



Matthew, the Evangelist who wrote the Gospel that appears first in the New Testament, was different from the other Apostles. He was not a popular man. Many people felt that he was unworthy to be chosen as a follower of Jesus because Matthew worked for the Romans as a tax collector. The Romans ruled Palestine and the Jewish people in the time of Jesus and forced the Jewish people to pay taxes to them. Many tax collectors cheated the people by charging more taxes than required and keeping the extra money for themselves. Matthew tells a story about how Jesus called him to follow him. The Pharisees, a group of Jews who strictly followed all the laws of their religion, call tax collectors “sinners.” Jesus knew in his heart that Matthew was not a sinner or a cheat.

Matthew wrote his Gospel for Jewish people who had become followers of Christ. He wanted the people to know that Jesus was the Messiah that God had promised to send to save all people. Matthew is also the only Evangelist who shares the eight Beatitudes with his readers. His Gospel faithfully reports how Jesus described who will be truly blessed by God in the Kingdom and the attitudes and actions that are required for those who follow the new Law Jesus came to bring.

After Jesus’ Ascension, Matthew preached the Gospel, as Jesus asked his disciples to do. It is believed that he established Christian communities in Ethiopia and other sections of the continent of Africa. Matthew wrote about Jesus’ Incarnation and his Gospel makes clear that Jesus was true God and true man. Tradition tells us that he died as a martyr. Matthew is the patron saint of bankers, bookkeepers, and of course, tax people. His Feast Day is September 21<sup>st</sup>.