



The Gospel of Matthew - Introduction

Author and Title

Since none of the four Gospels includes the names of their authors in the original manuscripts, they are all technically anonymous. This is not surprising, since the authors likely compiled their Gospel accounts for members of their own churches, to whom they were already well known. However, historical documents from early church history provide significant insight into the Gospels' authorship.

The earliest traditions of the church are unanimous in attributing the first Gospel to Matthew, the former tax collector who followed Jesus and became one of his 12 apostles, along with his brother James son of Alphæus.

The earliest and most important of these traditions comes from the 2nd Century in the writings of Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor circa AD135, and Irenæus, bishop of Lyons in Gaul circa AD175. Because these early church leaders had either direct or indirect contact with the apostolic community, they would have been very familiar with the Gospels' origins. Moreover, no competing traditions now exist, if they ever did, attributing Matthew's Gospel to any other author. If Matthew did not write the book, it is hard to see why the false ascription would bear the name of a relatively obscure apostle, when more well-known and popular figures could have been chosen, e.g. Peter, Thomas, or James.

Matthean authorship is denied by some modern scholars, especially on the view that the author of Matthew borrowed much of his material from Mark's Gospel. Given that Matthew was an apostle while Mark was not, it is assumed that Matthew would not have needed, or indeed chosen, to depend on Mark's material. But even if Matthew did borrow from Mark's Gospel, it would only have added to Matthew's apostolic credibility since the evidence suggests that Mark himself relied extensively on the testimony of the apostle Peter. See the corresponding section in the Introduction to Mark's Gospel.

When Jesus called him, Matthew was sitting at his tax collector's booth, collecting taxes for Herod Antipas, under the authority of Rome, and this may have been along a commercial trading route about 4 miles or 6.4 km from Capernaum. However, since the narrative surrounding Matthew's call is set in Capernaum, the

tax booth may have been on the Sea of Galilee at Capernaum, since Herod also taxed fishermen.

At his calling in the first Gospel he is referred to as Matthew, while Mark and Luke's Gospels name him as 'Levi the son of Alphæus' (Mark 2:14), and simply 'Levi' in Luke 5:27. The reason for the variation in names has elicited much discussion, but most scholars believe that the tax collector had two names, Matthew Levi, which he either possessed from birth or took on following his conversion. His occupation as a tax collector implies that he had training in scribal techniques and was thus able to write, while his identity as a Galilæan Jewish Christian suggests his ability to interpret the words and actions of Jesus in light of OT messianic expectations.

Date

The precise date of the writing of Matthew's Gospel is not known. Some scholars argue for a date later than the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, since Jesus alludes to this event in Matthew 24:1-28, describing it in remarkable detail. Of course, such a conclusion is warranted only if one denies Jesus' ability to predict, or more likely know, the future. In light of Irenæus' assertion that Matthew composed his Gospel while Peter and Paul were still living (Irenæus, Against Heresies 3.1.1), it is traditionally dated to the late 50s or early 60s.

Theme

This is the story of Jesus of Nazareth, recorded by the apostle Matthew as a compelling witness that Jesus is the long-anticipated Messiah, who brought the Kingdom of God to earth and is the prophesied fulfilment of God's promise of true peace and deliverance for both Jew and Gentile.

Purpose

Matthew crafted his account to demonstrate Jesus' messianic identity, his inheritance of the Davidic kingship over Israel, and his fulfilment of the promise made to his ancestor Abraham to be a blessing to all the nations: **<<Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'>>** (Genesis 12:1-3). Thus Matthew's Gospel is an evangelistic tool aimed at his fellow Jews, persuading them to recognise Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah. At the same time, the Gospel reveals clearly to Gentiles that salvation through Jesus the Messiah is available to all nations. For Jewish Christians, Matthew's Gospel provides encouragement to remain steadfast amid opposition from their own countrymen, as well as Gentile pagans, secure in the knowledge of their citizenship in God's Kingdom.

