:27-29)

Listed among the Twelve disciples/Apostles of Jesus (Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16)

Was an eyewitness of Jesus’ baptism, ministry, and resurrection, for about three years

Sent out by Jesus to preach “the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand”, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead and cast out demons (Mt 10:1-42; Mk 6:7-13; Lk 9:1-10)

Was present during the Last Supper and the Upper Room Discourse (Mt 26:20; Mk 14:17, Lk 22:14; Jn 13:4)

Was with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26:36; Mk 14:32-42; Lk 22:39-46; Jn 18:1)

He deserted Christ during Jesus’ trials and crucifixion.

Note: It is interesting that the person who would know finances perhaps better than any of the Twelve, did not hold “the bag” for the Apostles. Judas “had the bag.” (Jn 12:6; 13:29)³

Major Accomplishments after Jesus’ Ministry:

Was present when Jesus appeared after his resurrection (Jn 20:19-25)

He may have been one of the two unnamed Apostles present when the disciples went fishing while waiting on Jesus at the sea of Tiberias. (Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, and John, and two others, Jn 21:2) If so, he would have witnessed the miraculous catch of fish (Jn 21:2-7)

Was present when Jesus gave the Great Commission (Mt 28:16-20)

Matthew was present at Jesus’ ascension (Ac 1:8-9)

Matthew was in the upper room with the other disciples and Apostles (Ac 1:10-14)

Listed in the upper room with Peter, James, John, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Mt, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon Zelotes and Judas the brother of James. (Ac 1:13)

³ Albert Barnes - *Had the bag*. The word translated *bag* is compounded of two words, meaning "tongue," and "to keep or preserve." It was used to denote the bag in which musicians used to keep the tongues or reeds of their pipes when travelling. Hence it came to mean any bag or purse in which travellers put their money or their most precious articles. The disciples appear to have had such a bag or purse in common, in which they put whatever money they had, and which was designed especially for the poor, Lk 8:3; Mt 27:55; Ac 2:44.

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Was present at the choosing of Mathias to replace Judas (Ac 1:13)

Along with the other Apostles, they began the movement called "Christianity." As such, he was one of the leaders of the early church.

Manner of Death:

Tradition says that Matthew ministered to Persia, Macedonia, Syria, Media, and Ethiopia.

The early church holds the tradition that Matthew died as a martyr.

Historically/Tradition says that Matthew died near Hierapolis or Ethiopia

Writings

He is credited with writing the first book of the New Testament: The Gospel According to Matthew.

When was the Gospel of Matthew written? It is generally considered that Matthew was written between 60-70 AD

Scripture References:

Mt 9:9; 10:3; Mk 2:14; 3:18; Lk 5:27, 29; 6:15; Acts 1:13

Strongest Character Traits:

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- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.