

An Introduction to Gospel of Matthew

Text: Matthew 9:9-13; 10:1-4

Topic: Gospel

Series: Matthew

Why Preach Through Matthew?

Today we begin a new sermon series in the first book of the New Testament (NT), the **Gospel of Matthew**. In our preaching here at Hope we strive to “preach the whole counsel of God.”¹ That means that we want to preach the whole Bible, including both Old (OT) and New Testaments. Thus, we seek—you might say—a balanced spiritual diet, so we try to move back and forth from OT to NT. Last week we completed a 14 week sermon series through the book of Psalms, which is found in the OT. Thus, we elders sensed that it was time in this new ministry year to go into the NT. The Gospel of Matthew is where we sensed the Lord leading us.

The Gospel According to Matthew

The title given to this gospel is, “The Gospel According to Matthew.” This title comes from one of the oldest extant NT manuscripts. This copy of the title page of this gospel dates to the late second or early third century. Some scholars would date it as early as A.D. 150-175.²



This fragment³, called $\text{P}4$ (papyrus 4) is housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (National Library of France) located in Paris. It says, *ευαγγελιον κατα μαθ'θαιον* (*euangelion kata Maththaion*), “the gospel according to Matthew,” hence the title you see in your Bible.

¹ Acts 20:17.

² Phillip Comfort and David Barrett, *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts* (Kregel Publishers, 2019) available [here](#).

³ Image source: Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, available at https://manuscripts.csntm.org/manuscript/Group/GA_P4?filter=1 accessed 16 September 2022.

One Gospel: Four Views

You may have heard the first four books of the NT referred to as “the gospels.” This may mistakenly give the impression that there are four *different* gospels, but this is not quite accurate. Truly there is only one gospel, because the gospel is about one person, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The gospel is the good news about one person, Jesus. However, this one gospel has been recorded from four different perspectives by four different authors, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each of these authors sheds a different light on the gospel of Jesus, but they do so each from his own vantage point and according to his own purpose in writing.

God is a God of variety. He saw to it, by the power of his Holy Spirit, that four different perspectives of Jesus have been handed down to the church throughout the ages. Perhaps in the same way that there are four different seasons that display the beauty of one planet, so there are four different gospels that display the beauty of one person, Jesus. Just as the seasons each display its own aspect of the glory of this world, so each gospel reflects a different aspect of the glory of Jesus.

When Did Matthew Write?

It is very difficult to precisely date the writing of the gospels and the order in which they appear in the Bible may not be chronological. However, the best estimates of when each of the gospels were composed are listed here in [this chart](#).

It is very possible that the gospel of Mark was written first, some time in the mid to late 50’s (i.e. about twenty or so years after the ascension of Jesus into heaven).

Gospel	Date A.D.
Mark	mid to late 50’s
Matthew	Late 50’s or early 60’s
Luke	early 60’s (~62-64)
John	A.D. 71-100 (~85-90)

Mark’s account is the shortest gospel and is the most action packed of the four. Mark’s story line moves rapidly from one scene to the next. Mark uses the word ‘immediately’ 35 times. According to [Eusebius](#) (A.D. 260-340), a fourth century historian called “the father of church history,” Mark wrote his gospel based upon Peter’s testimony and memory of Jesus’ life and ministry, but he did not write chronologically.⁴ He wrote accurately, but “not in order,” that is, not chronologically, reported Eusebius, who was reading the writing of a second century bishop of Hierapolis, named Papias (c. A.D. 60=130), who was a contemporary of the apostle John.

Matthew’s gospel was most likely written a few years after Mark’s (late 50’s or early 60’s). There are many scholars who date Matthew much later than this (i.e. around A.D. 80), but the primary

⁴ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History, Books 1–5*, ed. Roy Joseph Deferrari, trans. Roy Joseph Deferrari, vol. 19, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 206.

reason for this is due to Jesus' powerfully negative language against the Jewish religious leaders and against the temple. The scholars who hold to a late date think that such strong language could only have arisen after the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.

However, it is not inconceivable for Jesus to have foreseen the destruction of the temple and to have spoken so authoritatively against his contemporary Jewish leaders. Given the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, why should such foresight be though impossible? Thus, an earlier date is not improbable.

