
Contents

Introduction	4
1. Background of Matthew	6
2. Survey of Matthew	13
3. Birth and Infancy of the King	18
4. Preparation of the King	27
5. Sermon on the Mount	34
6. Power of the King	43
7. Commission to the Twelve	48
8. Rejection of the King	54
9. Parables of the Kingdom	60
10. Mission of the King	65
11. Christians Living in Harmony	75
12. Final Ministries of the King	79
13. The King's Second Coming	92
14. Death and Burial of the King	100
15. Resurrection and Great Commission of the King	106
Appendix	110
Bibliography	111

Lesson 1

Background of Matthew

The background of the writing of Matthew's gospel provides a good introduction to its message. Here is where motivations to study are stirred and specific goals laid out.

There are four main stages in the study of a book of the Bible. These stages are:

1. Learning the *background* of the book (e.g., for whom was it originally written?)
2. Making a *survey* of the book as a whole
3. Making a firsthand *analysis* of each part (e.g., chapter) of the book (observation, interpretation, application)
4. Referring to outside helps (e.g., commentaries) for supplementary and checking aid

Background, the first stage of study, is the subject of this lesson. Lesson 2 is devoted to the second stage, survey, and the remaining lessons are the core of your study of Matthew, which is analysis of the Bible text.

I. AUTHOR AND TITLE

As with the other three gospels, authorship of this first gospel account is not identified by name. Tradition is unanimous in ascribing the writing to Matthew, son of Alphaeus, whose Jewish name was Levi. Matthew was the publican (tax collector) whom Jesus called to be His disciple. Read Matthew 9:9-13.

Read these other New Testament verses, which are our only source of information about the man Matthew: Matt. 10:3; Mark 2:14-17; 3:18; Luke 5:27-32; Acts 1:13.

The title assigned to this gospel by the early church was "The Gospel According to Matthew." The word "gospel" means "good

news.” Why, then, are the words “according to” more accurate than “of”?

II. ORIGINAL READERS

It is clear from the content of this Bible book that it was written for the immediate audience of Jews. Since the first hearers of the spoken gospel were mainly Jews, it does not surprise us that one of the four gospels was directed especially to them, answering questions uppermost in their minds about Jesus, such as

Was Jesus truly descended from David?

What was Jesus’ attitude toward the Old Testament law?

Did He come to establish the kingdom promised in the Old Testament?

This is why Matthew was the most highly valued and widely read of the four gospels in the first decades of the early church.

This gospel is not exclusively Jewish, however. Throughout the account, Jesus’ ministry is related to all the people of the world, such as in the Great Commission of 28:19-20 and in Jesus’ identification of Himself as the Son of man (e.g., 16:13).¹

III. DATE AND PLACE WRITTEN

A possible date for the writing of Matthew is A.D. 58. This was before the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) and shortly before Luke wrote his account (see Appendix). There is strong reason to believe that Matthew was the first of the four gospels to be written.

Matthew may have written this gospel from Jerusalem or Antioch of Syria. The history of the manuscript’s circulation from place to place, and of copies made from it, is not known to us today. “Each of the four Gospels, with its distinctive picture of Christ, seems to have circulated at first in the churches of a particular area, but shortly after the appearance of the fourth the four appear to have been bound up together and acknowledged by the churches at large as the authoritative fourfold Gospel of Christ.”²

IV. PURPOSE AND THEME

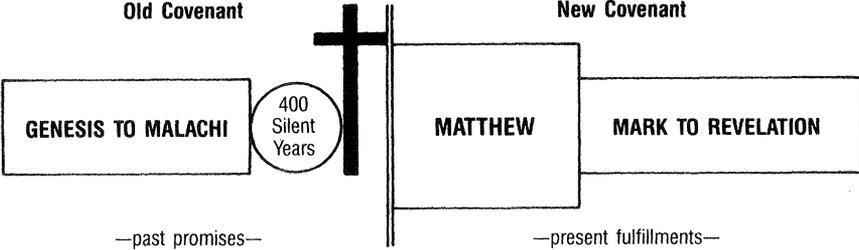
Matthew’s gospel is the historical connecting link between the Old and New Testaments. This is shown on Chart A. Matthew is

