
Detective Dan's (Shorter/Simpler) Version of Bible Story for Big Question 12, Bible Truth 2

The Case of the Man Who Left His Money *Matthew 9; Mark 2; Luke 5*

(Numbers correspond to Bible story picture pages in Detective Dan's Big Question Box)

1. Jesus had good news to tell everyone. "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" He exclaimed. The kingdom of God is NEAR? What did THAT mean? What IS this kingdom of God? How can we be part of it?" many wondered.

2. "The kingdom of God is knowing and enjoying God as His people. It's loving God most of all and living for Him," Jesus explained. "God's kingdom is in heaven already. And one day, I'll come back and bring it to the new heaven and earth. But right now, it can be in your heart," He said.

3. Wow! Jesus' good news was the BEST news the people had ever heard! They didn't have to wait for heaven or even until Jesus came back. They could be part of God's kingdom that very day.

4. But as big and good as this news was, it wasn't easy to live out. Why? Because we have sinful hearts. We find things to love more than God. We choose ways to live instead of God's good way. There's so much we must stop loving and doing if we are to love God most of all.

5. A man named Matthew knew this. Matthew did NOT love God most of all. He loved money and the nice things he could buy, instead. And, while Matthew had grown up learning about God, he had chosen to break God's good laws to get more money and nice things for himself.

6. Matthew was a tax collector. He gathered money from his people for Caesar, the enemy Roman king. It was a bad job that most people wouldn't do.

7. Every day, Matthew sat in his tax house near the Sea of Galilee, stopping people with things to sell. "Pay your taxes. Here's what you owe Caesar," he demanded. But Matthew was unfair. He made everyone pay a lot more than they owed and kept the extra to make himself rich.

8. Matthew also squeezed lots of money from the people in his town, Capernaum, and they hated him. Perhaps Matthew had a big house, lots of nice things, and loads of money, but he lost many friends. He had broken his friendship with them by the mean, greedy things he did.

9. Even worse, Matthew had chosen to break God's good laws, and he refused to repent. Wherever God's kingdom was, whenever it could come, Matthew certainly would not be a part of it. There seemed to be no hope for Matthew to be right with God again.

10. But there WAS hope for Matthew. Jesus came to Capernaum to teach. As Matthew listened to Jesus, the Holy Spirit worked in his heart and changed it. Now, Matthew wanted to love God most of all. He wanted to be one of God's people and have the kingdom of God in his heart.

11. Jesus knew what was happening in Matthew's heart. "Matthew, follow Me! Be my disciple, my close friend who lives with Me and learns from Me each day," Jesus said to him. "Yes, Jesus, I will," Matthew told Jesus, and right then, he left his tax house and all his money to follow Jesus.

12. The rest of his life, Matthew followed Jesus and sought to love God most of all. God even used him to write a Bible book about Jesus: the Gospel of Matthew. "Gospel" means "good news," and that's what Jesus was to Matthew --the Savior who made him one of God's people.