One of the strongest pieces of evidence for an early date of Matthew is that "all patristic writers assumed Matthew wrote before Mark"⁵ based upon the writings of a man named Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis, who according to Eusebius was a contemporary of the apostle John and wrote that "Matthew collected the oracles in the Hebrew Language, and each one interpreted them as he was able."⁶

Furthermore, it may be that Matthew used Mark's gospel as an outline for his own account, but greatly expanded upon it or it may be that Mark used Matthew's gospel and greatly condensed it. Either way, there are strong similarities between the two and they most likely knew of each other's work. Neither were greatly concerned with providing us conclusive landmarks to guarantee a certain date, thus, following their example we ought not be too dogmatic regarding dating either of them.

Luke's gospel was written next, probably around A.D. 62-64. Luke's gospel is a much more like an investigative reporter who did lots of interviews with eyewitness. Luke did seek to be more chronological in ordering his gospel and thus his gospel is much easier to date.

Finally, John's gospel was written much later than Luke's, maybe even about 25-30 years after Luke's and close to the end of the first century (~ A.D. 85-90). John, being well aware of the other three gospels, sought not to repeat what the other three had written and instead was laser focused on the person of Jesus and particularly the final week of his life, which takes up 50% of the entire gospel.

Summary

What is important to note is that Matthew wrote very early, most likely within about 20 years of Jesus' ascension, and not close to the end of the first century. "Irenaeus (ca. AD 180) claimed that Matthew wrote his Gospel while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome (early AD 60s)."⁷ Thus, Matthew's account of Jesus' life and teaching can be trusted as reliable and authentic.

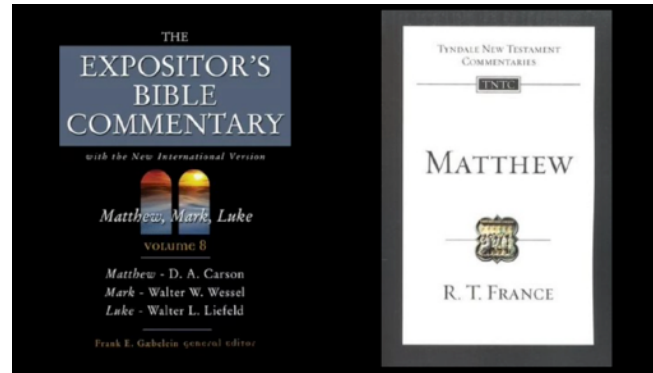
⁵ R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 31.

⁶ *Ibid*, 3.39.16.

⁷ Charles L. Quarles, "Matthew," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1494.

Recommended Commentaries

If you're the kind of person who would like to dig deeper into Matthew or if you're a LIFE group leader, then I would recommend either of two commentaries. The first is *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, on Matthew, which is Vol. 8, by D.A. Carson or the *Tyndale New Testament Commentary* on Matthew, vol. 1, by R. T. France.



Who Was Matthew?

Unlike the apostle Paul, none of the gospel writers explicitly named themselves as the author of the gospels that bear their names. This is most likely reason for this is because these accounts were originally intended to teach the gospel of Jesus within a local church setting among an audience that would have known the author. For example, if I were to share with you a copy of what I wrote while on sabbatical, but didn't put my name on it, everyone one here would know who the author was. Something like this may have happened in the case of each of the four gospels. Amazingly, there was universal agreement⁸ among the early church fathers that the disciple and apostle Matthew wrote this gospel. Because of this strong confidence in the authenticity of this gospel's authorship, it was far and above the most quoted gospel among the Christian writers of the second century.⁹

Matthew Levi

So, who was this Matthew? We do not know much about Matthew. He is only mentioned twice in this gospel. He was the son of Alphaeus and his other name was Levi (Mk. 2:14; Lk. 5:27, 29; cf. 6:15). Some people have stumbled over this fact, but it should not trouble us. There are many such examples in the Bible. In OT Jacob was also named Israel, Peter was also named Simon, Mark was also named John, and Saul was also named Paul. Thus, just as I am David Todd so the author of the first gospel is Matthew Levi.

A Tax Collector

Prior to meeting Jesus, and being called to be one of the 12 disciples, Matthew was a tax collector. We learn this from the lists of names of those whom Jesus chose to be his Twelve Disciples.¹⁰ Matthew was actually sitting at his tax booth when Jesus called him.

⁸ D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 4..

⁹ France, *Matthew*, 18.

¹⁰ Mt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15.

