



The DAILY JESUS NEWS #058

Jesus' Great Galilean Ministry

Jesus' First Tour of Galilee

Jesus Calls Matthew to Follow Him

MT 9.9-13 (Parallel Texts: MK 2.13-17; LK 5.27-32)

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^MOnce again, Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he was teaching them.

⁹ ^{MT}As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew, ^La tax collector also called Levi, ^Mthe son of Alphaeus, sitting at ^{MT}the tax collector's booth. *"I command you to continue following me,"* he said. So, Matthew ^Lleft everything, ^{MT}and having risen up, he followed him.

¹⁰ ^LLevi made Jesus a great feast ^{MT}at his house; while Jesus was having dinner, ^La large crowd ^{MT}of many tax collectors and 'sinners' came and sat down ^Lat the table, and they and ate with him and his disciples, ^Mfor there were many who followed him.

¹¹ ^{MT}When the Pharisees ^Mand their scribes ^{MT}saw this—^Mthat he was eating with tax collectors and 'sinners,'—^Lthey murmured against his disciples ^{MT}and asked: "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ But I command you all to go and really learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'* (Hos. 6.6). *For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners ^Lto repentance."*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus.*

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	Capernaum
Time	During the 1 st Tour of Galilee; Sept. To February (Months 9 to 13)
Stage of Jesus' Life	Stage IV: His Great Galilean Ministry
SAGA Chapter I	The First Tour of Galilee
Section #058	Jesus Calls Matthew to Follow Him

Like the Early Judean Ministry, we know very few of the details the 1st Tour of Galilee. The Synoptics gave us an excellent summary of these roughly six months in DJN #055. The healing of the leper (#056) and paralyzed man (#057) were described for their representative value of the countless miracles that occurred in these months, and because of their great significance in revealing Jesus as “the Lord who Saves from sin.” In today’s reading another crucial development on the 1st tour was recorded for our edification--the call of Matthew.

Of the eventual 12 apostles, only the calling of Peter, Andrew, John, James, and Matthew into full-time discipleship were written about in the gospels. Why just these five? Peter, John, and Matthew became authors of vital portions of the New Testament. The gospel of Mark is closely associated with Peter, and he wrote two epistles as well. John wrote his gospel, three epistles, and the Revelation. Matthew authored the gospel bearing his name. James had the high honor of becoming the first martyr of the church age. We do not see anything specific in the New Testament about Andrew’s ministry, but it was crucial as an apostolic witness at the least.

It seems then, that the calling scenes of Peter, John, and Matthew were included in Scripture because they became authors of critical portions of the New Testament, including three of the gospels. James and Andrew were also included because they were apostles, and present when their respective brothers were also called. We needed to know more about these particular apostles than the other seven in order to fully understand the ministry of Jesus, through the witness of these particular men.

Today's reading gives us another case study in how careful reading of our "blended" DJN text can give us precious insights into the glory of our Lord.

In the DAILY JESUS NEWS we use “superscript ID” to identify material found in MT, MK, LK, JN, and Acts . (This system is explained in each DJN just above the “Context Digest” chart.) Each of these gospels were written by different people, from different perspectives, for different target audiences, in different literary styles and arrangements. Blending them together into one text has the disadvantage of losing their distinctive features. This is why we should always read the gospels from beginning to end, one after the other, in a systematic way--on a daily basis--as the foundation for our personal Bible reading program.

On the other hand, blending the parallel gospel passages into one composite account has the advantage of bringing all the information together in place, enabling to see the comprehensive “big picture” of what happening, while retaining all the details. Studying the life of Jesus in chronological order, with the materials “blended” into one text gives us the ability to see the total life of Jesus with much more clarity than any one gospel alone can give us. Therefore, the DJN approach to studying the life of Jesus is an excellent supplement to reading the gospels.

We use the “Superscript ID” system to allow our readers to trace the distinctive contributions of each author in blended texts. The calling of Matthew is a great example of what we can learn from each author's unique perspective, as indicated by the Superscript ID.

