

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW

The first of the gospels is written by Matthew. It is not only first in order in the New Testament, but it is also first in passages that are quoted and in frequency of study.

Matthew was written to Jewish Christians who knew the Old Testament. It is filled with Old Testament quotations, references to the law and the prophetic writings, and Old Testament characters. It is rich in reference to customs and circumstances in Israel during the time of Christ without too much explanation, taking for granted that the readers, in the main, would be familiar with these things.

I. AUTHOR AND PLACE.

This Gospel does not name its author. However, from its earliest mention in the church, the author was recognized to be Matthew, referred to in Luke as Levi (**Matt. 9:9; Luke 5:27-32**). The Epistle of **Barnabas** [130 A. D.] refers to **Matt. 22:14** as Scripture, and uses **Matt. 9:9, 13** in such a way as to indicate a strong belief that the author is the one spoken of in these verses. Likewise, the writings of **Polycarp** and **Ignatius** [110 A. D.] are filled with references to the Gospel. For example, **Polycarp** quotes **Matt. 2:1-2; 3:15; and 10:16** in his letter to the Ephesians, and ascribes the writings to Matthew. **Ignatius** does the same. Clement of Alexandria [110 A. D.] uses **Matt. 6:9** to teach his students not to pray as the hypocrites, but to use the prayer taught by Jesus. In the *Didache*, he refers to the Lord's yoke of **Matt. 11:29**, and the Great Commission (**Matt. 18:19-20**), along with other passages that indicate an intimate knowledge of the Gospel. The significance of the testimony of these men is that their lives are linked to the Apostle John's by a man named **Papias**. He was a personal friend and student of John, and he was a teacher of these men.

II. DATE.

Many of the writers in the early church believed that Matthew was the first of the gospels written. Among those were **Origen, Clement, and Irenaeus**. The modernist scholar argues that Matthew, along with Luke and John were products of 2nd century redactors. But the early use of Matthew scuttles that idea quickly. They also argue that Matthew and Luke were enlargements on the gospel written by Mark, who was supposedly a friend of Peter, but never knew Jesus. **There are three internal keys**, that help us put to rest all such nonsense. **First**, there is the intimate knowledge Matthew has of Jewish custom of that day. **Second**, there are two passages in which Matthew indicates some distance between the writing of the Gospel and the death of Jesus – but not too much distance. The first has to do with the name of the graveyard where Judas was buried (**Matt. 27:8**), and the second has to do with the story concocted by the Jews to explain the resurrection (**Matt. 28:15**). Both, according to Matthew, continue “unto this day.” After 70 A. D., neither would be relevant or remembered. **Third** is the fact that Jesus was continually issuing warnings of the impending doom the Jewish state and society faced in the destruction of Jerusalem at the hand of the Romans. The historical event would be an immense vindication of the Lord and his cause, because of these warnings, but it is never mentioned. The only explanation is that Matthew was written before the fulfillment of those warnings. However, there is much conjecture concerning exactly when before 70 A. D. Matthew was written. Some argue that it was written while the composition of the church was almost all Jewish, before the missionary journeys of Paul. Others guess that it was written around 65 A. D. Nobody knows.

III. PURPOSE AND THEME.

The subject of the book is outlined in the first verse. The gospel of Matthew is "the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (**Matt 1:1**). In this introduction our Lord is related to two of the most important OT covenants, the Davidic (**2 Sam 7:8-16**) and the Abrahamic (**Gen 15:18**). . . . To determine the "structure" and purpose of the gospel, one must take this division in **Matt 1:1** into consideration. The book is peculiarly the gospel for Israel, but as proceeding from the atonement of Christ, a gospel of world outreach. (From **The New Unger's Bible Dictionary**. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright (c) 1988.)

Aim. There is a lack in it of the vivid details found in the others, his aim being to give prominence to the Lord's discourses. Jesus' human aspect as the ROYAL Son of David is mainly dwelt on; but His divine aspect as Lord of David is also presented in **Matt 22:45; 16:16**; proving that Matthew's view accords with that of John, who makes prominent Jesus' divine claims. . . .