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

This took place just outside *Capernaum*, beside the sea¹¹ of Galilee. This means that Matthew was collecting taxes for Herod Antipas (son of Herod the Great¹²) near the border of the territory belonging to his brother Philip, across the Jordan river.

As a tax collector for the Romans, Matthew would have been deeply despised by his fellow Jews. Tax collectors were responsible for collecting a designated amount of money from local citizens and then submitting that money to Rome.

Tax collectors were viewed as traitors and servants of the enemies among the Jewish people. They were authorized by Rome to collect taxes, however, they very often abused that authority in order to pad their own pockets by collecting more money than Rome required. They were viewed by their fellow Jews as liars, deceivers, and thieves. They were outcasts who were shunned by pious Jews.

Therefore, calling such a man to be his disciple would have been a very controversial move by Jesus, whose ministry was growing as he traveled around the region preaching and teaching in local synagogues. Matthew, being a tax collector, would have been a very observant and culturally knowledgeable man, since it was his job to know who was doing what and how much they were doing it with as well as keeping track of the travel back and forth of all the locals. Thus, Matthew would have already heard tell of Jesus and his teaching or perhaps he may have even heard him teach in person.

Being a tax collector meant that Matthew was almost certainly well educated, fluent in Greek and Aramaic, and a meticulous records-keeper, all of which would have been very helpful in writing an accurate record of Jesus' life.¹³ Matthew had a sharp mind. As you read his gospel, one fact that will be strongly impressed upon you is that his mind was saturated with Hebrew Scripture. He quotes from OT ninety-nine times.¹⁴ Matthew knew his Bible and because of this, he became absolutely convinced that Jesus is God's messiah!



¹¹ Mk. 2:1, 13.

¹² He died not long after Jesus' birth and then divided his realm among his three sons, Antipas, Philip, and Archelaus.

¹³ Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 224.

¹⁴ John MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 123 (Apple Books, chapter 8).

A Total Convert

Not only was Matthew a tax collector, but he was also a total convert. While his profession would have cast doubt and suspicion upon his character, Matthew's response to Jesus says a great deal about him.

After Jesus said to him, "**Follow me,**" it is astonishing that Matthew "**rose and followed him.**" In Luke's account of this interaction, he reports that Matthew "**left everything**" (5:27-28). Matthew appears not to have even hesitated. He simply and quickly got up and obeyed the command of Jesus, taking nothing with him. He left behind the money, the well-paying job, the connections with local government and Rome, and he threw himself whole-heartedly in with Jesus. We know this because of what happened next.

Matthew 9:10-13 (ESV) ¹⁰ And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹² But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

When Luke and Mark give their account of this scene, they both make it clear that "**the house**" (v.10) in Matthew's telling is actually *his* house.¹⁵ Perhaps in Matthew's modesty he was reluctant to mention that he was the host, but Mark and Luke were not. Luke calls this a "**great feast.**"¹⁶ So immediately after "**leaving everything**" to follow Jesus, Matthew hosts a "large company"¹⁷ at his own house and it all centered on Jesus.

His Friends: the Outcasts

Evidently Matthew invited a large number of his friends, which entailed "**many tax collectors.**" These were his friends and coworkers. Along with them came a great many who were classified as "**sinners**" (v.10). But Matthew has met someone whom he wanted to be sure that all closest friends also had a chance to meet. Matthew was not ashamed of Jesus, and Jesus was not ashamed of being seen in Matthew's house. Even though the only attendees at this banquet were two classes of people whom all pious Jews sought diligently to avoid, yet Jesus chose to sit down with them and have dinner.

His Mission of Mercy

Matthew also records a sentence, a quote from an OT prophet, that Jesus said that night, which none of the other gospel writers recorded. This reveals to us something about the man Matthew.

¹⁵ Mark 2:13-15; Luke 5:29.

¹⁶ Luke 5:29.

¹⁷ Ibid.

By the time this dinner took place, Jesus was already under the scrutiny of the Pharisees (v.11). They were there and already watching what Jesus was doing. Jesus was drawing the attention of many. Sitting down to eat with '*tax collectors and sinners*' would have rendered a Jew to be ceremonially unclean. Thus, no conscientious Jew would ever have attended and participated in the dinner that night, given those who was there. Thus, the question in verse 11, "*Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners,*" is not a request for understanding but rather a charge of accusation. (Note also that the Pharisees do not state this directly to Jesus but rather his disciples.) Jesus overheard the Pharisees asking this question and he responded,

Matthew 9:12-13 (ESV) ¹² But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

In saying, "*go and learn what this means,*" Jesus was employing a phrase the rabbi's often used in teaching to communicate to their students that they need to go back to the text and study more deeply for they've missed the main point. Jesus is saying the Pharisees, "Go back and study your Bible a little more, for you haven't yet completely understood the true meaning of the text." He is saying the smartest, most educated men of his day, that they have misread holy Scripture. This would have been jarring to them.