Against the backdrop of such opposition to Jesus' message, Matthew establishes the identity of Christ's church as the true people of God, who now find their unity in service to Jesus despite previous racial, class, and religious barriers. His Gospel provides necessary instruction for all future disciples, Jew and Gentile, who form a

new community centred upon devotion and obedience to Jesus the Messiah amid significant opposition and persecution.

Many scholars have suggested that the prominent church in Antioch of Syria, whose members included both Jewish and Gentile Christians, as confirmed in Acts 11:19-26 and Acts 13:1-3, was the intended audience of Matthew's Gospel. They point to the Gospel's influence on Ignatius, an early bishop of Antioch. At the same time, Matthew's message spoke to all of the fledgling churches of his day, and the Gospel appears to have circulated rapidly and widely.

Summary of Salvation History

Jesus comes as the messianic King in the line of David to fulfil the OT, especially its promises of everlasting salvation. The ultimate fulfilment comes with his crucifixion and resurrection.

Writing Style

The primary genre of Matthew is the Gospel, and the organising framework of all four Gospels is narrative or story. However, within the narrative framework of Matthew's Gospel, a major amount of space is devoted to Jesus' discourses. Beyond that, the usual array of subtypes are found: birth stories, calling or vocation stories, miracle stories, parables, pronouncement stories, encounter stories, passion stories, and resurrection stories.

The most notable literary feature of the book's format is the alternating pattern around which the book is organised. The material in Matthew's Gospel is based on a rhythmic, back-and-forth movement between blocks of narrative material and blocks of discourse material. There are five passages of discourse, which can be easily remembered if the questions that Jesus in effect answers in each unit are listed:

1. How are citizens of the Kingdom to live (Chapters 5-7)?
2. How are travelling disciples to conduct themselves on their evangelistic journeys (Chapter 10)?
3. What parables did Jesus tell (Chapter 13)?
4. What warning did Jesus give about not hindering entrance into the Kingdom and on forgiveness (Chapters 18-20)?
5. How will human history end (Chapters 24-25)?

Matthew even used a set formula to signal these units, ending them with the statement 'when Jesus had finished [saying these things]'.

Matthew's distinguishing stylistic features include recurrent quotation and citation from the OT and an emphasis on Jesus as being kingly or royal, where even the opening genealogy places Jesus' supposed earthly father Joseph in the Davidic line!

Additionally, Matthew is fond of the term 'Son of David' as a title for Christ, using it ten times in all. He also uses statements to the effect that 'this was done that it

might be fulfilled as the prophets had said', and the formula 'the Kingdom of heaven is like'.