1. The book of Acts clearly shows that the first Christians were mainly of Jewish stock and that eventually the fellowship was enlarged by the extension of a ministry to Gentiles.
2. F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments* (Westwood, N.J.: Revell, 1963), p. 93.

preeminently the gospel of fulfillment. The writer seeks “to connect the memories of his readers with their hopes; to show that the Lord of the Christian was the Messiah of the Jew,” the King of the promised kingdom.³

MATTHEW’S LOCATION IN THE BIBLE

Chart A



Of the thirty sections in Matthew that are peculiar to that gospel, most have a bearing on the theme of Christ as King. Read Acts 1:3-6 and observe that the subject of Christ’s kingdom was prominent on Jesus’ lips and in the inquiring hearts of the disciples just before Jesus ascended to heaven.

Listed below are major subjects appearing throughout this gospel that would be of special interest to Jews with Old Testament background. Read the verses cited.

“holy city”; “holy place”—4:5; 24:15; 27:53

“son of David”—1:1, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15, 22:42, 45

fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy—1:22; 2:5, 15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4, 42; 26:31, 54, 56; 27:9-10

Jewish customs—15:1-2; 27:62

law of Moses—5:17-19, 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43; 7:12; 11:13; 12:5; 15:6; 22:36, 40; 23:23

“kingdom of heaven”—(more than 30 references: consult a concordance)

Old Testament prophets—(39 references)

The above selections illustrate the classic couplet:

The New Testament is in the Old concealed;

The Old Testament is in the New revealed.

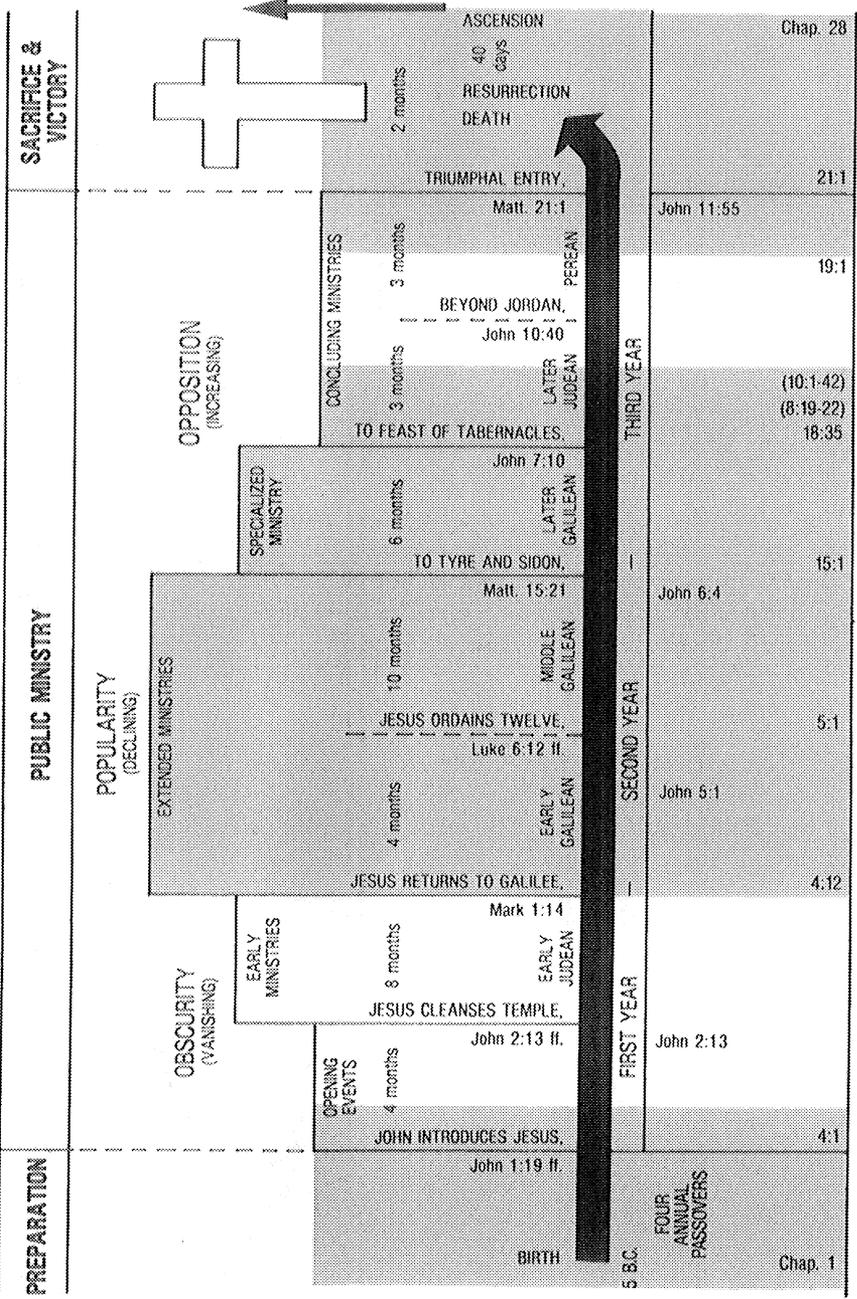
Of this, Joseph Parker writes:

