

Introduction to Matthew

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Hello, my name is Mike Rogers. We are introducing the Gospel according to Matthew, today. There are a couple of things before we actually get into looking at Matthew, there are a couple of things that I think we need to understand for all of the Gospels. First of all, we need to understand that there's only one gospel. There are four accounts, but there's one gospel. And the gospel is the good news of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So the Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, four accounts, but they all tell a different perspective to a different audience, about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

A second thing that I think is important that we understand is that Matthew, Mark and Luke, are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels. That simply means that they are similar. Matthew, Mark, and Luke often tell basically the same stories, in basically the same ways. Now, Mark usually is a briefer account than Matthew and Luke. But, and that has led a lot of people to believe that Matthew and Luke use Mark as a source. And we'll talk more about that in the introduction to Mark. But it's important that we understand that these three are called The Synoptics.

There's also something that I think that we need to understand before we engage in an in depth study of any book, whatever book it is, and that is, we need to read that book several times, just to get a general idea of the content, and maybe an idea of where he begins and where he ends. It's important that we understand the general idea of a book before we begin an in depth study. We do that, by reading it several times, it may be two or three, or maybe even four or five times, depending on the individual.

But then there's also, we need to know if at all possible, we need to know who wrote the book. If we can know who wrote the book, that helps us to get a better idea of that book, and of the style and everything that's about the book.

A third thing is that we need to learn, if at all possible, when the book was written. That helps us to know the people a little better, it helps us to know the culture a little better. So when was the book written? If it's at all possible, we need to know where the book was written from and where the audience was when the book was written. There is also, obviously, we need to know who the audience is. Who was this book intended for?

And then we need to know what is the purpose of this book? Why was this book written in the first place? And then it's important, for me at least, when I do an in depth study of a book, I want to know how the book is divided. Can it be divided into three parts, or five parts, or maybe seven parts? But how is that book divided? And that helps us when we kind of piece together the understanding of the book.

And then finally, the thing that I like to do before I begin an in depth study, is do more of a detailed outline of that book. Now, even when you do the detailed outline, when you study the book, your outline may change some. It may change it in different spots, different things change. But, do a detailed outline of that book. Just simply so you can get a better idea and a better feel of where you've been and where you're going.

So let's begin by looking at the Gospel according to Matthew, even though. Let's think about the authorship. Who wrote the book? Well, even though the earliest copies of the Gospel according to Matthew has that title, it is certain that that was not included in the original. As a matter of fact, there's probably no information, according to who wrote this Gospel, this account, until we get to Eusebius, who, who quoted from Papias, which is about 130, that Matthew wrote it. And basically, it's just a statement. There is no real, as far as I can tell, there's no real arguments that are made for it. It's just stated as a matter of fact. And basically, I don't know of anyone who really opposes that the Gospel according to Matthew was written by Matthew himself. And so we pretty much can assume that it was Matthew. Although, there are a few scholars that would dispute that, most New Testament scholars are going to admit and agree that it was Matthew who wrote this Gospel.

And there's so many different things that we look at. Some scholars say that it couldn't be Matthew, because an eye witness would not have had to use Mark as a source, assuming that Matthew uses Mark, and, as a source, and maybe. But that doesn't create a problem for me, because just read Matthew, chapters 4 and 5, and see how many times Jesus quotes from the Septuagint. Jesus quotes from the Old Testament numerous times throughout the letter. Just in chapters 4 and 5, he quotes from the Old Testament numerous times. That doesn't create a problem for me. Go to Jude. In Jude, verse 14, Jude quotes from First Enoch. And he cites Enoch. So that Matthew using Mark as a source doesn't create a problem for me that Matthew is the author of this book.

It's also interesting to know that Mark and Luke refer to Matthew, not as Matthew, but as Levi. And Luke even calls him the son of Alphaeus. We also know from all three that Matthew was a tax collector, and most likely was sitting on the road near Capernaum, as he was collecting taxes. This is, this is a big issue, because when looking at Matthew being a tax collector, we understand Jesus called all kinds of people to be His disciples. So it doesn't create a problem for me, Matthew, being the author, because he was a tax collector.

As a matter of fact, it helps me to understand that Matthew was a Jew living in Palestine, and he was called to be a disciple of Jesus. And he did. And if he wrote this gospel, he would have known Jewish customs being a Jew himself. He would have known the traditions of the Jews. And so there's no better person than someone that lives in Palestine that would write this author. My point is this: when it comes to the authorship of Matthew, there is enough evidence, I think, that points to Matthew as being the author, that it is pretty much undisputed in the scholarly world as we know it.