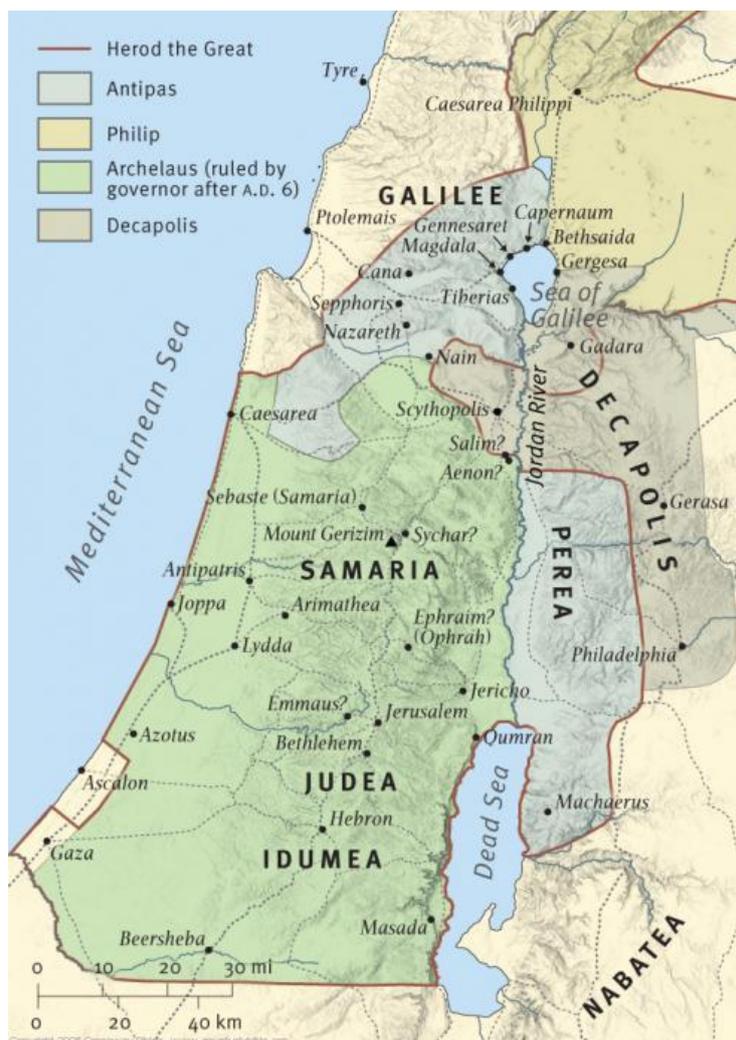
Key Themes

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Verses</u>
1 The portrait of Jesus. Jesus is the true Messiah, Immanuel, God incarnate with his people, Son of God, King of Israel, and Lord of the church.	1:1, 23; 2:2; 14:33; 16:16; 18:20; 21:5-9.
2 The bridge between the Old and New Testaments. Jesus fulfils the hopes and promises of the OT through his messianic genealogy, fulfilment of OT prophecies, and fulfilment of the OT law. These bridging qualities may have been one reason why Matthew's Gospel was chosen to begin the NT canon. Another possible reason is that many in the early church thought that Matthew was the first Gospel written, and another is that it was personally written by an apostle, in contrast to Mark and Luke.	1:1-17; 1:22-23; 2:4-5; 2:15; 2:17; 2:23; 5:17-20.
3 Salvation-historical particularism, i.e. God's salvation work within Israel; and universalism, i.e. where God extends this saving work to all the peoples of the earth through the person and work of Christ.	10:5-6; 28:19.
4 The new community of faith. The early church included both Jewish and Gentile Christians. Matthew's Gospel would have encouraged them to transcend ethnic and cultural barriers to find unity in service to Jesus the Messiah as members of his universal church.	11:28; 16:18-19; 28:19.
5 The church is built and maintained by Jesus' continuing presence. God's saving work in the present age is carried out chiefly by and through the church, which Jesus continues to build and inhabit. Anyone who responds to Jesus' call, whether Jew or Gentile, male or female, rich or poor, slave or free, is brought into the fellowship of his church to enjoy him and participate in the community of his Kingdom.	16:18; 18:15-20; 22:10; 28:20.
6 A 'great commission' for evangelism and mission. Jesus' command to 'make disciples of all nations' is found only in Matthew and has motivated countless believers to reach out to the lost with the good news of the Gospel. As Jesus made disciples in his earthly ministry, he commissions his church to follow his example.	28:19.

- 7 Jesus' five discourses recorded in Matthew can be viewed as a manual on discipleship. The presentation of five of Jesus' major discourses, addressed at least in part to his disciples, forms the most comprehensive collection of Jesus' instructional ministry found anywhere in Scripture. They paint an holistic picture of life lived in obedience to Christ, and the church has used them to instruct disciples throughout the ages. Chapters 5-7; 10; 13; 18-20; 24-25.

The Setting of Matthew

The events in the book of Matthew take place almost entirely within the vicinity of Palestine, an area extending roughly from Cæsarea Philippi in the north to Beersheba in the south. During this time it was ruled by the Roman Empire. The opening chapters describe events surrounding Jesus' birth in Judæa, where Herod the Great had been appointed king by the Romans. The closing chapters end with Jesus' death, resurrection, and commissioning statement during the rule of Pontius Pilate and the tetrarchs Antipas and Philip.



