



Lecture #4, Part 1

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW

Theme:

Since none of the gospel writers identify themselves in their writings, it is necessary to rely on the early church fathers as well as on evidence that is within the gospels themselves.

I. OPENING STATEMENT

- A. Until the time of the Renaissance/Reformation the Gospel of Matthew was thought to have been the first Gospel written (and still is by the Roman Catholic Church).
- B. It was the most copied, most quoted, most used gospel in catechism and in the early liturgy by the church for the first two centuries.
- C. William Barclay in *The First Three Gospels*, p. 19, said “When we turn to Matthew, we turn to the book which may well be called the most important single document of the Christian faith, for in it we have the fullest and the most systematic account of the life and the teachings of Jesus.”

This is because it developed the teachings of Jesus in a thematic way. It was used to teach new converts (both Jew and Gentile) about the life and message of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ.

- D. It forms a logical bridge between the Old and New Covenants, between Jewish believers and Gentile believers. It used the Old Testament in a promise/fulfillment format as did the early sermons of Acts which are called the *kerygma*. The Old Testament is quoted over fifty times and alluded to many more. Also, many of the titles and analogies used of YHWH are applied to Jesus.
- E. Therefore, the purposes of The Gospel According to Matthew were evangelism and discipleship, the twin aspects of the Great Commission ([Matthew 28:19–20](#)).
 - 1. They were to help convert Jews by informing them of Jesus’ life and teachings,
 - 2. They were to disciple both believing Jews and Gentiles into how they should live as Christians.



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II. AUTHORSHIP

- A. Although the earliest copies of the **Greek NT (A.D. 200–400)** have the designation “according to Matthew,” the book itself is anonymous.
- B. The uniform tradition of the early church is that Matthew (also known as **Levi**, cf. [Mark 2:14](#); [Luke 5:27, 29](#)), tax-collector (cf. [Matthew 9:9](#); [Matthew 10:3](#)) and disciple of Jesus, wrote the Gospel.
- C. **Matthew, Mark and Luke** are strikingly similar
 1. they often agree in form on OT quotes that are not found in the Masoretic text nor the Septuagint,
 2. they often quote Jesus in unusual grammatical constructions, even using rare Greek words,
 3. they often use phrases and even sentences of exactly the same Greek words,
 4. obviously literary borrowing has occurred.
- D. Several theories have been advanced concerning the relationship between **Matthew, Mark and Luke (the Synoptic Gospels)**
 1. The uniform tradition of the early church is that Matthew (Levi), the tax-collector and disciple of Jesus, wrote the Gospel. The Apostle Matthew was unanimously affirmed to be the author until the Renaissance/Reformation.
 2. Around the year of **1776 A. E. Lessing** (and later Gieseler in 1818), theorized an oral stage in the development of the Synoptic (“to see together”) Gospels. He asserted that they were all dependent on earlier oral traditions which the writers modified for their own target audiences.
 - a. Matthew: Jews
 - b. Mark: Romans
 - c. Luke: Gentiles

Each was related to a separate geographical center of Christianity.

 - a. Matthew: Antioch, Syria
 - b. Mark: Rome, Italy
 - c. Luke: Caesarea by the Sea, Palestine
 - d. John: Ephesus, Asia Minor
 3. In the early nineteenth century **J. J. Griesbach** theorized that Matthew and Luke wrote separate accounts of Jesus’ life, completely independent of each other. Mark wrote a brief Gospel trying to mediate between these other two accounts.



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4. In the early twentieth century **H. J. Holtzmann** theorized that Mark was the first written Gospel and that both Matthew and Luke used his Gospel structure plus a separation document containing the sayings of Jesus called Q (German *quelle* or “source”). This was labeled the “two source” theory (also endorsed by **Fredrick Schleiermacher in 1832**).