The second thing that is important that we learn is: Can we date the letter? Now, Matthew's letter has been dated anywhere from 50 to 100. Can we narrow it down anymore? I don't know. There is really no certain internal evidence that dates the Gospel according to Matthew. The only thing that I've been able to find that might help, and this is just might help, is Matthew 23 and 24, that Matthew writes as if the temple is still standing. If the temple was destroyed in AD 70, as we know it was, then it seems to me that it had to be written prior to AD 70. Can we know anymore? Well, dating it depends a lot on dating Mark. If Matthew uses Mark as a source, then Matthew has to be written after Mark. And we'll talk more about the dating of Mark, which is very speculative as well. But, the most that we can know about the dating of Matthew, is that it was pre AD 70. And that's about all that I am willing to say on that, because that's about all that we can know.

What about the location? Well, as uncertain as the dating of Matthew is, so is the audience, or at least where it was written from and where the audience was when it was written. It appears that the majority of New Testament scholars believe that Matthew wrote to an audience that was either in

Palestine, or in Antioch of Syria. And there's some some evidence that kind of helps us to understand that. Number one, if you look into Acts chapter 11, we understand that the people from the dispersion of Jerusalem, those Jews, those Jewish Christians, from the dispersion of Jerusalem, many of them settled in Antioch on Syria. And so it's not unreasonable to think that Matthew wrote to a group of Jews who were there in Antioch, or the surrounding region.

But it's just as difficult to notice, where was Matthew when he wrote? Was Matthew still in Palestine? We know in chapter 8, and verse 1, that the apostles didn't leave Jerusalem when everybody else did. Everybody else ran out and went about preaching the gospel. But Matthew, along with the other 12, stayed in Jerusalem. And so maybe, if it's true that Matthew was in Palestine, when he wrote this, this account, to an audience in Antioch. That's a possibility. But it's still, it's speculation.

There's another issue that I think it's important that we look at when we look at the audience there. And that is, when Stephen was killed, which when he was stoned, dates probably around AD 35. And you would think the gospel account (and we'll talk about the purpose of Matthew in a moment), but basically, it was to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. It causes one to wonder, well, would it have taken 30 years? Would the author, would he have waited 30 years to write an account to prove that the Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah? And again, it's a question we really have no answer to. So, the audience, we're going to say, were Jews. There's no question about that. When we think about the audience, and I know of no scholar that denies that Matthew was written to a Jewish audience.

Think about all of the number of Old Testament references that are in Matthew. More than in any other account. More than in Mark or Luke or John. And so he writes to an audience that understands and knows the Old Testament, and therefore he refers to it often. Also, there's no account in Matthew, there's no record in Matthew's account that Matthew explained Jewish customs or traditions, as he did in Mark and John. In Mark's account, in Mark chapter 7, on one occasion, Jesus felt compelled to explain to His audience about the tradition of Jews washing their hands before they ate. Matthew has nothing like that. And so we understand even in John chapter 4, when Jesus meets the woman at the well, and there's a parenthetical statement there that says, "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." There's nothing like that in Matthew. So there's, it's pretty obvious, that Matthew was written to a Jewish audience.

Another thing that seems interesting to me, and makes a difference between Matthew, Mark and Luke, specifically, is that Matthew uses the phrase, "Kingdom of heaven," much more than he uses "kingdom of God." As a matter of fact, "the kingdom of God" is only used four times in the entire account of Matthew. And those four times, every one of them is referred to by Jesus, Jesus Himself is using that phrase. Mark and Luke never use the phrase, "kingdom of heaven." They use consistently, "the kingdom of God." And so, because Jews, this seems to be the reason Matthew does not use "kingdom of God," is because the Jews had such reverence for God, that they wouldn't even call His name. And so therefore, in order to keep from offending Jews, possibly, Matthew uses the phrase, "kingdom of heaven." And, even though some scholars then argue that it is impossible to know the specific location of this writing, just about everyone agrees that it was written to a Jewish audience.

So let's look then at the fifth thing, and that is the purpose for Matthew's account. There are three things that I think are significant, as we look at the purpose for Matthew. Number one, it is clearly to let this Jewish audience know that Jesus is the Messiah, and that He has already come. That seems to

be the underlying purpose for everything. There is a second purpose that is used, that is given here, and that second purpose is to, to express to his readers, that they are no longer under the burden of the Law of Moses, or under the burden of Roman jurisdiction. Although they lived under the Roman rule, they were no longer being citizens in the kingdom of heaven, under the rule of God, they were not under the rule of the Law, as the Pharisees were trying to impose.

And then there's a third reason, I think, even though this may be a little more subtle, and it's, it's maybe somewhat speculative, regarding the dating the letter as well. But I believe that a third reason for the writing of Matthew was to prepare these Jews for the Gentiles entering into the kingdom. There's so much about the kingdom and so much about the Jews and not being under the Law and accepting Gentiles, that the Gospel was not just written to the Jews only, but also to the Gentiles, and to all those who would call upon his name.