In saying, "*I desire mercy, not sacrifice,*" Jesus is quoting Hosea (6:6). The context in Hosea is God lamenting Israel's outward ritual observance of his law that did not entail inward, genuine affection and devotion to the Lord. The call to observe the law was intended to be an outward expression inward devotion to God, but Israel at the time of Hosea had turned that upon its head. Israel assumed God was pleased with mere outward obedience while inner affection of their hearts were beyond God's concern. Hosea was speaking on behalf of the LORD and calling the nation to deep self-examination.

The daily sacrifices were not commanded because God needed breakfast and dinner provided to him. The daily sacrifices were given to illustrate that true spiritual communion with a Holy God was only possibly through the forgiveness and removal of sins, which could only be effected by the shedding of innocent blood.

The word '*mercy*' (9:13) translates the Hebrew word *hesed*, which is that sweet covenant word that can also be translated as '*steadfast-love,*' and entails the affection and provision of God for and toward his people. We could think of this as God saying, "I want your love more than your mere outward obedience. I want your heart more than I want your hands." It is not as though outward obedience was unimportant, but rather that the priorities were reversed. On the night before Jesus was crucified, he explained that if the love is there, then the obedience will surely follow.¹⁸

¹⁸ Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Matthew heard these words of Jesus and they stuck in his ears. He had been an outcast for as long as he had been a tax collector. I'm sure he considered himself beyond salvation. But then he met Jesus, a man who seemed to cut through the external religious trappings and go straight to the heart. This caught Matthew's attention. No Pharisee would have ever come to dinner at Matthew's house, yet here was a man who sat at his table and appeared to know God's word more accurately than did the Pharisees. There was something fresh and different about this Jesus.

I am sure that Matthew was not innocent when it came to financial fraud, but he met Jesus and this rabbi called him to walk with him. Matthew heard a call from Jesus that prioritized people over ritual purity. Jesus was not (then or any time thereafter) soft on sin. Jesus constantly called people to live pure and holy lives. He never allowed anyone who followed him to comfortably remain in a pattern of sin. Remember how he treated the woman caught in adultery. He was merciful toward her, but he also called her to purity. Yes, he said that he didn't condemn her, but he also said to her, "Go, and sin no more."¹⁹ He was showing her grace, for certainly she (and the man with whom she was caught) deserved to die according to the law, but told her to change her lifestyle and stop living in sin. This is what Jesus was saying to Matthew. Jesus knew he was a sinner but he was inviting Matthew to change his ways.

If Matthew was listening closely then he just Jesus say that he and all the others at his table were infected with a kind of sickness that needed to be healed. Jesus said, "*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but rather those who are sick*" (Mt. 9:12). Apparently Jesus saw himself as a kind of physician who was willing to tend to these sick people. Clearly he was not speaking about physical sickness. He was talking about a spiritual sickness. Jesus was talking about sin. Jesus never tolerated habitual sin, but he would sit long enough with sinners in order to have a conversation about what true religion is. The Pharisees would never have even sat at the table with tax collectors and sinners. But Jesus was a teacher and physician who apparently came to call sinners to righteousness. Jesus came to call sinners "to repentance."²⁰ Jesus came to call tax collectors to forsake their dishonesty and embrace the truth. Jesus came to call all sinners to turn away from their sin and believe that Jesus had something better to give than did sin. Matthew obeyed this called and leaving everything, he followed Jesus!

Why Did He Write?

There are no doubt multiple reasons for why Matthew wrote the gospel that he did, but chief among them must be the fact that **first**, he wrote to make clear that Jesus was the *messiah of the Jews*. Matthew aimed to clearly demonstrate to Jews that Jesus of Nazareth was the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, to David, to all his promises to Israel. This

¹⁹ John 8:11.

