

Gospel According to Matthew

Authorship: Matthew, a Jewish tax collector who became a disciple of Jesus.

Date: Late 70's to 90's AD

Unique Features:

1) **Abundance of OT Quotations.** Almost everything that Jesus does and says, Matthew will punctuated it by saying, Now Jesus did this or said this in fulfillment of the prophet Jeremiah said, or what the prophet Isaiah said. Then he will give a quotation, usually a fairly loose quotation. He does this at almost every point along the way. This feature is present in the other Gospels but it is not as pronounced. It is almost as if Matthew as he tells his story is very careful to tie the story to the OT prophets and to the OT Law. That tells us something about Matthew's readers, they are Jewish. Mark doesn't do that. As a matter of fact, Mark even explains Jewish customs which probably tells us that his readers were Gentiles. It would not do any good for Gentiles to come up with elaborate quotations from the OT because the OT was not their book. It wasn't something that they would be familiar with. But it appears that Matthew's Gospel is addressed to people with a Jewish background or a Jewish persuasion. People who have some knowledge and appreciation of the OT. Otherwise this feature makes no sense. Its about the only way this feature makes any sense. So, this unique feature seems to provide a window through which we can begin to see Matthew's readers. They are people who are in one way or another connected to Judaism.

2) **Emphasizes the Teachings of Jesus.** Matthew reproduces for us in his Gospel whole blocks of teachings of Jesus. And it is obvious that in many cases Matthew takes teachings of Jesus that were spoken on numerous occasions and puts them together into a block and then he builds his Gospel around them. We will see that the structure of Matthew's Gospel is largely built around five major blocks of teachings of Jesus. The first of which is the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew uses the content of the teachings of Jesus by putting it in five major blocks around which he builds his Gospel. So we see an emphasis in Matthew that Jesus is a Teacher. What might that tell us about Matthew's readers? Well, who in the Pharisaic form of Judaism is the most prominent person? The Rabbi. In the Sadducees the High Priest was most prominent. Among the Zealots it was whoever had the biggest slingshot. But in Pharisaic Judaism you did not rise any higher than the Rabbi or teacher. Rabbis were known for the content of their teaching. They did not divide up into small-group. Rabbis were interested in communicating to their students a body of teaching which their students memorized. So, Rabbis were known for their body of teaching. It is almost as if Matthew deliberately underscores, emphasizes Jesus as a Rabbi. Which would be consistent with what we have concluded with the first unique feature, the original audience were Jewish. That's something that would be important in Judaism. To narrow the scope, we know that such teachings would be important to Pharisaic Judaism? It would not be overly important to the Essenes, it wouldn't be important at all to the Saducees or the Zealots. But it would be important to the Pharisees. Again, that tells us that Matthew's audience is not just connected to Judaism but they are connected to Pharisaic Judaism. The Judaism that centers in the teaching of the Law.

3) **Five-Fold Structure.** Matthew is built around five large bodies of Jesus' teaching...and each conclude with the key word, "finished." For example, the five large topical collections each conclude with something like, 'And when Jesus had finished all these sayings...' The five sections: (1) Sermon on the Mount, chaps. 5-7), (2) instructions for the ministers of the Kingdom (10:5-42), (3) parables of the kingdom at work in the world (13:1-52), (4) teaching on relationships and discipline in the kingdom (18:1-35), (5) eschatology, or the consummation of the Kingdom (chaps. 23-25).¹ Matthews audience, Jewish people, would automatically associate the five large sections in Matthew's Gospel with the Torah (Five books of the Law). What is the significance of the number five? Any Jew would recognize immediately that a Gospel that is deliberately structured around five parts was to be understood in some kind of relationship with the Judaism. Five in Judaism clearly symbolizes the Law, the first five book of the OT, the Pentateuch, the Torah (all those are synonyms). So, if this be true if the structure in Matthew then even a casual reader of Matthew's Gospel in the 1st century would recognize that somehow this Gospel is to be connected to Judaism. It is to be understood in connection to Judaism. That seems to be deliberate as far as the structure in Matthew's Gospel. Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT hopes for a Messiah. (B. W. Bacon first identified these seams).

Major Themes:

- 1) Jesus is the fulfillment of OT hopes for Messiah
 - a. By living up to OT prophecies and expectations perfectly
 - b. Six Antitheses - These are six paragraphs that follow 5:21. The reason why they are identified with the term Antitheses is because they all begin with Jesus saying, "You have heard that the Law said...but I say unto you..." So, that Jesus sets Himself up in an antithetical relationship with the Law. That is why they are called the Six Antitheses. Jesus returns to what the Law had intended. He cuts away the interpretations and returns to the intent of the Law.
- 2) The Church is the new community of faith. Built on confession of faith and contains a commission to reach ALL!