And so, I think the purpose of it is threefold. It's first to prove that Jesus, the one that's introduced in Chapter 1, is the Messiah. The one that's promised the one that they had waited on for so long to come. He is here. He is Jesus. It's also to show them that they are now under the rule of God, and not under the rule of the Law. And is certainly it's to help them to introduce, to help them to understand and to accept Gentiles into the kingdom.

Then there's the sixth thing that I think that has to be done in order to get an in depth study into a book, and that is to look at the literary structure, how the book is divided. And when it comes to Matthew, that's relatively easy. We look at the, the Gospel as we began in the very beginning, and chapters 1 and 2, tell of the birth and childhood of Jesus. And it's very, who is this Messiah? Who is this Son of God? Who is this God with us? Immanuel? Well, it tells His genealogy, where He's from, to prove that He is from the Jews, from the lineage of David. And then it proves, it shows His childhood. Then the second part that goes from chapter 3, all the way through chapter 25, shows the life of Jesus. The life of Jesus. What did He do while He was living upon this earth? What are the teachings? What are the parables? What is the life? What was that like? And you read that. And then chapters 26 to 28, tell about the death, resurrection, and even the ascension of Jesus. Those are, that's the way, that's the literary structure of the book.

And then, as we look at this, Matthew describes the life of Jesus. Around five different sermons, which are very important as we look at the life of Jesus. He describes that around five different sermons, and each one of those sermons ends with a very similar closing remark. For example, when Jesus finished these words, in chapter 7, and verse 28, we can understand when Jesus finished these words. Now, this is not all of the sermons that we have in the Gospel according to Matthew, but it gives us a break in these sermons.

So there's the Sermon on the Mount, that goes from chapter 5 through chapter 7. There is the Instruction for the Twelve that goes from chapter 10. There is the Parables of the Kingdom, that is found in chapter 13. There is the Relationships in the Kingdom, that is found in chapter 18. And then there are the Signs of His Coming, that are found in chapters 24 and 25. And the signs of His coming is a very good study that we're not going to get into at this point. But that is a discourse that, a sermon that Jesus had in teaching his disciples about the destruction of the temple, and possibly even beyond.

And then, let's do very briefly very quickly, let's do a brief outline, a little more detailed, brief outline of Matthew's account. Chapter one: It is a confirmation that Jesus is the promised Messiah. It's produced by the genealogy and birth of Jesus that fulfills prophecy of the lineage from which the

Messiah would come. Then we have the birth of Jesus as we see it in chapter one. He was born of a virgin in the city of Bethlehem, and He was named Immanuel, which means “God with us.” All of this is prophesied.

Then in chapter two, the attempted assassination and escape of Jesus, how Jesus escaped the assassination by going into Egypt from, by, with his father taking Him into Egypt to escape.

Chapter 3 then, we have the baptism of Jesus. And then in chapter 4, we have the temptations of Jesus. Then in chapters 5-7, we have the Sermon on the Mount, which Jesus announces the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven. We also have, in this, in the Sermon on the Mount, I believe, some subtle remarks that tell us that Jesus is introducing the kingdom to the Gentiles and letting the Jews understand that the Gentiles are going to be admitted to the kingdom as well.

In chapters 8 through 10, you have the early ministry of Jesus as He brings the new rule of God into the lives of men, applying it to them. You have in chapters 8 and 9, the miracles, the miracles of Jesus, as He presented it. You have in chapter 10, where He sends His disciples out.

You have in chapters 11 and 12, the different responses of the people. You have how the poor accepted Him and embraced Him. But then you have in chapter 12, for example, you have John the baptist and his disciples, who questioned Jesus. John sent his disciples to Jesus and asked, “Are you the one that we've been waiting for?” And so, there was that question there. Then you have some that just completely rejected Jesus, like the Pharisees. And so when chapters 11, and 12 are very important chapters, because, even through the preaching and teaching, you see how people are accepting Jesus, or rejecting Jesus, or even questioning, “Are you really the Messiah?”

And then in chapter 13, you have the parables about the kingdom. Then in chapters 14-20, you have more miracles and teachings of Jesus that go throughout this this time period of Jesus's teaching.

In chapters 21-27, you have the last week, including the death and burial of Jesus. And then in chapter 28, you have the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus. And that kind of gives you a detailed, more detailed outline.

And when you study it, and when you go through it, you get to the point where you say, “Okay, this is better broken at this point.” And so even though I've given you my detailed outline, you may outline yours a little differently. But it's important for us to kind of get a general idea of how this book is laid out, and what to expect, before we get into this study. And if we get all of this information about a letter, a book, Matthew specifically, we're much better prepared to engage in an in depth detailed study of the book. And I guarantee you, you will get so much more out of it with this preliminary information than you would if you just jumped into the book to start with. Thank you for your time today.