I selected Matthew (MT) as the base text for this passage because it describes his personal call to follow Jesus. His own experience is the primary source for this passage. Verse 9 described the way Jesus “saw” him, or knew and related to him in his omniscience when he reached out with his grace to invite Matthew into a relationship with himself. Note the key differences between the various accounts.

Luke described Jesus as **“seeing a tax collector named Levi.”** The first thing in Jesus' consciousness in Luke's view is that Matthew was a Roman tax collector. That is the way everyone viewed him. He was a social outcast for choosing to pursue this hated vocation, which was commonly seen as “consorting with the enemy;” selling his soul to the devil (the Romans) just to make easy money.

The fact that Jesus saw him as a tax collector, but invited Matthew to follow him anyway, emphasized Jesus' marvelous grace for Luke. People ostracized him; Jesus included him. This view fits harmonizes with Luke's consistent presentation of the way Jesus reached out to the poor and outcasts; the unpopular and marginalized segments of society. The Lord was full of unconditional love toward all people, including tax collectors like Matthew. This was Luke's consistent portrait of Jesus.

Mark wrote that Jesus **"saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax office."** (Both Luke and Mark use Matthew's formal name, Levi. He was also commonly called Matthew, the name that he chose to use for himself.) Here Mark presents Jesus seeing Levi as signified by his name, and secondarily as a tax collector. A person's name is imbued with their personality and character over time.

Most New Testament scholars believe that Mark is a collection of the preaching of Peter. It is probably "the gospel according to Peter, as narrated by Mark." Remember that when Jesus first met Peter he focused on his name: **"You are Simon the son of John. You will be called Cephas."** JN 1.42 Cephas means "Rock" in Aramaic. The change in Simon's name signified the change in his character that would come from following Jesus. Mark's description of Jesus "seeing Levi," who ended up being known by all of us as "Matthew," also emphasized the riches of Jesus' grace extended to Matthew, from Mark's (Peter's) point of view.

Matthew's own description of this scene is the most telling. He wrote: **"Jesus saw a man, called Matthew..."** Having been seen by everybody else as a hated tax collector for years, Matthew experienced grace in being seen simply as "a man," with no preconceived judgements made about him. Matthew felt like he had a totally fresh start--totally unrelated to his past actions--when Jesus saw him simply as "a man" in need of a Savior. Jesus saw his common humanity, not his unpopular job description. What grace!

Three different authors emphasized Jesus' grace in calling Matthew, in three different ways. Each is wonderful. When we put them all together, the full glory of Jesus' grace shines brighter than in any single account. That is why we "blend" parallel accounts in the DAILY JESUS NEWS, and use the Superscript ID to allow our readers to appreciate the wonders of our matchless Lord.

Finally, Matthew's call was an irreplaceable part of the good news about Jesus for one more reason. Jesus stated one of the most fundamental reasons for his own incarnation and ministry.

"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE MERCY, NOT SACRIFICE.'" (Hos. 6.6). For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners ^{to} repentance."

Of the twelve apostles, Matthew was in the most scandalous life-situation when Jesus called him. Tax collectors were vilified--considered the scum of the earth by their Jewish peers. Jesus was drawn like a magnet to "sick" people like Matthew, because they already knew they were NOT righteous, and they were thus hungry for the redemption that society would never give them. Their only hope was in God. Jesus came to save people who know they need salvation. He came for people who consider themselves to be a "Matthew"--a person in desperate need of forgiveness and grace.

APPLICATION:

Jesus sees each of us first as a person in need of him. He sees all the individuality and uniqueness of our own life-experience, as signified by knowing our name. He sees everything we have done that others might judge or condemn, but he does not. He simply calls us to follow him, so that HE can change us into a person like himself--with a brand new name. That's what the calling of Matthew says to each of us, too.

Matthew immediately threw a huge party to introduce Jesus to all of his family and friends. That is a great way to share the gospel with our friends and family. Host a party, give your testimony, and ask

some of your friends to do the same. It is a natural, yet highly effective way to introduce your friends to Jesus.

When will you throw a "get to know Jesus" party at your place? Who will you invite?