

Jesus – The King of the Jews #23

The Publican's Conversion

Matt 9:9-17

Introduction:

1. Many people, like the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day, *consider* themselves to be righteous, and for them Jesus offers no hope or help, because they admit no need.
2. The first declaration of the gospel is negative—that every man is sinful, separated from God, and condemned to hell.
 - a. A person will not seek to be saved until he realizes he is lost.
 - b. The first step in proclaiming the gospel is to tell men of their lostness, and the first step in receiving the gospel is to confess that lostness.
3. A person will not seek healing until he is convinced he is sick; he will not seek life until he acknowledges he is dead.
4. Conversion, then, occurs in one who is willing to accept the death sentence and also the acquittal of God.
5. The man who does not recognize his condemnation to death has no hope for new life.
6. The only incident in Matthew's life that is recorded in Scripture is his conversion/calling to be Christ's disciple which is recorded in this text.
7. Matthew's calling was under much different circumstances than the other disciples' calling.
8. All do not have the same circumstances in their conversion and calling.

I. **The Occupation at the Conversion – vs 9 →**

Matthew was a publican (tax collector), and "*receipt of custom*" speaks of his table where he solicited people to pay their taxes.

1. Tax collectors were notorious for their habitual evil of graft.
2. A tax collector served occupying Rome against his own people as a collector of taxes.
 - a) *By the nature of his position, his first loyalty had to be to Rome.*
 - b) *Nationals of a country or province occupied by Rome could buy franchises that entitled them to levy certain taxes on the populace and on travelers.*
 - c) *A franchise required collecting a specified amount of taxes for Rome and allowed anything collected beyond that figure to be kept as personal profit.*
 - d) *Because his power of taxation was virtually unlimited and was enforced by the Roman military, the owner of a tax franchise in effect had a license for extortion.*
 - e) *For those reasons the publicans were understandably considered traitors by their own people and were usually even more despised than Roman officials or soldiers.*
 - f) *Many tax collectors would accept bribes from the wealthy to reduce and falsify their taxes and would then exact proportionately more from the middle and lower classes, making themselves hated still more.*
 - g) *They amassed great fortunes under the authority of the oppressor and at the expense of their own countrymen.*
3. Alfred Edersheim reports that a Jewish *publicani* was barred from the synagogue and was forbidden to have any religious or social contact with his fellow Jews.
4. He was ranked with the unclean animals, which a devout Jew would not so much as touch.
5. He was in the class of swine, and because he was held to be a traitor and a congenital liar, he was ranked with robbers and murderers and was forbidden to give testimony in any Jewish court.
6. The occupation of Matthew emphasized his need of conversion, and also showed the grace of God in conversion.

9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

BYZ **Matthew 9:9** Καὶ παράγων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐκεῖθεν εἶδεν ἄνθρωπον καθήμενον ἐπὶ τὸ τελώνιον, Ματθαῖον λεγόμενον, καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ἀκολούθει μοι. καὶ ἀναστὰς ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ.

τελώνιον, noun ans from **τελώνιον** toll house, revenue or tax office, toll collector's booth

II. The Opportunity for the Conversion – vs 9

"As Jesus passed forth from thence"

1. Matthew had a passing opportunity to be a follower of Christ, and he did not let the opportunity pass by without using it for his conversion and calling.
2. Procrastinators who let opportunity pass by without taking advantage of it, will suffer great loss.
3. Especially is this true spiritually—procrastinators fill hell not heaven. *"Now is the day of salvation"* ([2 Corinthians 6:2](#)).

III. The Object of the Conversion – vs 9

"Follow me"

- When Christ called Peter, Andrew, James, and John the same *"Follow me"* command was given ([Matthew 4:19](#)).

A. The Savior in the Object – vs 9 - "Me."

1. It would be amazing to Jews that Jesus would call a publican to be one of his followers
2. The conversion/calling of Matthew would cause his life to revolve around Jesus Christ.
3. Our salvation and our service must focus on Him to be valid.

B. The Submission in the Object

1. To follow Christ means to submit to His will.
2. He is the leader and decides where to go and what to do.

C. The Separation in the Object

1. To follow Christ meant separation from others.
2. Not many are following Christ.
3. You will, therefore, be separated from many people.

IV. The Obedience in the Conversion – vs 9

9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

- Matthew responded well to the call from Christ. His obedience is instructive.

