



Saint Matthew the Evangelist

Feast Day: September 21

Birth: 1st Century

Death: 74 AD

Patron: Accountants, Bankers, Bookkeepers, and tax collectors

Matthew, also called Levi, son of Alpheus, was born in Galilee in the 1st century. At this time, Palestine was ruled by the Romans who imposed heavy taxation on the Jews. Matthew was not a popular man living in Palestine. He was a Jew working for the Romans as a tax collector. Tax collectors were considered cheaters, charging more taxes than they were supposed to and keeping the extra money for themselves. A Jewish tax collector was considered a traitor. One day Jesus approached Matthew and told him "Follow me." Matthew left his job and immediately followed Jesus. The people were shocked to see a tax collector among Jesus' disciples. The Pharisees complained to Jesus, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke 5:30-32

Matthew is pictured with an angel whispering in his ear; illustrating that the words Matthew wrote were divinely inspired. Matthew's Gospel focuses on Christ's humanity and begins with the genealogy of Jesus: "Abraham became the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob...Jesse the father of David..." all the way to "...Matthan the father of Jacob the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Messiah." Matthew's Gospel recounts the birth of Christ, underscoring Jesus' incarnation (God in the flesh) as well as Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Ch 5-7) including the eight Beatitudes (5:1-10) and the Lord's Prayer (6:9-13). The first book in the New Testament, Matthew's Gospel is considered to be a bridge from the Old Testament since he references the Old Testament in over 130 quotes and allusions to make clear that Jesus is indeed the long awaited Messiah foretold by the prophets.

Before Jesus ascended into Heaven, he asked his disciples to preach the Good News. Matthew traveled about, preaching that Christ died for our salvation. Matthew is said to have evangelized as far East as the Caspian Sea as well as much of Ethiopia (not the African country we know today, but much of northern Africa.) Matthew died a martyr.



Matthew's symbol is a winged man because his Gospel centered on Jesus as true God and true man. Matthew sacrificed his job and steady income to follow Jesus. He reminds us that our faith in Jesus is what really makes us rich.