

- h) More healings. 15:21-31
- i) The feeding of the four thousand. 15:32-39
- j) Another demand for a sign. 16:1-4
- k) The yeast of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. 16:5-12
- l) Peter's confession of Jesus & passion prediction. 16:13-23
- m) The way of discipleship. 16:24-28
- n) The Transfiguration. 17:1-13
- o) The healing of an epileptic boy. 17:14-21
- p) The second major passion prediction. 17:22-23
- q) The temple tax. 17:24-27.
- ii] The 4th Discourse - Life Under Kingdom Authority.
18:1-19:2

6. Opposition and Eschatology:

The Triumph of Grace. 19:3-26:5

- i] Narrative. 19:3-23:39
 - a) Marriage and divorce. 19:3-12
 - b) Blessing little children. 19:13-15
 - c) Wealth and the kingdom. 19:16-22
 - d) The parable of the workers. 20:1-16
 - e) The third major passion prediction. 20:17-19
 - f) Suffering and service. 20:20-28
 - g) Healing two blind men. 20:29-34
 - h) The Triumphal Entry to Jerusalem. 21:1-11
 - i) Cleansing the temple. 21:12-17
 - j) The fig tree.. 21:18-22
 - k) Controversies in the temple court. 21:23-22:46
 - l) Seven woes on the teachers of the law. 23:1-36
- ii] The 5th Discourse - The coming of the Lord. 24:1-26:5

7. The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. 26:6-28:20.



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Matthew: An Introduction

Introduction

In every ancient list of the gospels, Matthew is placed first. Although we usually hold that Mark was the first of the gospels written and that Matthew used Mark to write his gospel, it is quite likely that the early Christians knew of the dating of the gospel better than we do. Of course, it could be that Matthew was placed first, because it was first in importance. It is a substantial work, with large blocks of teaching, and closely tied to the Old Testament through key texts. As with each gospel, Matthew seeks to present a particular view of Jesus. It is not just a recording of the life and teachings of Jesus. It is a theological work in its own right. It has its own message.

Features

i] Extensive use of Old Testament texts.

More than any of the other gospels, Matthew seeks to support the life and teachings of Jesus with Old Testament proof texts. He emphasises the notion of "fulfilment" - Jesus fulfils the words of the prophets.

ii] Jewish.

Matthew comes out of a Jewish Christian background and is most likely written for Jewish believers. Old Testament proof texting, Hebrew and Aramaic untranslated words, Old Testament subject matter.... all lead to this conclusion. That doesn't mean that the gospel is for Jews only. It fully recognises that the doors of the Kingdom are now open to the Gentiles. The Gentiles have joined with remnant Israel and entered the Kingdom.

iii] Structured.

The gospel is very carefully constructed. In particular, there are large blocks of thematic teaching material dispersed within the narrative.

iv] Church orientated.

Unlike the other gospels, Matthew makes mention of the church and produces a gospel which is very useful in teaching new believers the Christian faith. Although the church envisaged is not an institution as such, but a gathering of believers, the gospel reflects the needs of disciplining a fellowship of believers.

Origin

The work is clearly produced for a church situation where Jewish believers are in the majority, and so Palestine is the obvious origin of the gospel. Tradition states that "Matthew wrote among the Hebrews". Of course there were Jewish communities outside Palestine and so other centres have been suggested, eg Syria, particularly Antioch. There is no firm evidence one way or the other, and in the end it makes little difference to our understanding of the gospel.

Date

The tendency has been to date Matthew around 85AD, that is some 20 years after Mark. An organised church, priority of Mark, supposed references to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD..... are used to support the argument. Church tradition has Matthew as the first gospel, written while Peter and Paul were still preaching in Rome. (Tradition has Peter's execution in Rome dated 64AD). There is actually no reason to discount the view of the early Christian writers (eg. Irenaeus). The gospel certainly doesn't reflect the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. Nor is there anything in the gospel to really preclude an early date, say around 60AD. The main problem is that it does seem that Matthew has used Mark as a prime source, but increasingly scholars accept that there may have been an earlier common source used both by Matthew and Mark. In any case, oral tradition would have been firmly set by this stage, and could itself serve as the common tradition.

