

The Church of the Servant King

Thursday Night Bible Study

The Gospel of Matthew (Thurs_Matthew_Introduction)

INTRODUCTION¹

Author: The author is not named in the Gospel, but there are certain clues that all but name Matthew. For instance:

- External evidence – many early church fathers cited Matthew as the author in spite of the fact that he was not one of the more prominent apostles.
- Internal evidence:
 - There are more references to coins or money in this Gospel than in any of the other Gospels. Matthew was a tax collector. There are three terms for coins that are found nowhere else in the New Testament, i.e. the two drachma tax (17:24); a four drachma coin (17:27); and talents (18:24).
 - Matthew's hometown was Capernaum. When Capernaum is mentioned in this Gospel, it is given special attention with some type of description attached to it (4:13; 11:23).
 - The Gospel of Matthew omits the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector that is recorded in Luke 18:9-14.
 - The Gospel of Matthew omits the story of Zacchaeus, a tax collector who restored fourfold what he had stolen (Luke 19:1-10).
 - The writer of the Gospel of Matthew refers to himself in less flattering ways than do others. For instance, Matthew refers to himself throughout the Gospel as "Matthew the tax collector." But Mark and Luke do not use such contemptuous language when describing Matthew. (A tax collector was not a highly esteemed occupation, especially when the tax collector was a Jew as was the case with Matthew). Also, Matthew invited his friends to what he described as a "dinner" (9:9-10); whereas Luke called the dinner "a great banquet" (Luke 5:29).

Date of Writing: While the date of writing is not known, several clues give us an idea of a range of dates that might be possible. The Gospel of Matthew was written before A.D. 70 since Matthew made no reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and he referred to it as the "holy city" in such a way as to imply that it was still in existence (4:5; 27:53).

In addition, Matthew includes references to certain customs and stories continuing "to this day" (27:7-8; 28:15) so as to imply that some time had passed since the Crucifixion of Jesus.

Therefore, a range of dates from A.D. 50-60 is very likely. (See diagram in **APPENDIX**).

Recipients: All the evidence indicates that Matthew was writing to Jews in particular. Some of this evidence includes the following:

- No other Gospel places such great stress upon the restoration of the glories of David's kingdom.

¹ See Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "Matthew" in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, general editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary – New Testament* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, a Division of Scripture Press Publications, 1983), 15-17 for more extensive treatment of this subject from which I summarized this introductory information.

- He uses the Jewish royal title “Son of David” nine times in his Gospel.
- He calls Jerusalem “the holy city” (4:5; 27:53) and the “city of the great King” (5:35) which are both uniquely Jewish ways of referring to it.
- The phrase “kingdom of heaven” appears 33 times and the phrase “kingdom of God” appears 4 times.
- He has more quotations from or allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures than any other New Testament author. There are approximately 50 direct citations from and about 75 allusions to Hebrew Scripture. On 13 of these occasions, Matthew indicates that Jesus’ actions were a direct fulfillment of Hebrew prophecies.
- Matthew discusses the law, ceremonial cleansing, the Sabbath, the temple, David, the Messiah, the fulfillment of Hebrew prophecies, Moses – all from a Jewish point of view. There is no explanation of these references in most all cases. This indicates that Matthew expected his readers to already be familiar with such things.

However, this doesn’t mean that Matthew restricts his Gospel to Jews. Similar to the manner in which believing Gentiles in the Millennial kingdom will pay homage to Jesus ruling from the throne of David, Matthew records the coming of the Magi (non-Jews) to worship the infant Jesus. He mentions the centurion with his great faith (8:5-13), and the Canaanite woman who had greater faith than Christ had seen in all of Israel (15:22-28). Matthew also gives a full statement of the Great Commission (28:18-20).

Major Theme: To prove to Jewish readers that Jesus is their Messiah and the promised King.

- The title “Son of David” is used extensively by Matthew (1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9, 15; 22:41-42)

41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: 42 "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They said to Him, "The son of David." (Matt 22:41-42)

- Genealogy in Chapter 1 emphasizes Jesus’ Davidic lineage and His legal claim to the throne
- The magi, looking for a king, worship Him
- John the Baptist declares, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” (3:1)
- The teachings of Jesus regarding kingdom law or principles are perhaps recorded to their fullest extent by Matthew versus the other Gospel writers (e.g. chapters 5-7, 13)
- The triumphal entry of Christ where the crowds cried “Hosanna to the Son of David!” (21:9)
- Certain prophecies of the Messiah are noted as being “fulfilled” in Christ’s life and ministry (Matthew includes nine occasions where prophetic Scripture is “fulfilled – 1:22, 23; 2:15; 2:17, 18; 2:23; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17-21; 13:35; 27:9, 10).

22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." (Matt 1:22-23)

15 He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON." (Matt 2:15)

17 Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: 18

"A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, WEeping AND GREAT MOURNING RACHEL WEeping FOR HER CHILDREN; AND SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED, BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE." (Matt 2:17-18)

23 And came and lived in a city called Nazareth. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: "He shall be called a Nazarene." (Matt 2:23)

14 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: 15 "THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI, BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, GALILEE OF THE GENTILES-- 16 "THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT, AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH, UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED." (Matt 4:14-16)

17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES." (Matt 8:17)

17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

18 "BEHOLD, MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN;
MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL IS WELL-PLEASED;
I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM,
AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES.

19 "HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT;
NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS.

20 "A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF,
AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT,
UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY.

21 "AND IN HIS NAME THE GENTILES WILL HOPE." (Matt 12:17-21)

35 This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

"I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES;
I WILL UTTER THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF
THE WORLD." (Matt 13:35)

9 Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "AND THEY TOOK THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER, THE PRICE OF THE ONE WHOSE PRICE HAD BEEN SET by the sons of Israel; 10 AND THEY GAVE THEM FOR THE POTTER'S FIELD, AS THE LORD DIRECTED ME." (Matt 27:9-10)

Secondary Theme: To explain God's kingdom program to his Jewish readership and explain how it relates now to Israel and to the Gentiles.

- Distinguishing characteristics of the spiritual life of the believer in the Kingdom (chapters 5-7)
- Parables relating to the Kingdom in response to opposition (chapter 13)
- The Kingdom is presented as at hand to the Jews and rejected (e.g. 11:16-24; 12:25-30; 21:28-22:46)
- Promises are made relative to the Kingdom that will be fulfilled by Christ at His Second Coming – i.e. 2nd Advent (19:28; 20:20-23; 23:39; 24:29-31; 25:31-46)

Outline

- The Birth and Preparation of the King (1:1-4:11)
- The Proclamation of the King's Principles for the Kingdom (4:12-7:29)
- The Manifestation of the King (8:1-11:1)
- Opposition to the King (11:2-13:53)
- The King's Responds to Opposition (13:54-16:12)
- Jesus Teaches and Prepares His Disciples for Events Proximate to the Kingdom's Coming (16:13-25:46)
- Crucifixion and Resurrection (26:1-28:20)

APPENDIX A – CHRONOLOGY OF THE WRITING OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

