

### NAME

Technically the book is anonymous but attributed to Matthew, the former tax collector who followed Jesus and became one of His 12 disciples.

Matthew is translated from the Hebrew name, Matityahu, which means "gift of God". His English name, Matthew, therefore does not translate directly to his Hebrew name, Matisyahu. This is not uncommon amongst people who are Jewish.

### AUTHOR

Matthew's authorship has been accepted since the early days of the church.

The book was attributed to Matthew by Papias (bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor [c. 135 A.D.] who was a student of the apostle John and Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in Gaul (c. 175 A.C.).

*"Matthew therefore composed the oracles in the Hebrew language [or, "in a Hebrew style"] and each interpreted them as he was able" (Papias of Hierapolis, Eusebius, Church History 3.39.15-16)*

No competing traditions exist (if they ever did) attributing Matthew's Gospel to any other author. However, 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 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.

Robert Gromaki: *"Who ever heard of an internal revenue agent writing a best seller? That is exactly what happened in the composition of this first Gospel. From human standards, Matthew would have been considered an unlikely candidate for the apostolic band, much less a biographer of Christ's life. But God's ways are not man's ways."*

When Jesus called him, Matthew was sitting in the tax collector's booth (9:9), collecting taxes for Herod Antipas. This may have been on the commercial trading route about 4 miles from Capernaum. However, since the narrative surrounding Matthew's call is set in Capernaum (9:1,7,10; cf. 4:13), the tax booth may have been on the Sea of Galilee at Capernaum. As a tax collector Matthew would have acquired some financial means by means which probably did not endear him to the Jewish populace and may have even placed himself in the position of a suspected traitor. The law of Moses strictly prohibited charging fellow Jews any interest at all (Leviticus 25:36; Deuteronomy 23:19,20). Thus, the tax collectors ordinarily were viewed as people who did not care about the law of Moses and were generally despised.

Matthew's occupation implies that he had training in scribal techniques (record keeping) and was thus able to write. He is known by the name "Matthew" (9:9), while Mark's and Luke's Gospels describe him as "Levi the son of Alphaeus" (Mark 2:14) and "Levi" (Luke 5:27). Most scholars believe that he had two names, Matthew Levi, which he either possessed from birth or took on following his conversion. Matthew's background seems to have prepared him to interpret the words and actions of Jesus in light of Old Testament messianic expectations.

Matthew is mentioned in the four lists of the Twelve: Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13. The only other mention is his call to follow Jesus (Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:14-17; Luke 5:27-32).

### DATE

Matthew is not the first book of the New Testament (i.e. chronological) yet comes first in canonical order for theological reasons. It bridges the gap between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Some scholars argue for a date later than the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., since Jesus alludes to this event in 24:1-28. Of course, such a conclusion is warranted only if one denies Jesus' ability to predict the future. Those who argue that Matthew used Mark as a source usually date Matthew after 70 A.D. Those who claim it is independent tend to date it earlier. In light of Irenaeus' assertion (c. 175 A.D.) that Matthew composed his Gospel while Peter and Paul were still living (Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.1.1), it is traditionally dated to the late 50's or early 60's.

Halley (page 530):

It is thought that he wrote his Gospel originally in Hebrew and that some years later, probably around 60 A.D., he issued a more complete edition in Greek.

The New Living Translation - Introduction to Matthew (page 1674):

Many think that Matthew was first written in Antioch in Syria, which is more probable than any other proposed setting.

### THEME

Halley (page 44): "*Jesus the Messiah*"

Matthew was written to show how Jesus of Nazareth enlarged and expanded the revelation which had begun in the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. Matthew's Gospel is distinctive in its presentation of Jesus as Messiah and Teacher, its emphasis on the Kingdom of Heaven, its strong call to discipleship, its constant pattern of Old Testament fulfillment, its incisive criticism of the Jewish religious leaders, and its universal outlook that includes Gentiles in the kingdom.

Jewish emphasis: Heavy use of Jewish customs, practices, terms with no explanation. 53 quotes from the Old Testament / 73 allusions. 13 references to Jesus as King. 8 references to Jesus as the Son of David. 32 references to the Kingdom of Heaven. 5 References to the Kingdom of God. (Halley has 43 references to "kingdom" of "kingdom of heaven"). Emphasis on David (below)

Topical emphasis: arranged topically not chronologically. This is not just a biography. Trying to show the Jewish reader that Jesus is the Messiah.