A. Standing in the Obedience – vs 9 - "He arose"

1. You always rise when you follow Christ. Sin lowers but the Savior raises.
2. The people you follow will either cause you to rise in character or be lowered in character, depending on their relationship to Jesus Christ.
3. Perhaps Matthew had been under deep conviction of his spiritual need
4. He seemed to be yearning for that forgiveness that the perverted system of Judaism told him he could never have

B. Submitting in the Obedience – vs 9 - "Followed him"

1. This submission to the calling evidenced the validity of Matthew's conversion.
2. Luke tells us that Matthew left everything behind and followed Jesus – Lu 5:28
 - a) *He would never be able to return to the tax collector position with the Roman govt*
 - b) *Matthew knew the cost and willingly paid it*
 - c) *When a person is genuinely converted he will leave the old life – old standards, old practices, habits*
3. We are justified in questioning professed conversions when the so-called converts do not obey the commands of Christ.

V. The Outreach After His Conversion – vs 10-13

- After Matthew followed Christ, he commendably endeavored to reach others for Christ.

A. The Supper in the Outreach – vs 10

10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

1. All three synoptic Gospels report that Matthew made a supper for the outreach after his conversion
2. But Matthew, in modesty, does not name himself in his Gospel as being the one who made the supper in this outreach.

B. The Sinners for the Outreach – vs 10

"Many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples"

1. Cognizance of the sinners.
 - a) *Matthew, because of his occupation as a tax collector, would know "many publicans and sinners" who could be invited to the supper.*
2. Compassion for the sinners.
 - a) *As soon as Matthew began following Christ, he had a compassion for his acquaintances to come to know Christ.*
 - b) *Salvation precedes and prompts evangelism.*
3. Confession before the sinners.
 - a) *Matthew was no secret disciple.*
 - b) *He confesses his faith openly and unashamedly before his old cronies.*

C. The Scorning of the Outreach – vs 11

11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

- Always is there opposition to the work of the Lord; and, as we have noted earlier, it often comes from religion; for Satan likes to hide his evil under the cloak of religion—it makes his evil more acceptable to people and thus more effective.
1. Indirectness of the scorning. "They said unto his disciples."
 - a) *So often critics use the indirect method of criticizing.*
 - b) *This was more criticism than it was query*
 - c) *Dissidents in church often do not go to the pastor but to some deacon or other officer.*
 - d) *This is to gain support for their criticism and also to bring schism among the friends of the one the dissidents are attacking.*
 - e) *It is cowardly conduct that shows the corruption in the critics' character.*
 2. Indictment in the scorning. "Why eateth your Master w/ publicans?"
 - a) *The rules of the religious leaders were to scorn the association with anything that was tainted.*
 - b) *The critics, of course, ignored the fact that they were also associating with publican and sinners by coming to the supper to snoop*

D. The Support of the Outreach – vs 12

12 But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

- Christ responded forcefully to the critics in support of the outreach.
1. Awareness in the support. "When Jesus heard"
 - a) *The sneaky criticism of Christ did not work, for Christ "heard."*
 - b) *He is omniscient and not only "heard" but knew their thoughts.*
 2. Argument in the support.
 - a) *A physician must come in contact with the sick, if he is to bring healing to them.*
 - b) *This does not condone mixing with the world but denounces the "holier than thou" critics who would pervert this contact as failure in separation.*

BYZ **Matthew 9:10** Καὶ ἐγένετο αὐτοῦ ἀνακειμένου ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ, καὶ ἰδοὺ, πολλοὶ τελῶναι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἐλθόντες συνανέκειντο τῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ.

BYZ **Matthew 9:11** Καὶ ἰδόντες οἱ Φαρισαῖοι εἶπον τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ, Διὰ τί μετὰ τῶν τελωνῶν καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν ἐσθίει ὁ διδάσκαλος ὑμῶν;

BYZ **Matthew 9:12** Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀκούσας εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχουσιν οἱ ἰσχύοντες ἰατροῦ, ἀλλ' οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντες.

3. Admonishing in the support. "Go ye and learn ..."
 13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.
 - a) Christ admonishes the perverted practices of His critics by telling them they need to learn some basic principles about reaching sinners.
4. Accusation in the support. "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice"
 - a) This was a rebuke of the religious leaders who were particular about sacrifices and other incidentals in the law but lacked the great principle of compassion for needy souls ([Matthew 23:23](#)).
5. Aim in the support. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners"
 - a) Unlike the leaders of that day, Christ came to save sinners.
 - b) The outreach of Matthew was for that purpose.
 - c) But the religious leaders were too concerned about faultfinding to convert sinners.

