

JESUS CAME TO SAVE SINNERS

SCRIPTURE Matthew 9:9–13: As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him. ¹⁰ And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹² But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

SYNOPSIS Jesus is the Holy One. The question has been: “What sort of Man is this?” The last set of miracles have answered in astonishing clarity: Jesus is the God-man, the Holy One of Israel in human flesh, the promised divine Messiah, Immanuel—“God with us,” Jesus—“Yahweh saves.” He alone has authority over the natural, over the supernatural, and over sin. But far from coming to justly punish the guilty, the Holy One has come to save. With Jesus’ words, “your sins are forgiven” still ringing, Matthew points us to the most powerful testimony of Christ’s mission that he knows, namely his own conversion. The encounter that follows Jesus’ call of Matthew unveils His mission with piercing clarity. Jesus came to save His people from their sins (1:21).

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. ★ **Sinners do not seek God, God seeks sinners.** Read Romans 3:10-11, 1 Corinthians 2:14, and Ephesians 2:1-4. Every religion in the world is fundamentally based on the principle of man seeking God. Only in Christianity is the truth revealed and demonstrated in Christ that God seeks man. When unforgiven sinners think they are seeking God, it is not a righteous, just, holy, and good God they pursue—but a god in their own image. But the context of our passage, Jesus is the Holy One and yet He came to save sinners. Jesus is Immanuel — “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). Therefore, He is God come to us, who will save His people from their sins, which is why He is called Jesus — “Yahweh saves” (Matthew 1:21). Read Ezekiel 34:11 (and 34:15-16), speaking in the larger context of the hope of the coming Christ (34:23), and then Luke 19:10, Matthew 20:28, 1 John 4:9, 14, and John 15:16. Discuss the importance of this principle and its impact in your daily thinking and living. How does this principle change the way you feel loved by God? Does it make any difference in your self-image? Does it affect your view of sin and motivation for sanctification? Does it affect your desire for God?

2. **Jesus calls; disciples follow.** Matthew concentrates on the one all-important and central point: Jesus called him. He acted with promptness and decisiveness. He follows Jesus as a sheep follows its shepherd. Read Matthew 4:18–22. Discuss the nature of response to Jesus’ call to be His disciple. Were any of these responses impulsive and reckless? Now read Matthew 16:24. Discuss the kind of cost may be involved in following Jesus. Read Luke 5:28 (Levi == Matthew) to consider what Matthew left behind. Will leaving your job always (or even usually) be involved? What types of things may or may not be abandoned in properly responding to Jesus? Is everyone called to

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abandon all for the sake of ministry? What implications does this principle have for your obedience to Christ's words? Read Matthew 28:19-20. Consider the following quote and discuss the disciple's call to observe all that Jesus commands: "Lord, let my obedience towards thee be as the echo to the voice" (Charles Spurgeon).

3. **Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners.** Read Matthew 9:10. This signals a picture of salvation—fellowship with God (Matthew 8:11; 26:29). It is an astonishing picture of why Jesus came. Read Acts 10:28, 11:2-3, and Galatians 2:11-13. Now read and discuss the principle of Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11 as it relates to the importance of mealtime fellowship.

Matthew, who was repentant and now following Jesus, hosts this feast in his own house (Luke 5:29). This scene should not be compared to fellowshiping in an immoral public establishment (bar, brothel, etc.). Why?

In a self-righteous and awkward way, Christians are often very uncomfortable around worldly sinners. Do we diminish the seriousness of sin if we warmly reach out and even accept sinners who will engage with us in showing them Christ? Can we interact with worldly sinners without interacting with worldly sin?

4. ★ **Who needs the gospel most?** Explain. Who goes to heaven? Who are the only people on the planet with the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)? Read Matthew 11:28-30, 22:9-10, Luke 14:21-23, and John 7:37 to get closer to the heart of Christ. The Pharisees were ready to let the tax collectors and sinners die in their sins. Only the hard-hearted and self-righteous—those who do not see that they are the ones most in need of the gospel—can be so unfeeling and judgmental towards other sinners. We should see sin through God's eyes, not through the relative scale of man. We should, like Paul, say, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost" (1 Timothy 1:15). And then we should say, "For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them" (1 Corinthians 9:19). Discuss how knowing grace compels evangelism. Discuss the importance of keeping our need and the grace of God towards us before us at all times. Discuss how this relates to humility. How does it affect our worship? How does it influence our daily choices?
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5. ★ **What must be learned?** Jesus says to the Pharisees, “Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matthew 9:13). What is the lesson that Jesus is saying they need to learn, and by extension what we most need to learn from this passage?

6. **Jesus is a physician not a facilitator.** Jesus emphatically clarified that He came as a physician, not as a facilitator—a savior from sin, not a supporter in sin (Matthew 9:12). Jesus’ concern is to heal the sick, not enable them to continue in their sickness. Jesus calls sinners not that they should remain sinners but that they would have the righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). How does this relate to the idea that birds of a feather flock together? Does this impact the way that you think of associating with those who do not love Christ? Does it affect the way you think of reaching out to worldly sinners? Does it change the way you think of fellowship? Does it encourage your heart to become more like Christ—touching the lives of sinners without touching their sin?