Even in Genesis the leaves are stirring; the air blows upon us from another world. You feel that someone is coming, and so all through the Old Testament. Now it is a sudden flash of light,

3. See W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 2:37.

Chart B

LIFE OF CHRIST SHOWING COVERAGE BY MATTHEW (Shaded Area)



now a transparent darkness. We feel it in history, in psalms, in prophecy. Sometimes a great voice of thunder, sometimes a still, small voice of comfort. Did I hear the blast of a trumpet miles and miles away, rising and falling in cadence? It is the sign of the King's approach. There will be a new personality amongst us.⁴

V. PROMINENT FEATURES

Three features especially characterize this gospel written in a style described by the words “antique simplicity”:

1. Five key discourses of Jesus (of the gospel's 1071 verses, 644 contain spoken words of Jesus)
2. Great Jewish themes: about Law, Messiah, Prophecy, Kingdom, Israel
3. Many references to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

VI. MATTHEW'S COVERAGE OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST

When all four gospels are harmonized into one story of the life of Christ, a composite picture of His earthly ministry appears. This is shown on Chart B. Each gospel reports only selected events and discourses of Jesus' career.⁵ The shaded areas on Chart B show how much is reported by Matthew.

VII. GEOGRAPHY OF JESUS' MINISTRY

The main ingredients of history are people, places, things, and events—all prominent in the gospel account. The second ingredient, places, is the subject of geography. Study the map until you are familiar with the places where Jesus ministered. Observe on the survey Chart D the regions of Jesus' ministry covered by Matthew. Visualize all geographical places whenever they appear in the Matthew account. This will be of great help in your study.

SOME REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the four main stages of study of a book of the Bible?
2. What is known about the author of the first gospel?
4. Quoted in W. W. White, *Thirty Studies in the Gospel by Matthew* (privately published, 1902), p. 12.
5. In fact, the four gospels together report only a small part of Jesus' total ministry (see John 21:25).

3. Who were the intended original readers of Matthew? What evidences in the book itself point to this?
4. When and where did Matthew write the gospel?
5. What is the main theme of this gospel? How is it related to the Old Testament? Why do you think it was placed first in the New Testament canon?
6. What are some of the prominent features of Matthew's gospel?
7. Who should read and study Matthew in this twentieth century? How do its prophecies (fulfilled and yet to be fulfilled) make it relevant to the world of today?