Outline (D. Carson)

1. Prologue: The Origin and Birth of Jesus Christ. 1:1-2:23

2. The Gospel of the Kingdom. 3:1-7:29.

i] Narrative - Jesus early Galilean ministry. 3:1-4:21

ii] The 1st Discourse - The Sermon on the Mount. 5:1-7:29.

3. The Kingdom Extended Under Jesus' Authority. 8:1-11:1

i] Narrative. 8:1-10:4

a) Healing miracles. 8:1-17

b) The cost of following Jesus. 8:18-22

c) Calming the storm. 8:23-27

d) Jesus demonstrates his authority. 8:28-9:8

e) Calling Matthew. 9:9

f) Eating with sinners. 9:10-13

g) Fasting and the dawning of messianic joy. 9:14-17

h) A resurrection and more healings. 9:18-34

i) Spreading the news of the kingdom. 9:35-10:4

ii] The 2nd Discourse - Mission and Martyrdom. 10:5-11:1

4. Teaching and Preaching the Gospel:

Rising opposition. 11:2-13:53.

i] Narrative. 11:2-12:50

a) Jesus and John the Baptist. 11:2-19

b) The condemned and the accepted. 11:20-30

c) Sabbath conflicts. 12:1-14

d) Jesus' as the prophesied Servant. 12:15-21

e) Confrontation with the Pharisees. 12:22-37

f) Doing the Father's will. 12:46-50

ii] The 3rd Discourse - The Parables of the Kingdom. 13:1-53

5. The Glory and the Shadow:

Progressive Polarization. 13:54-19:2

i] Narrative. 13:54-17:27

a) Rejection at Nazareth. 13:54-58

b) Herod and Jesus. 14:1-12

c) The feeding of the five thousand. 14:13-21

e) The walk on the water. 14:22-33

f) Popularity - constant and unavoidable ministry. 14:34-36

g) Jesus and the tradition of the elders. 15:1-20

by grace through faith.

In the face of the perfection of Christ, the lost can only admit that they are unworthy and foolish servants who hear God's Laws, but do "not put them into practice". Yet the condemned can look to Jesus for mercy, and through mercy receive, as a gift of grace, "surpassing righteousness", and thus eternal standing before God. This gift of righteousness is both of status (imputed) and of state (imparted). In Christ God regards us as righteous (forgiven), and in Christ God begins to shape us toward that righteousness we already possess in him, (ie. we begin to exhibit the qualities of the Sermon on the Mount, qualities only Christ could fulfill).

Structure

There is no single accepted structure for the gospel of Matthew. That doesn't mean the gospel is without structure, just that it is not the neat type of structure enjoyed by the Western mind.

There are a number of obvious patterns:

i] Geographical. Matthew does seem to agree with Mark's geographical structure: Ministry in Galilee, in the North, journey toward Jerusalem, confrontation in Jerusalem, and passion and resurrection.

ii] J. D. Kingsbury's three sections based on the phrase "from that time Jesus began", 4:17, 16:21. He sees three major sections: The person of Jesus the messiah, 1:1-4:16. The Proclamation of Jesus the messiah, 4:17-16:20. The suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus the messiah, 16:21-28:20. These are certainly observable sections to the gospel.

iii] The teachings divisions which sit within the general narrative of the gospel:

Ch.5-7. Jesus' teaching about discipleship

Ch.10. Jesus' teaching about mission

Ch.13. Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom through parables

Ch.18. Jesus' teaching about relationships among disciples

Ch.24-25. Jesus' teaching about the future.

It is clear Matthew designed an intricate frame in which to shape his gospel.

Author

The gospel claims no author. Church tradition has Matthew, the disciple of Jesus, as the author, but early support for this tradition is confused. The writer is clearly an educated Jew who writes fluent Greek in an Aramaic style. He does seem to rest on oral tradition rather than an eye witness account, and so the designation "Matthew" may just be a dedication to a disciple whom the author respects.

The Synoptic problem

From an early time scholars have wondered about the similarities in the first three gospels (the synoptic gospels) and at the same time their differences. Nearly 45% of Matthew's gospel is similar to Mark and even follows the same order. Another 20% is similar to Luke, and again follows much the same order. Up till recent times it was generally held that Mark wrote first, then Luke used Mark and an extra document called "Q", then Matthew used Mark, Luke and Q. This theory is no longer widely held. Some now say Matthew wrote first, then Luke, and then Mark condensed both Matthew and Luke.

