

Lesson 1 Study Guide
The Gospel according to Matthew
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The Character of Matthew's Gospel

Of the four Gospels contained in the canon of the New Testament, those of Matthew and John were most widely read and commented on during the patristic age. Some contend that Matthew was first written as early as AD 50 but more probably after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in AD70. It is safe to say that the Christians of the First and Second Centuries came to know the word and deeds of Christ based upon this text. In our study of the first 200 years of the Early Church we found Justin Martyr (c.100/110-165) describing the Eucharist Celebration and in that text mentioning the Gospel of Matthew. Around AD190 an early canon of the Church ranks Matthew first followed by the other three Gospels. And, Irenaeus (c.135-202) cites this text regularly as inspired Scripture on the same level of the Old Testament. Much later, Origen (185-254) authors the first systematic commentary of Matthew in AD240 and John Chrysostom (344/354-407) gives 90 homilies on the entire Gospel.

Most importantly, this Gospel is written for the Jews as it hails Jesus as Messiah and Son of David. It is a record of the words and deeds of Christ's redemptive work. Matthew uses phrases familiar to the Jews in proving Christ as Messiah. Further this Gospel that makes these claims of Jesus: He was sent only to the "lost sheep of Israel"; the Law is eternally valid; and, like all pious Jews, Christians were to fast, pray and give alms. Matthew alone mentions:

- Christ's founding of the Church upon Peter (16:18);
- That the church can bind, loose and exclude the sinner (18:15-19); and
- Where two or more gather in His name Jesus will be present (18:20).

Please understand that while Matthew focuses on Peter, it is not as an individual but as an image of the church and voice of true Israel. Any other assumption of this text on Peter is a misinterpretation of Holy Scripture.

The Writing of Matthew's Gospel

According to Fr. Farley, this gospel was originally written in Aramaic and then translated into Greek. He believes that this piece was really a collection of teachings and miracles of Christ for the Jewish churches of Palestine where Matthew worked. It was written in the early 60's or 70's by a Christian scribe in Matthews's community of Palestine under his authority as an Apostle.

This text has been put together in 5 discourses, a sort of Christian Torah.

1. Christ's ethical Teaching – Sermon on the Mount (5)
2. Teaching on prayer (6:5-19)
3. His teaching on mission;
4. His parables; and

5. Lament over Jerusalem's hardness of heart.

Matthew presents a systematic body of teaching so that the teachers and evangelists would have easy access to what Christ said on a particular subject.

1. In Matthew, Jesus is considered the _____ and hailed as the _____
2. The New Testament is a _____ the Book of Matthew is the most _____ of all.
3. Matthew is a record of how God _____ His word and sent the a _____ to carry out the work of _____.
4. Fr. Lawrence feels strongly that Matthew comprised a series of Christ's teaching and miracles in _____.
5. T or F. The Gospel of Mark is a basis for Matthew.
6. In Matthew the Pharisees are pictured as _____ and _____.
7. This gospel is written about AD ____ which is when _____ was destroyed.
8. This Gospel is similar to the _____.

Chapter 1. The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

“And it shall come to about, when your days are fulfilled and you rest with your father, I will raise your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will prepare his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish his throne forever. I shall be a Father to him, and he shall be to me a son.” (2 Samuel 7:12-14)

The Gospel of John that we studied a few years ago states, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)’ John later adds, “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,”(John 1:14) Matthew wrote correctly in this genealogy portraying Christ as “the son of David and the son of Abraham’ for who can speak of his descendants (Isaiah 53:8). Yet, He is before the centuries and of one substance with the Father himself from the standpoint of eternity. But by this genealogy He is also numbered among the families of humanity. For in truth, while remaining God, Christ became man without ceasing to be God.

Matthew has made it clear that Christ participated in our human generation and in our nature. Otherwise one might claim that he appeared as an illusion rather than by becoming genuinely human. Think of what might have been said if none of this had been written? (Severus of Antioch 488-538)

(Note: While this statement is clearly Orthodox - Christ is perfect man and perfect God, actually this bishop was a Monophysite theologian– thinking that Christ could not have been two persons)

Matthew tells of the second birth of the Lord in the flesh and for this reason traces his family line from Abraham, treating separately the tribe of Judah, until he comes down to Joseph and Mary.