Design. For the Jews; to show Jewish readers (to whom were committed the Old Testament "oracles of God") that Jesus is the Messiah of the Old Testament, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies, . . . (from **Fausset's Bible Dictionary**, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1998 by BibleSoft)

Theological Significance. Matthew's main subject is the "kingdom of heaven" or "kingdom of God." This kingdom is mentioned 51 times in the Gospel of Matthew, twice as often as in any other gospel. The kingdom is already here in Jesus (**12:28**), but it is not yet fulfilled (**13:43; 25:34**). The kingdom cannot be earned (**19:23**); it can be received only by those who recognize that they do not deserve it (**5:3; 21:31**). The kingdom extends like a fishing net, gathering people from every part of society (**13:47**), offering new life in the life-changing presence of God (**8:11**). The kingdom is more valuable than a precious gem (**13:45-46**), and it excludes any and all competitors for its allegiance (**6:33**).

The kingdom of God means the rule or reign of God-in the entire universe, in the world, and in our hearts. The primary indication of the presence of the kingdom in the world is the transformation of life, both individually and socially. A person enters the kingdom not by saying the right words, but by doing "the will of My father in heaven" (**7:21**).

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IV. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The Gospel of Matthew has at least five special considerations that will be mentioned briefly here:

1. Matthew sought to prove to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. A recurring statement that occurs in this gospel is, "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet" (**1:22; also 2:15,17,23**).
2. Matthew has a special interest in the church, which by the time this gospel was written had become the dominant factor in the lives of Christians. Indeed, Matthew is the only gospel to mention the word "church" (**16:18; 18:17**).
3. Matthew has a strong interest in eschatology (the doctrine of last things) - that is, in the second coming of Jesus, the end of the age, and the final

judgment (**chap. 25**).

4. Matthew has a great interest in the teachings of Jesus, especially concerning the kingdom of God (**chaps. 5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24:1-25:46**).

5. Matthew writes to show that Jesus is the King to whom God has given power and authority to redeem and to judge mankind (**1:1-17; 2:2; 21:1-11; 27:11,37; 28:18**).

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Records found only in Matthew. Christ's GENEALOGY (which see) from Abraham to Joseph through the male line; the succession to the throne, from Abraham through king David to Joseph, 42 generations, with omissions. **Matt 1:** Joseph's dreams. **Matt 2:** Christ worshipped by the wise men, Herod's massacre of the children at Bethlehem, Herod's death, and Christ's return to Nazareth. **Matt 5-7:** the Sermon on the Mount in full. **Matt 9:** healing of two blind men. **Matt 11:** call to the heavy laden. **Matt 13:** parables of the hidden treasure, the pearl, and the drag-net. **Matt 16:** Peter's confession of Christ, and Christ's confirmation of Peter's name (compare at an early time **John 1:42**). **Matt 17:** Christ's paying the tribute with money from a fish. **Matt 20:** cures two blind men while going from Jericho. **Matt 22:** parable of the wedding garment. **Matt 25:** parables of the ten virgins, talents, and sheep and goats at the judgment. **Matt 27:** dream of Pilate's wife, appearance of many saints after the crucifixion. **Matt 28:** soldiers bribed to say that Christ's disciples had stolen His body.

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V. MATTHEW THE MAN.

There is very little known about Matthew the man. We know he was an apostle (**Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13**). As such he would have been in the company of Jesus from the beginning of his ministry through his ascension into heaven. He was with the others on Pentecost and received the powers of the Holy Spirit. As an apostle, his task was to tell the world about Jesus.

The call of Matthew is the only narrative that relates particularly to him (**Matt. 9:29-13; Mark 2:14-17; Luke 5:27-32**). He was a publican sitting at his collection table when Jesus called him. Publicans were collectors of Roman taxes, and they were known for extortion and excess. There were some exceptions. The narratives tell us that he rose from the table, forsaking all and followed Jesus. Mark calls him a son of Alphaeus. After his call, he gave a feast and Jesus draws criticism for eating with sinners when he goes.

Nothing else can be known of Matthew as an individual, for this is all that is recorded.

OUTLINE OF MATTHEW

MATTHEW: A Teaching Outline

Part One: The Presentation of the King (1:1--4:11)

- I. The Advent of the King 1:1--2:23
- II. The Announcer of the King 3:1-12
- III. The Approval of the King 3:13--4:11

Part Two: The Proclamation of the King (4:12--7:29)

- I. The Background for the Sermon 4:12-25
- II. The Sermon on the Mount 5:1--7:29

Part Three: The Power of the King (8:1--11:1)

- I. The Demonstration of the King's Power 8:1--9:34
- II. The Delegation of the King's Power 9:35--11:1

Part Four: The Progressive Rejection of the King (11:2--16:12)

