

## DINNING WITH TAX COLLECTORS AND SINNERS

Matthew (the converted tax collector) proceeded to have a dinner party in Jesus' honor.

### **Matthew 9:10 (NKJV)**

**10 Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.**

Matthew jumps right to the point, while the other two synoptics (Mark and Luke – cf. Mk. 2:14-20; Lk. 5:27-35) give a little more background detail. We see there that this was a dinner held at the house of Matthew evidently with the purpose of Matthew introducing Jesus to his old friends and associates. He wanted them to know Jesus too.

### **Luke 5:29 (NKJV)**

**29** Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.

Note that this was a large gathering of “many tax collectors and sinners” who came and sat down with Jesus and His disciples. Wouldn't it have been fun to have been there and just listened in on how this interaction went?

Here is Jesus and His disciples with this large group tax collectors and sinners. What did they talk about? The food, the weather, what Jesus had been doing? Probably all of the above.

Sinners in this context would have been outcasts of every stripe who were either morally compromised or didn't closely follow the ceremonial codes of the Jews.

In the time of Jesus, when people dined like this, they typically would lie on mats and be propped up on one elbow while eating from a low table.

### **Matthew 9:11 (NKJV)**

**11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”**

The Pharisees were always hanging around on the periphery. Certainly, by their own admission, they were not eating with this motley group of sinners, but they were close enough to see what was happening. They dogged

Jesus' footsteps to try and catch Him in something by which they might accuse Him in their efforts to bring Him down.

Note they didn't have the boldness to directly ask Jesus, so they approached His disciples with this question which was really more of an accusation than it was a legitimate question.

It was inconceivable to them that a true prophet would eat like this with tax collectors and sinners. That was considered defiling and serious compromise. And so, they in effect charged Jesus with "**guilt by association**". Having a meal with someone denoted fellowship – so here He was (in their minds) have fellowship with sinners.

The word **Pharisee** means "**separated one**". They were separatists who sought to separate themselves from any and everything that had any connotation of ceremonial defilement. But this emphasis on extreme externalism led to hypocritical self-righteousness. In Luke 18 Jesus spoke a parable that contrasted a self-righteous Pharisee with that of a humble broken tax collector saying that, "**everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.**" (cf. Lk. 18:9-14).

Jesus was far harder on these religious hypocrites than He was on the pagans generally or the Roman authorities.

"The Pharisees had devised a slick disguise, concealing their self-righteousness and hypocrisy under a veneer of religious zeal." - **John MacArthur**

Jesus had a definite purpose in associating with these tax collectors and sinners – an evangelistic purpose as He will go on to explain.

We love the brethren (fellow believers) in the sense of extending the right hand of fellowship, but we love the lost evangelistically. This is the example of Jesus who came to bring sinners to repentance. How can we win them if we never interact with them? There is a place for dinning with sinners in keeping with our evangelistic calling.