

Matthew 9:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

Analysis

Jesus eating 'with publicans and sinners' (μετα των τελωνων και αμαρτωλων) was scandalous. Table fellowship in Jewish culture signaled acceptance, intimacy, and shared identity. To eat with someone was to endorse them. 'Publicans' (τελωναι/ telōnai, tax collectors) were Jews who collaborated with Rome, extracting taxes plus extra for profit. They were considered traitors and extortioners. 'Sinners' (αμαρτωλοι) likely refers to those living openly immoral lives or violating purity laws. Jesus' willingness to dine with society's outcasts demonstrates radical grace. He doesn't condone their sin but offers redemptive fellowship. This pattern—eating with sinners—becomes Jesus' signature ministry approach, culminating in the Lord's Supper where sinners commune with their Savior.

Historical Context

Jewish purity laws created sharp social boundaries between righteous and sinners. Pharisees avoided contact with the ritually impure to maintain holiness. Tax collectors worked for Rome's oppressive system and were barred from synagogue leadership. They often extorted extra money (Luke 19:8). For a rabbi to eat with such people was professionally and religiously devastating. Jesus' action challenged the entire honor-shame cultural system, replacing exclusion with invitation. Early Christian table fellowship continued this radical inclusivity (Galatians 2:11-14, Acts 10-11).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' table fellowship with sinners demonstrate the heart of the gospel?
2. What is the difference between accepting sinners and condoning sin?
3. Who are the modern equivalents of 'tax collectors and sinners' that Christians often avoid?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐγένετο αὐτοῦ ἀνακειμένου ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ καὶ
And it came to pass his sat at meat in the house And
G2532 G1096 G846 G345 G1722 G3588 G3614 G2532

ἰδού, πολλοὶ τελῶναι καὶ ἀμαρτωλοὶ ἐλθόντες
behold many publicans And sinners came
G2400 G4183 G5057 G2532 G268 G2064

συνανέκειντο τῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ
and sat down as Jesus And G3588 G2424 G2532 G3101 G846
G4873

Additional Cross-References

John 9:31 (Sin): Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.