- I. The Beginning of Rejection 11:2-30
- II. The Rejection of Christ by the Pharisees 12
- III. The Consequences of the Rejection 13:1-53
- IV. The Continuing Rejection of the King 13:54--16:12

Part Five: The Preparation of the King's Disciples (16:13--20:28)

- I. Revelation of Great Truths 16:13--17:13
- II. The Instruction in View of Rejection 17:14--20:28

Part Six: The Presentation and Rejection of the King (20:29--27:66)

- I. The Blind Men Recognize the King 20:29-34
- II. The Public Presentation of the King 21:1-17
- III. The Nation Respects the King 21:18--22:46
- IV. The King Rejects the Nation 23
- V. Jerusalem and the King's Second Coming 24:1--25:46
- VI. The Passion of the King 26:1--27:66

Part Seven: The Proof of the King (28:1-20)

- I. The Empty Tomb 28:1-8
- II. The Appearance of Jesus to the Women 28:9-10
- III. The Bribery of the Soldiers 28:11-15
- IV. The Appearance of Jesus to the Disciples 28:16-17
- V. The Great Commission 28:18-20

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- I. The birth of Jesus Christ. 1:1-2:23.
- II. The beginnings of the ministry of Jesus Christ. 3:1-4:11.
 - A. The forerunner of Christ. 3:1-12.
 - B. Baptism of Christ. 3:12-17.
 - C. Temptation of Christ. 4:1-11.
- III. The ministry of Jesus Christ. Matthew 4:12-25:46.
 - A. In Galilee. 4:12-18:35.
 - 1. At Capernaum. 4:12-17.
 - 2. Call of four disciples. 4:18-22.
 - 3. General survey of the Galilean ministry. 4:23-25.
 - 4. Sermon on the mount. 5-7.
 - 5. Ten miracles and related events. 8-9.
 - 6. Mission of the twelve. 10.
 - 7. Christ's answer to John, and related discourse. 11.
 - 8. Opposed by the Pharisees. 12.
 - 9. Kingdom parables. 13.
 - 10. Withdrawal of Jesus following John's beheading. 14.
 - 11. Conflict with the Pharisees over tradition. 15:1-20.
 - 12. Withdrawal to Phoenecia and healing of a Canaanitish woman's daughter. 15:21-28.
 - 13. Return to Galilee and miracles. 15:29-38.
 - 14. Conflict with the Pharisees and Saducees. 15:39-16:4.
 - 15. Withdrawal to Caesarea Philippi. 16:5-17:23.
 - 16. Instruction of the twelve at Capernaum. 17:24-18:35.
 - B. In Perea. 19:1-20:16.
 - 1. Teaching on divorce. 19:1-12.
 - 2. Blessing the children. 19:13-15.
 - 3. Interview with the rich young man. 19:16-30.
 - 4. Parable of the laborers in the vineyard. 20:1-16.
 - C. In Judea. 20:17-34.
 - 1. Christ's death and resurrection. 20:17-19.
 - 2. Ambitious request of Zebedee's sons. 20:20-28.
 - 3. Healing of two blind men. 20:29-34.
 - D. In Jerusalem. 21:1-25:46.
 - 1. Triumphal entry. 21:1-11.
 - 2. Cleansing the Temple. 21:12-17.
 - 3. Cursing of the barren fig tree. 21:18-22.
 - 4. Questioning of Jesus' authority. 21:23-22:14.
 - 5. Questioning of Jesus by various groups. 22:15-46.
 - 6. Jesus' public denunciation of the Pharisees. 23.
 - 7. Olivet Discourse. 24-25.
- IV. The Passion of Jesus Christ. 26:1-27:66.
 - A. Plot against Jesus. 26:1-16.
 - B. The final meal. 26:17-30.
 - C. Prediction of Peter's denial. 26:31-35.
 - D. Events in Gethsemane. 26:36-56.
 - E. At the Jewish trials. 26:57-27:2.
 - F. Remorse of Judas. 27:3-10.
 - G. Events at the Roman trials. 27:11-31.
 - H. The Crucifixion. 27:32-56.
 - I. Burial. 27:32-56.
- V. The resurrection of Jesus. 28:1-20.
 - A. Discovery of the empty tomb. 28:1-8.
 - B. Appearance of Jesus Christ. 28:9,10.
 - C. Report of the soldiers. 28:11-15.
 - D. The Great Commission. 28:16-20.

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