²⁰ Luke 5:32.

gospel is obviously aimed at Hebrews since about fourteen times he directly names Jesus as the fulfillment of a particular OT messianic prophecy. If Papias was correct, then Matthew originally wrote this gospel in Hebrew.²¹ Thus, this gospel is a gospel for Jews. Matthew aims to convince Jews that Jesus is the long awaited messiah.

Second, he also aims to make clear that Jesus was also *Savior of the Gentiles*. Matthew wrote to convince Jews and Gentiles that, not only is Jesus the savior of the Jews, he is also the savior of the Gentiles. Jesus is God's messiah, but God's saving purposes are not limited to Israel alone, but includes people from all nations, whoever will put their faith in him and go to God through him. The final words of this gospel include Jesus command to go make disciples of all nations. Thus, this gospel is a gospel for Gentiles (i.e. non-Jews).

Third, Matthew writes to convince that Jesus is the *king of God's people*. This gospel speaks often of the coming of the kingdom of God. Matthew wants the world to know that Jesus is the promised descendant of David. The particular phrase he employs to communicate this fact is 'Son of David.' The point is to teach that Jesus is one who will "sit on David's throne forever."²² Matthew uses this phrase more than any other Gospel writer. We find this title in the very first verse and eight other times throughout the gospel, usually on the lips of those who are sick or lame. This gospel is aims to make clear that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of David who came to usher in the kingdom of God.

Fourth, to *establish the church*. in Matthew we find the only two occurrences in the synoptic gospels of the word 'church' (*ekklēsia*). In both cases we find the word on the lips of Jesus.²³ In Matthew we see Jesus promising to build a new community of his followers, the church, that will be made up of Jews and Gentiles. The distinctive marker of these people will no longer be ethnic, social, or religious allegiances, but rather a supreme allegiance to Jesus alone. This gospel is for the building up of the church of Jesus.

Fifth, last but not least, is to preserve and spread *the teaching of Jesus*. Matthew's focus is primarily upon the teaching of Jesus. "Matthew preserves much of Jesus' teaching not found elsewhere."²⁴ In fact, 35% of this gospel contains teaching not found in any other.²⁵ For this reason, the early church used Matthew's gospel as teaching tool for catechesis and a kind of manual for discipleship.²⁶ This gospel is for the proclamation of the teaching of Jesus.

²¹ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.39.16.

²² 2 Samuel 7:13,16.

²³ Mt. 16:18; 18:17.

²⁴ D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 4.

²⁵ France, *Matthew*, 37.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

Conclusion

Therefore, I'd like to invite you to join me in focusing on this gospel of Jesus. This gospel is a reliable account of Jesus' life and teaching.

This gospel has convinced many Jews that Jesus is God's messiah.

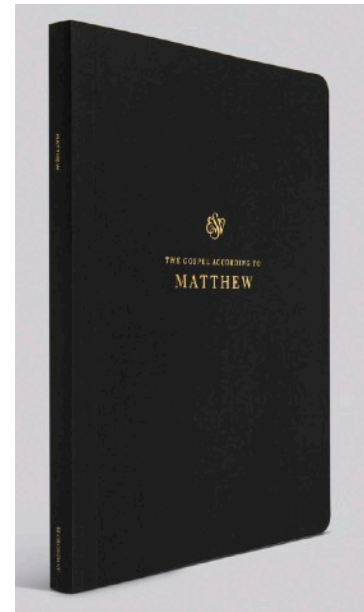
This gospel has convinced many Gentiles that Jesus is not only the savior of Jews, but in fact the only savior of all mankind, including both Jews and Gentiles.

This gospel is a gospel of mercy, where guilty sinners—like the despise and rejected tax collector Matthew—can find forgiveness and acceptance and transformation.

This gospel is also a call to love Jesus more than sin. This gospel is a call to leave everything and follow Jesus with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

To help you do this, we'd like to try an experiment this year. We'd like to offer you a **Scripture journal**. This journal contains the gospel of Matthew along with room to write out what you see in the text.

I'd invite you to pick one up on the way out the door or you can order one as [crossway.org](https://www.crossway.org).



Discussion Questions

1. Did you learn anything about the Gospel of Matthew that was new to you? If so, what?
2. Why do think Jesus chose Matthew to be one of his 12 disciples?
3. Why do think Matthew alone recorded Jesus' quote of Hosea 6:6, which says, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice?"
4. Describe some of the characteristics of the man Matthew? Based upon what you know about him, what do you think he would have been like?