The Gospel of Matthew is arranged in five major sections. Each of these sections contains a major narrative and a teaching of Jesus. In each of His teachings or "discourses" Jesus presents crucial information about His ministry and what it means to live in a relationship with God. The five major discourses of Jesus in Matthew are:

- 5:1-7:29 - The Sermon on the Mount - emphasis on God's Kingdom coming for us
- 10:1-11:1 - Mission and Martyrdom - emphasis on Apostleship
- 13:1-53 - The Parables of the Kingdom - emphasis on what the Kingdom of Heaven is like
- 18:1-19:2 - Life Under Kingdom Authority - emphasis on the living together in the Kingdom
- 24:1-25:46 - The Olivet Discourse - emphasis on eschatology

Understanding the main emphasis of each section helps us to concentrate on what Jesus is teaching His followers.

Pedagogical emphasis: Teaching Gospel focused on what Jesus said more than what He did (i.e. The Sermon on the Mount 5,6,7; The Commissioning of the Twelve 10; Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven 13; Sermon on the meaning of the greatness of the kingdom 18; Olivet discourse 24,25)

Regal emphasis: Genealogy of David, visit of wisemen worship of King Jesus. Triumphant entry to Jerusalem *"Behold thy King commeth."* Son of man / throne of His glory King of the Jews on the cross.

Key Word (Nelson's): Jesus The King - By quoting repeatedly from the Old Testament, Matthew validates Christ's claim that He is, in fact, the prophesied Messiah (the Anointed One) of Israel.

Key Verses (Nelson's):

*"Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'" (Matthew 16:16-19)*

*"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority is heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18-20)*

Key Chapter (Nelson's): 12 - The turning point of Matthew comes in the twelfth chapter when the Pharisees, acting as the leadership of the nation of Israel, formally reject Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Christ's ministry changes immediately with His new teaching of parables, increased attention given to His disciples, and His repeated statement that His death is now near.

Outline (Adapted from the Expositor's Bible Commentary):

- I. Prologue: The Origin and Birth of Jesus the Christ 1:1-2:23
- II. The Gospel of the Kingdom 3:1-7:29
  - A. Narrative 3:1-4:25  
Foundational steps, early Galilean ministry
  - B. First Discourse: The Sermon on the Mount - God's Kingdom coming for us 5:1-7:29
- III. The Kingdom Extended Under Jesus' Authority 8:1-11:1
  - A. Narrative 8:1-10:4  
Healing miracles, the cost of following Jesus, calming a storm, further demonstrations of Jesus authority, calling Matthew, eating with sinners, fasting and the dawning of messianic joy, a resurrection and more healings, spreading the news of the kingdom
  - B. Second Discourse: Mission and Martyrdom - Apostleship 10:5-11:1
- IV. Teaching and Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom: Rising Opposition 11:2-13:53
  - A. Narrative 11:2-12:50  
Jesus and John the Baptist, the condemned and the accepted, Sabbath conflicts, Jesus as the prophesied Servant, Confrontation with the Pharisees, doing the Father's will
  - B. Third Discourse: The Parables of the Kingdom - what the Kingdom of Heaven is like 13:1-53

- V. The Glory and the Shadow: Progressive Polarization 13:54-19:2
  - A. Narrative 13:54-17:27  
Rejected at Nazareth, Herod and Jesus, the feeding of the five thousand, the walk on the water, transitional summary of constant and unavoidable ministry, Jesus and the tradition of the elders, more healings, the feeding of the four thousand, another demand for a sign, the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees, Peter's confession, the way of discipleship, the Transfiguration, the healing of the epileptic boy, the second major passion prediction, the temple tax
  - B. Fourth Discourse: Life Under Kingdom Authority - living together in the Kingdom 18:1-19:2
- VI. Opposition and Eschatology: The Triumph of Grace 19:3-26:5
  - A. Narrative 19:3-23:39  
Marriage and divorce, blessing little children, wealth and the kingdom, the parable of the workers, third major passion prediction, suffering and service, healing two blind men, opening events of Passion Week
  - B. Fifth Major Discourse: The Olivet Discourse - eschatology 24:1-25:46
- VII. The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus 26:6-28:20
  - A. The Passion 26:6-27:66
  - B. The Resurrection 28:1-7
  - C. The Risen Messiah and His Disciples 28:16-20

### **RECIPIENTS**

Jews in Syria (and Palestine?)

### **CONTRIBUTION TO CANON**

Halley (page 529):

The special emphasis of Matthew is that Jesus is the Messiah foretold by the Old Testament prophets. He quotes and refers to the Old Testament more often than any other New Testament author and seems to have had particularly Jewish readers in mind.

Ties Old Testament prophecy with New Testament fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah

Emphasis on Kingdom of God and our part in it (God's new community). Note that the word "church" (ἐκκλησία) occurs twice in Matthew (16:18; 18:17). It appears in no other Gospel.

**RESOURCES**

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Robert H. Gundry, Ph.D., *A Survey Of The New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1970

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

*Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts*, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Frank E. Gaebelin, General Editor, Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoizian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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