

A Survey of the Gospel of Matthew

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Author:

The author does not identify himself, but the apostle Matthew, the son of Alphaeus (also called Levi) is universally accepted as writer of this gospel (**Matthew 9:9-13, 10:2-4, Mark 2:14, Luke 5:27-28**). History tells us that the early church consistently agreed to this as a fact and traditions to the contrary have not emerged. In fact, by the middle of the second century Matthew was already being quoted by the church fathers.

The name Matthew means "gift of the Lord." Matthew's name appears seventh in two lists of apostles (**Mark 3:18, Luke 6:15**), and eighth in two others (**Matthew 10:3, Acts 1:13**). The last time we hear about Matthew in the Bible is in **Acts 1:13** when he is listed among those in the upper room waiting for the Holy Spirit to come upon them with power. Matthew's life from that point on is surrounded by tradition. Fox's Book of Martyrs says this of Matthew: "Whose occupation was that of a toll-gatherer, was born at Nazareth. He wrote his gospel in Hebrew, which was afterwards translated into Greek by James the Less. The scene of his labors was Parthia, and Ethiopia, in which latter country he suffered martyrdom, being slain with a halberd (*combination of a spear and a battle axe – long handle with an axe on the end – not always used for a beheading*) in the city of Nadabah, A.D. 60."

Matthew's profession was a tax collector in Capernaum for the Roman government before Jesus called him into the ministry. As a publican he was despised by his Jewish countrymen, maybe even among the disciples. Jesus called him from his tax booth, and his swift response tells us that he had been stirred by Jesus' public preaching ministry. Immediately after his calling into Jesus' leadership team, he held a large party for Jesus in his home. This was probably so that his associates could meet Jesus and learn from Him. Tax collectors are lumped together with harlots (**Matthew 21:31**), Gentiles (**Matthew 18:17**), and other sinners (**Matthew 9:10**). They were as offensive to Jews for their economic and social practices as lepers were for their uncleanness, both were excluded from the people of God.

Date:

The Gospels are difficult to date, but the consensus is that it was written between 40-140 AD. It was probably written around 60 AD, no later than 70 AD, in my opinion. Consider the expressions of **Matthew 27:8, Matthew 28:15** indicating that an extensive period of time has passed since Jesus' death, but prior to the destruction of Jerusalem (**Matthew 24-25**).

Theme:

The theme of Matthew is that Jesus is the King of Kings (**Matthew 1:23, 2:2-6, 3:17, 4:15-17, 21:5-9, 22:44-45, 26:64, 27:11-37**). The phrase "*kingdom of heaven*" appears 32 times in this book but nowhere else in the New Testament. Matthew also uses more Old Testament references than any other book, especially making references to the prophecies of the Messiah (**Matthew 12:39-40, 13:13-35, 17:5-13**). Matthew documents Jesus' genealogy, baptism, messages, miracles, death, burial, and resurrection. All point to the same conclusion: Christ is King! Matthew also likes to refer to Jesus as the Son of Man and Son of David.

Audience:

The early church depended upon the preaching and teaching of the good news (**Acts 4:8-12**). Christians would meet often to hear the stories of Jesus told and longed to hear from those who could tell first-hand experiences. Therefore, the gospels became the source for these eyewitnesses (all will be covered in this series). He is the only gospel writer to mention the church (**Matthew 16:18, 18:17**). Matthew may have also used Mark's gospel as a source.

It is assumed that Matthew wrote this gospel specifically for the Greek speaking Jews in Palestine or Syrian Antioch. Due to the affluence and influence of that congregation (see the book of Acts) the book was copied and accepted quickly. In his Ecclesiastical History (323 AD), Eusebius quoted Papias (140 AD) who said that Matthew was also written in Aramaic (no Aramaic form has been found). However, it is possible that Matthew may have published an abbreviated version of Jesus' sayings in Aramaic before writing his gospel in Greek for a much larger audience.

Key Verses:

Matthew 5-7, 9:37-38, 10:32-33, 11:25-30, 16:13-19, 16:24-28, 18:15-20, 20:28, 21:1-11, 22:36-40, 24-25, 26:17-46, 27:37, 28:18-20

Outline:

Presentation of the King (1:1-4:11)

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

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

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

Power of the King (8:1-11:1)

- I. The Demonstration of Power (8:1-9:34)
- II. The Delegation of Power (9:35-11:1)

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

- I. The Commencement of Rejection (11:2-30)
- II. The Communal Rejection (12:1-50)
- III. The Consequences of Rejection (13:1-53)
- IV. The Continual Rejection (13:54-16:12)

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

- I. The Revelation of Jesus (16:13-17:13)
- II. The Instruction of Jesus (17:14-20:28)

Persecution of the King (20:29-27:66)

- I. The Blind Reach Out to the King (20:29-34)
- II. The Public Recognizes the King (21:1-17)
- III. The Nation Respects the King (21:18-22:46)
- IV. The King Rejects the Nation (23:1-39)
- V. The King Reveals The Future (24:1-25:46)
- VI. The Nation Rejects the King (26:1-27:66)

Proof of the King (28:1-20)

- I. Completion (28:1-8)
Jesus is Raised From the Dead
- II. Communication (28:9-10)
Jesus Appeared to the Women
- III. Corruption (28:11-15)
The Soldiers Are Bribed
- IV. Consecration (28:16-17)
Jesus Appears to the Disciples
- V. Commission (28:18-20)
Jesus Gives The Great Commission