The Region of Palestine during Jesus' day

Outline

- I. **The Arrival in History of Jesus the Messiah (1:1-2:23)**
 - a. The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah (1:1-17)
 - b. The Birth of Jesus the Messiah (1:18-25)
 - c. The Visit of the Wise Men (2:1-12)
 - d. OT prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah (2:13-23)
 - i. The Escape to Egypt (2:13-15)
 - ii. The Massacre of the Infants (2:16-18)
 - iii. The Return from Egypt (2:19-23)
- II. **John the Baptist Prepares for the Appearance of the Messianic Kingdom (3:1-17)**
 - a. The Proclamation of John the Baptist (3:1-12)
 - b. The Baptism of Jesus (3:13-17)
- III. **Jesus the Messiah Begins to Advance the Messianic Kingdom (4:1-25)**
 - a. The Temptation of Jesus (4:1-11)
 - b. Jesus the Messiah begins his Galilæan ministry (4:12-25)
 - i. Jesus Begins His Ministry in Galilee (4:12-17)
 - ii. Jesus Calls the First Disciples (4:18-22)
 - iii. Jesus Ministers to Crowds of People (4:23-25)
- IV. **The Authoritative Message of the Messiah: Kingdom Life for His Disciples (5:1-7:29) (First Discourse)**
 - a. Setting, Beatitudes, and witness of the Kingdom of heaven (5:1-16)
 - i. The Beatitudes (5:1-12)
 - ii. Salt and Light (5:13-16)
 - b. The messianic Kingdom in relation to the law (5:17-48)
 - i. The Law and the Prophets (5:17-20)
 - ii. Concerning Anger (5:21-26)
 - iii. Concerning Adultery (5:27-30)
 - iv. Concerning Divorce (5:31-32)
 - v. Concerning Oaths (5:33-37)
 - vi. Concerning Retaliation (5:38-42)
 - vii. Love for Enemies (5:43-48)

- c. The development of Kingdom life in the real world (6:1-7:12)
 - i. Concerning Almsgiving (6:1-4)
 - ii. Concerning Prayer (6:5-15)
 - iii. Concerning Fasting (6:16-18)
 - iv. Concerning Treasures (6:19-21)
 - v. The Sound Eye (6:22-23)
 - vi. Serving Two Masters (6:24)
 - vii. Do Not Worry (6:25-34)
 - viii. Judging Others (7:1-5)
 - ix. Profaning the Holy (7:6)
 - x. Ask, Search, Knock (7:7-11)
 - xi. The Golden Rule (7:12)
 - d. Warning! With Jesus or against him? (7:13-29)
 - i. The Narrow Gate (7:13-14)
 - ii. A Tree and Its Fruit (7:15-20)
 - iii. Concerning Self-Deception (7:21-23)
 - iv. Hearers and Doers (7:24-29)
- V. The Authoritative Power of the Messiah: Kingdom Power Demonstrated (8:1-9:38)**
- a. Healings, discipleship, and overpowering Satan's strongholds (8:1-9:8)
 - i. Jesus Cleanses a Leper (8:1-4)
 - ii. Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)
 - iii. Jesus Heals Many at Peter's House (8:14-17)
 - iv. Would-Be Followers of Jesus (8:18-22)
 - v. Jesus Stills the Storm (8:23-27)
 - vi. Jesus Heals the Gadarene Demoniacs (8:28-9:1)
 - vii. Jesus Heals a Paralytic (9:2-8)
 - b. Unexpected discipleship, miracles, and workers (9:9-38)
 - i. The Calling of Matthew (9:9-13)
 - ii. The Question about Fasting (9:14-17)
 - iii. A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed (9:18-26)
 - iv. Jesus Heals Two Blind Men (9:27-31)
 - v. Jesus Heals One Who Was Mute (9:32-34)
 - vi. The Harvest Is Great, the Labourers Few (9:35-38)

VI. The Authoritative Mission of the Messiah's Messengers (10:1-42) (Second Discourse)

- a. Commissioning and instructions for the short-term mission to Israel (10:1-15)
 - i. The Twelve Apostles (10:1-4)
 - ii. The Mission of the Twelve (10:5-15)
- b. Coming Persecutions (10:16-25)
- c. Characteristics of missionary disciples (10:26-11:1)
 - i. Whom to Fear (10:26-33)
 - ii. Not Peace, but a Sword (10:34-39)
 - iii. Rewards (10:40-11:1)

