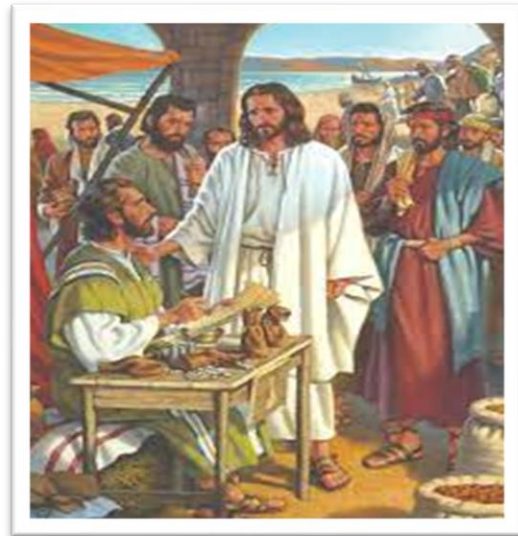


Jesus Instructs From His Barque. Call of Matthew

A great crowd of pagans who had been at Cornelius' feast were here assembled. Jesus was instructing them and, as the throng became very great, He with some of His disciples went on board His little barque, while the rest of them and the publicans went on Peter's boat. And now from the barque He instructed the heathens on the strand, making use of the parables of the sower and the tares in the field. The instruction over, they struck out across the lake, the disciples in Peter's boat plying the oars. Jesus' barque was fastened to Peter's, and the disciples



took turns to row. Jesus sat on a raised seat near the mast, the others around Him and on the edge of the boat. They interrogated Him upon the meaning of the parable and asked why He spoke in similitudes. Jesus gave them a satisfactory explanation. They landed at a point between the valley of Gerasa and Bethsaida-Julias. A road ran from the shore to the houses of the publicans, and into it the four who were with Jesus turned. Jesus meanwhile, with the disciples, continued along the shore to the right, thus passing Matthew's residence, though at a distance. A side path ran from this road to his custom office, and along it Jesus bent His steps, the disciples timidly remaining behind. Servants and publicans were out in front of the custom house, busied with all kinds of merchandise. When Matthew from the top of a little eminence beheld Jesus and the disciples coming toward him, he became confused and withdrew into his private office. But Jesus continued to approach, and from the opposite side of the road called him.

Then came Matthew hurrying out, prostrated with his face on the ground before Jesus, protesting that he did not esteem himself worthy that Jesus should speak with him. But Jesus said: "Matthew, arise, and follow Me!" Then Matthew arose, saying that he would instantly and joyfully abandon all things and follow Him. He accompanied Jesus back to where the disciples were standing, who saluted him and extended to him their hands. Thaddeus, Simon, and James the Less were particularly rejoiced at his coming. They and Matthew were half brothers. Their father Alpheus, before his marriage with their mother Mary Cleophas, was a widower with one son, Matthew. Matthew insisted upon all being his guests. Jesus, however, assured him that they would return next morning, and then they continued their way.

Matthew hurried back to his house, which stood in a corner of the mountains about a quarter of an hour from the lake. The little stream that flows from Gerasa into the lake ran past it at no great distance, and the view extended over lake and field. Matthew at once procured a substitute in his business, an excellent man belonging to Peter's barque, who was to discharge his duties until further arrangements could be made. Matthew was a married man with four children. He joyfully imparted to his wife the good fortune that had fallen to him, as well as his intention to abandon all and follow Jesus, and she received the announcement with corresponding joy. Then he directed her to see to the preparing of an entertainment for the next morning, he himself taking charge of the invitations and other arrangements. Matthew was almost as old as Peter. One might easily have taken him for the father of his young half brother Josés Barsabas. He was a man of heavy, bony frame with black hair and beard. Since his acquaintance with Jesus on the way to Sidon, he had received John's baptism and regulated his whole life most conscientiously.

On leaving Matthew, Jesus crossed the mountain at the rear of his dwelling and proceeded northward into the valley of Bethsaida-Julias, where He found encamped caravans and travelling pagans, whom He instructed.

Toward noon the next day Jesus returned with the disciples to Matthew's, where many publicans who had been invited were already assembled. Some Pharisees and some of John's disciples had joined Jesus on the way, but they did not enter Matthew's. They stayed outdoors, sauntering around the garden with the disciples, to whom they put the question: "How can you tolerate your Master's making Himself so familiar with sinners and publicans?" They received for answer: "Ask Himself why He does so!" But the Pharisees responded: "One cannot speak with a man who always maintains that he is right."

Matthew received Jesus and His followers most lovingly and humbly, and washed their feet. His half brothers warmly embraced him, and then he presented his wife and children to Jesus. Jesus spoke to the mother and blessed the children, who then retired, to return no more. I have often wondered why the children whom Jesus blessed usually appeared no more. I saw Jesus seated, and Matthew on his knees before Him. Jesus laid His hand upon him, blessed him, and addressed to him some words of instruction. Matthew had formerly been called Levi, but now he received the name of

Matthew. The feast was a magnificent one. The table, in the form of a cross, was set in an open hall. Jesus sat in the midst of the publicans. In the intervals between the different courses, the guests arose and engaged in conversation with one another. Poor travelers passing by were supplied with food by the disciples, for the street on which the house stood led down to the ferry. It was on the occasion of their leaving table that the Pharisees approached the disciples, and then occurred the speeches and objections narrated in the Gospel of 5:30-39. The Pharisees insisted particularly on the subject of fasting, because among the strict Jews a fast day began that evening in expiation of the sacrilege King Joachim committed by burning the Books of the Prophet Jeremias. Among the Jews, especially in Judea, it was not customary to pluck fruit by the wayside. Now Jesus permitted it to His disciples, and this the Pharisees made a subject of reproach to Him. While giving His answers to the Pharisees, Jesus was reclining at table with the publicans, whereas the disciples to whom the questions of the Pharisees were addressed were standing or walking among them. Jesus turned His head from side to side in answering.

Capharnaum was much more lively now than formerly. Crowds of strangers were streaming in on account of Jesus, some of them His friends, others His enemies, and most of them pagans, the followers of Zorobabel and Cornelius.