It is quite probable that the gospels actually developed independently of each other, say within particular church centres. Probably much of this development was within an oral tradition where the stories and teachings of Jesus were told and retold, but also written down at different times. One would expect these traditions to move amongst the different Christian communities, rub off each other, and develop a common form and order. The verification of the traditions by the apostles would control the development of myth. The "sermon" shape of many of the episodes in the gospels reflect the shaping of the traditions with an active church community. So the final composition and recording of the tradition, reflects not only their origin in the life and teachings of Jesus, the shaping of Christian fellowship and conflict, but the perspectives of the author/editor.

Theology

The purpose of Matthew's gospel is to proclaim that the Kingdom, which God foretold by the prophets, has reached fulfilment in the life, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ who is the promised Messiah, the Son of David. Therefore the messianic Kingdom of Heaven (God) is now - "at hand", (inaugurated). The immediacy of the Kingdom demands an immediate response. Sadly the Jews, and especially their leaders, reject the evidence of the Kingdom's presence in Jesus, and thus stand condemned. Yet a faithful remnant of Israel does believe, and to this vine is grafted the Gentile stem and thus the church becomes the people of God in this final age. This people of God must stand in a troubled and hostile world and give witness to the new reality of the Kingdom (the gospel). This may bring persecution, but as members of the Kingdom they share the blessings of the new covenant. They stand eternally secure in the one who gave his life as a ransom for many.

So the purpose of Matthew's gospel is to document the gospel - "the time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, repent and believe the gospel". To that end it serves to assure those who believe in Jesus (the doctrine of justification), to instruct in the Christian life, provide apologetic and evangelistic resources, encourage in the Christian life, and deepen faith.

Themes in Matthew

i] **Christology** - an explanation of who Jesus is.

Matthew develops a very Jewish picture of Jesus, but not in any way different to the other synoptic gospels.

a) Christ. Matthew likes "Son of David" to define Jesus as the Messiah (the anointed one) who comes to his people Israel to establish the everlasting Kingdom. The term "Christ" is also used, but Jesus only once uses it of himself. It is a loaded term likely to cause trouble with a questioning Jew. The role of the Messiah is liberation in a particular sense. "He will save his people from their sins".

b) Son of Man. This was Jesus' favourite messianic title because it was unusual and confused the crowds. It could just

mean "man", but obviously it referred to the Daniel Son of Man who, in glory and triumph, rules the coming Kingdom, Dan. 7:13-14.

c) King. For Matthew, Jesus is the "King of the Jews".

d) Son of God. Again, this is a loaded messianic term which is mainly said of Jesus, but not by Jesus. The use of the phrase shows something stronger than just messiah. In the coming of Jesus is the coming of God.

ii] **Fulfilment.**

For Matthew, Jesus is the fulfilment of God's purpose for his creation, as revealed in the Old Testament scriptures. The prophets announce the coming of the Kingdom. In Jesus that Kingdom is realized. To that end Matthew constantly shows from Old Testament scripture, how the life and teachings of Jesus brings to final completion all that the prophets proclaimed.

iii] **Church.**

Matthew, in a very particular way, describes a rebellious Israel, whose faithful remnant is Jesus himself. Jesus is the true Israel, and those who join with Jesus share in his standing before God. In Christ, the believer, both Jew and Gentile, becomes part of faithful Israel - the new community, the church. The church described by Matthew is not that of institution, but rather the gathered fellowship of believers.

iv] **Law.**

At first reading Matthew seems to establish a new ethic to replace the Law of Moses. People have often understood the teaching sections, particularly the Sermon on the Mount, as Law for believers. Yet Matthew's purpose is to demonstrate that Jesus has not come to demolish the Law, but to "fulfill" it, in the sense of do it. He is the one faithful Israelite who brings the Law to completion. He sets out to demonstrate a righteousness that exceeds that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, a righteousness of perfection, and by doing it, to offer that righteousness to those who take hold of it in him. This is not a righteousness a person gains by obedience, but is a gift of grace through faith. It is from this understanding of the Law that Paul the Apostle develops his theology of the doctrine of justification