VII. Opposition to the Messiah Emerges (11:2-12:50)

- a. Jesus, John the Baptist, and ministry in Galilee (11:2-30)
 - i. Messengers from John the Baptist (11:2-6)
 - ii. Jesus Praises John the Baptist (11:7-19)
 - iii. Woes to Unrepentant Cities (11:20-24)
 - iv. Jesus Thanks His Father (11:25-30)
- b. Confrontations with the Pharisees (12:1-45)
 - i. Plucking Grain on the Sabbath (12:1-8)
 - ii. The Man with a Withered Hand (12:9-14)
 - iii. God's Chosen Servant (12:15-21)
 - iv. Jesus and Beelzebul (12:22-32)
 - v. A Tree and Its Fruit (12:33-37)
 - vi. The Sign of Jonah (12:38-42)
 - vii. The Return of the Unclean Spirit (12:43-45)
- c. The True Kindred of Jesus (12:46-50)

VIII. Mysteries of the Messianic Kingdom Revealed in Parables (13:1-53) (Third Discourse)

- a. The opening of the Parabolic Discourse (13:1-23)
 - i. The Parable of the Sower (13:1-9)
 - ii. The Purpose of the Parables (13:10-17)
 - iii. The Parable of the Sower Explained (13:18-23)

- b. Further parables told to the crowds (13:24-35)
 - i. The Parable of Weeds among the Wheat (13:24-30)
 - ii. The Parable of the Mustard Seed (13:31-32)
 - iii. The Parable of the Yeast (13:33)
 - iv. The Use of Parables (13:34-35)
- c. Explanations and parables told to the disciples (13:36-53)
 - i. Jesus Explains the Parable of the Weeds (13:36-43)
 - ii. Three Parables (13:44-50)
 - iii. Treasures New and Old (13:51-53)

IX. The Identity of the Messiah Revealed (13:54-16:20)

- a. Prophet(s) without honour (13:54-14:12)
 - i. The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth (13:54-58)
 - ii. The Death of John the Baptist (14:1-12)
- b. Feeding the Five Thousand (14:13-21)
- c. The Son of God worshiped (14:22-36)
 - i. Jesus Walks on the Water (14:22-33)
 - ii. Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret (14:34-36)
- d. Teacher of the Word of God and compassionate healer (15:1-39)
 - i. The Tradition of the Elders (15:1-9)
 - ii. Things That Defile (15:10-20)
 - iii. The Canaanite Woman's Faith (15:21-28)
 - iv. Jesus Cures Many People (15:29-31)
 - v. Feeding the Four Thousand (15:32-39)
- e. Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God (16:1-20)
 - i. The Demand for a Sign (16:1-4)
 - ii. The Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:5-12)
 - iii. Peter's Declaration about Jesus (16:13-20)

X. The Suffering of the Messiah Revealed (16:21-17:27)

- a. The suffering sacrifice (16:21-28)
 - i. Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection (16:21-23)
 - ii. The Cross and Self-Denial (16:24-28)
- b. The Transfiguration (17:1-13)

- c. Sons of the Kingdom (17:14-27)
 - i. Jesus Cures a Boy with a Demon (17:14-21)
 - ii. Jesus Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection (17:22-23)
 - iii. Jesus and the Temple Tax (17:24-27)

XI. The Community of the Messiah Revealed (18:1-20:34) (Fourth Discourse)

- a. Characteristics of life in the Kingdom community (18:1-35)
 - i. True Greatness (18:1-5)
 - ii. Temptations to Sin (18:6-9)
 - iii. The Parable of the Lost Sheep (18:10-14)
 - iv. Reproving Another Who Sins (18:15-20)
 - v. Forgiveness (18:21-22)
 - vi. The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (18:23-35)
- b. Valuing the Kingdom community (19:1-20:34)
 - i. Teaching about Divorce (19:1-12)
 - ii. Jesus Blesses Little Children (19:13-15)
 - iii. The Rich Young Man (19:16-30)
 - iv. The Labourers in the Vineyard (20:1-16)
 - v. A Third Time Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection (20:17-19)
 - vi. The Request of the Mother of James and John (20:20-28)
 - vii. Jesus Heals Two Blind Men (20:29-34)