VI. The Opposition From His Conversion – vs 14-17

- The question about fasting in this text is a follow-up of the criticism of the Pharisees about Christ associating with publicans and sinners
- Both the Pharisees' criticism and the fasting question represent opposition to Christ.
- Pharisees' opposition was directed at the outreach of the conversion.
- The opposition involving the fasting question represents opposition to the entire ministry of Christ.
- The criticism of Christ's conduct and that of the disciples involved no high moral principles but rather a behavior that did not follow the traditions of the religious system of the Jews.
- Much criticism in conduct is like that in every age. People are more upset if you do not abide by men's rules than if you do not abide by God's rules.

A. The Asking in the Opposition – vs 14

14 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

- The question simply expressed opposition to Christ disguised as a spiritual perplexity.
1. Problem in the asking. "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?"
 - a) The problem involved fasting.
 - b) The disciples of John and the Pharisees fasted often but Jesus' disciples did not fast at all.
 - c) Fasting was a prominent form of outward piety in Judaism; but in the law, God only commanded it to be done once a year ([Leviticus 16:29](#)).
 - d) Hence the frequency of fasting was simply an outward show of piety.
 - e) The emphasis in Judaism was on externals not the heart.
 - f) The question was an indirect criticism of Christ, for it is implied that He did not teach His disciples to fast according to the religious traditions of the day.
 2. People in the asking. "Disciples of John."
 - a) They were not alone in this questioning.
 - b) Other Gospel accounts indicate that the Pharisees were also involved.
 - c) The Pharisees had evilly influenced some of John's disciples, for John was now in prison.
 3. Pride in the asking. "We and the Pharisees fast oft."
 - a) This question of criticism was filled with pride—they were fasting often compared to Christ's disciples who did not fast at all.
 - b) Those whose religion is largely based on keeping externals are the most prone to pride.

BYZ **Matthew 9:13** Πορευθέντες δὲ μάθετε τί ἐστίν, Ἐλεον θέλω, καὶ οὐ θυσίαν· οὐ γὰρ ἦλθον καλέσαι δικαίους, ἀλλὰ ἁμαρτωλοὺς εἰς μετάνοιαν.

BYZ **Matthew 9:14** Τότε προσέρχονται αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου, λέγοντες, Διὰ τί ἡμεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι νηστεύομεν πολλά, οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ σου οὐ νηστεύουσιν;

B. The Answer for the Opposition

15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

16 No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. 17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

- In summary, the answer to the question says Christ is not an additive to the present religious system but is a brand new entity.
 - He is not STP that you add to your car to make it run better, but He is a new car.
 - You cannot mix law and grace, for they are incompatible. Christ gave three illustrations in answering the question about fasting.
1. Custom in the answer. "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?" ([Matthew 9:15](#)).
 - a) John the Baptist had used this example to illustrate the superiority of Christ to John ([John 3:29](#)).
 - b) The disciples were with Christ. Why mourn and fast when you are with the Savior?
 - c) But the problem for the critics here is that they did not deem Christ as the bridegroom.
 2. Cloth in the answer. "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse" ([Matthew 9:16](#)).
 - a) This new cloth is unshrunk cloth and after some washings would shrink and cause the material to come apart.
 - b) The illustration simply shows the incompatibility of law and grace and of the religious traditions of the day with Christ's teachings.
 3. Container in the answer. "Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottle break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish" ([Matthew 9:17](#)).
 - a) The "bottles" are wine skins.
 - b) New wine in old and weakened wine skins would break the wine skins when the new wine ferments.
 - c) It is simply another illustration that shows the law and grace do not mix, Christ's teachings and the traditions of Judaism do not mix.

BYZ **Matthew 9:15** Καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Μὴ δύνανται οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος πενθεῖν, ἐφ' ὅσον μετ' αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ὁ νυμφίος; Ἐλεύσονται δὲ ἡμέραι ὅταν ἀπαρθῇ ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὁ νυμφίος, καὶ τότε νηστεύσουσιν.

YZ **Matthew 9:16** Οὐδεὶς δὲ ἐπιβάλλει ἐπιβλημα ῥάκουσ ἀγνάφου ἐπὶ ἱματίῳ παλαιῷ· αἶρει γὰρ τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱματίου, καὶ χειρὸν σχίσμα γίνεται.

BYZ **Matthew 9:17** Οὐδὲ βάλλουσιν οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς παλαιούς· εἰ δὲ μήγε, ῥήγνυνται οἱ ἀσκοί, καὶ ὁ οἶνος ἐκχεῖται, καὶ οἱ ἀσκοὶ ἀπολοῦνται· ἀλλὰ βάλλουσιν οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς καινοὺς, καὶ ἀμφοτέροισιν συντηροῦνται.