

File No. 117

MATTHEW 9:9–13

Mark 2:13–17; Luke 5:27–32

MATTHEW BECOMES A DISCIPLE

(SBS Bk 4 Story No 55)

Story Notes

When Jesus asked Matthew to follow him, he made Israel's leaders angry. It went against the rules they had prescribed for membership in the kingdom of God. Israel's leaders believed that being in the kingdom depended on their offering ritual (sacrifice) rather than on God's mercy. They needed to read Hosea 6:6 to understand the heart of God for his people.

Matthew invited many of his friends home for a meal (so Luke tells us). By accepting this invitation, Jesus demonstrated the truth of God's mercy reaching out to heal them all.

Jesus was anticipating a coming kingdom feast with Jews and Gentiles (Matt. 8:11) and was already celebrating this by feasting with Matthew and his friends. How could he lead his disciples in the regular fasting practised by the Pharisees when it was time to celebrate his presence in Israel as their 'Bridegroom' (Matt. 9:15)? Judaism's piety could not make enough room for Jesus' presence. His presence and mercy needed new arrangements.

Sinners who received Jesus would inherit the kingdom of His Father. Righteous people who refused him would gain nothing from the reign of God.

©2003 Grant Thorpe