XII. The Messiah Asserts His Authority over Jerusalem (21:1-23:39)

- a. Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (21:1-11)
- b. Jesus Cleanses the Temple (21:12-17)
- c. Jesus Curses the Fig Tree (21:18-22)
- d. Controversies in the temple court over Jesus' authority (21:23-22:46)
 - i. The Authority of Jesus Questioned (21:23-27)
 - ii. The Parable of the Two Sons (21:28-32)
 - iii. The Parable of the Wicked Tenants (21:33-46)
 - iv. The Parable of the Wedding Banquet (22:1-14)
 - v. The Question about Paying Taxes (22:15-22)
 - vi. The Question about the Resurrection (22:23-33)
 - vii. The Greatest Commandment (22:34-40)
 - viii. The Question about David's Son (22:41-46)

- e. Jesus Denounces Scribes and Pharisees (23:1-36)
 - i. Warnings against the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (23:1-12)
 - ii. Woes of judgment against the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (23:13-36)
- f. The Lament over Jerusalem (23:37-39)

XIII. The Delay, Return, and Judgment of Messiah (24:1-25:46) (Fifth [Olivet] Discourse)

- a. The beginning of birth pains (24:1-14)
 - i. The Destruction of the Temple Foretold (24:1-2)
 - ii. Signs of the End of the Age (24:3-8)
 - iii. Persecutions Foretold (24:9-14)
- b. The Great Tribulation and the coming of the Son of Man (24:15-31)
 - i. The Desolating Sacrilege (24:15-28)
 - ii. The Coming of the Son of Man (24:29-31)
- c. The nearness and time of Jesus' coming (24:32-44)
 - i. The Lesson of the Fig Tree (24:32-35)
 - ii. The Necessity for Watchfulness (24:36-44)
- d. Parabolic exhortations to watch and be prepared for the coming of the Son of Man (24:45-25:30)
 - i. The Faithful or the Unfaithful Slave (24:45-51)
 - ii. The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids (25:1-13)
 - iii. The Parable of the Talents (25:14-30)
- e. The Judgement of the Nations (25:31-46)

XIV. The Crucified Messiah (26:1-27:66)

- a. Plot, anointing, and betrayal to the religious leaders (26:1-16)
 - i. The Plot to Kill Jesus (26:1-5)
 - ii. The Anointing at Bethany (26:6-13)
 - iii. Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus (26:14-16)
- b. The Passover and the Lord's Supper (26:17-35)
 - i. The Passover with the Disciples (26:17-25)
 - ii. The Institution of the Lord's Supper (26:26-30)
 - iii. Peter's Denial Foretold (26:31-35)
- c. Jesus Prays in Gethsemane (26:36-46)
- d. The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus (26:47-56)

- e. The Jewish trial of Jesus (26:57-27:10)
 - i. Jesus before the High Priest (26:57-68)
 - ii. Peter's Denial of Jesus (26:69-75)
 - iii. Jesus Brought before Pilate (27:1-2)
 - iv. The Suicide of Judas (27:3-10)
 - f. The Roman trial of Jesus (27:11-26)
 - i. Pilate Questions Jesus (27:11-14)
 - ii. Barabbas or Jesus? (27:15-23)
 - iii. Pilate Hands Jesus over to Be Crucified (27:24-26)
 - g. Jesus the Messiah crucified (27:27-44)
 - i. The Soldiers Mock Jesus (27:27-31)
 - ii. The Crucifixion of Jesus (27:32-44)
 - h. The Death of Jesus (27:45-56)
 - i. The Burial of Jesus (27:57-61)
 - j. The Guard at the Tomb (27:62-66)
- XV. The Resurrection and Commission of the Messiah (28:1-20)**
- a. The Resurrection of Jesus (28:1-10)
 - b. The Report of the Guard (28:11-15)
 - c. The Commissioning of the Disciples (28:16-20)