

## The Gospel according to Matthew: An Introduction

### Introduction

1. The Gospel of Matthew: “the most important book ever written” (Ernst Renan)
2. The “First Gospel”: always listed first among the NT books
3. The “Favorite” Gospel of the Early Church:

“Matthew’s Gospel was more widely used and more influential in the early Church than any of the other Gospels” (Graham Stanton, *The Interpretation of Matthew*, 1)

4. Questions: Why Was Matthew’s Gospel so special? Why the “First Gospel”?

### The Gospel of Matthew in the Early Church

1. The First Gospel to be Written:
  - a. Although debated by modern scholars
  - b. Ancient Christians believed that Matthew had been written first

*St. Irenaeus: Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia. (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.1)*

2. An Apostolic Gospel:
  - a. Only 2 of 4 Gospels attributed to Apostles of Jesus (Matt and John)

*Eusebius: Nevertheless, of all the disciples of the lord, only Matthew and John have left us written memorials and they, tradition says, were led to write only under the pressure of necessity. For Matthew, who had at first preached to the Hebrews, when he was about to go to other peoples, committed his Gospel to writing in his native tongue, and thus compensated those whom he was obliged to leave for the loss of his presence. (Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.24.5-6)*

- c. Title: All manuscripts Gospel to “Matthew” (Papyrus 4, 62, Codex S.)
- d. Matthew (Greek matthias; Hebrew mattanyah, “gift of the LORD”)
- e. One of the Twelve (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13)
- f. Former Tax-Collector; also called Levi (cf. Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27-28)

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. (Matthew 9:9)

3. Most Frequently Quoted Gospel:
  - a. Apostolic Fathers (*1 Clement*, *Epistle of Barnabas*, *Didache*)
  - b. "As it is written" = equal with Old Testament Scripture
4. The Genre of Matthew: ancient "biography" (Greek *bios*) of Jesus
  - a. Justin Martyr: "memoirs of the apostles" (*1 Apology* 66:3; 67:3, etc.)
  - b. Modern Scholars: Gospels are *bioi* (e.g., Richard Burridge)

### **Contemporary New Testament Scholars<sup>1</sup>**

1. Minority Opinion: written by apostle Matthew (S. Hahn; R. T. France, J. Wenham)
  - a. Jewish Christian
  - b. Logical Choice from Twelve Disciples is Tax-Collector/Scribe
2. Majority Opinion: written by unknown Jewish-Christian (U. Luz, D. C. Allison)
  - a. Gospel is originally 'anonymous'; only later attributed to the apostle Matthew
  - b. Two Source Hypothesis: Matthew copied from Mark
  - c. Eyewitness (Matthew) wouldn't have used non-eyewitness (Mark) as a source

### **The Most Jewish Gospel**

1. Written for Jewish Christians
2. Presupposes Familiarity with Jewish Scriptures (=Old Testament)
  - a. Direct OT Quotations: 44 Times
  - b. Compare Mark (18 times), Luke (19 times), John (12 Times)
3. Presupposes Familiarity with Jewish Traditions
  - a. Frequent References to "Scribes and Pharisees"
  - b. "Tradition of the Elders": washing hands (Matt 15:1-5; cf. Mark 7:1-4)
4. Ancient Jewish Terminology:
  - a. *Qorban* meaning "given to God" (Matt 27:6; cf. Mark 7:11)
  - b. *Paraskeuē* = "Sabbath"; no explanation (Matt 27:62; cf. Mark 15:42)
  - c. "Kingdom of Heaven": only found in Matthew (cf. later Rabbis)
5. Ancient Jewish Hopes for the Messiah: Typology
  - a. Jesus the New David/Messiah (Greek *Christos*)
  - b. Jesus the New Moses
  - d. Jesus the New Isaac
  - e. Jesus the New Solomon

### **The Contents of Matthew: Year A**

1. Infancy Narrative (Matt 1-2): Star, the Magi, Infants' Massacre, Flight to Egypt

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<sup>1</sup> See Brant Pitre, *The Case for Jesus* (New York: Image, 2016). See also Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

2. Five Speeches of Jesus
  - a. The Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7)
  - b. The Mission Discourse (Matt 10)
  - c. The Parables Discourse (Matt 13)
  - d. Discourse on the Church (Matt 18)
  - d. The Olivet Discourse (Matt 24-25)
3. The Passion Narrative (Matt 26-27)
- 4 The Resurrection (Matt 28)