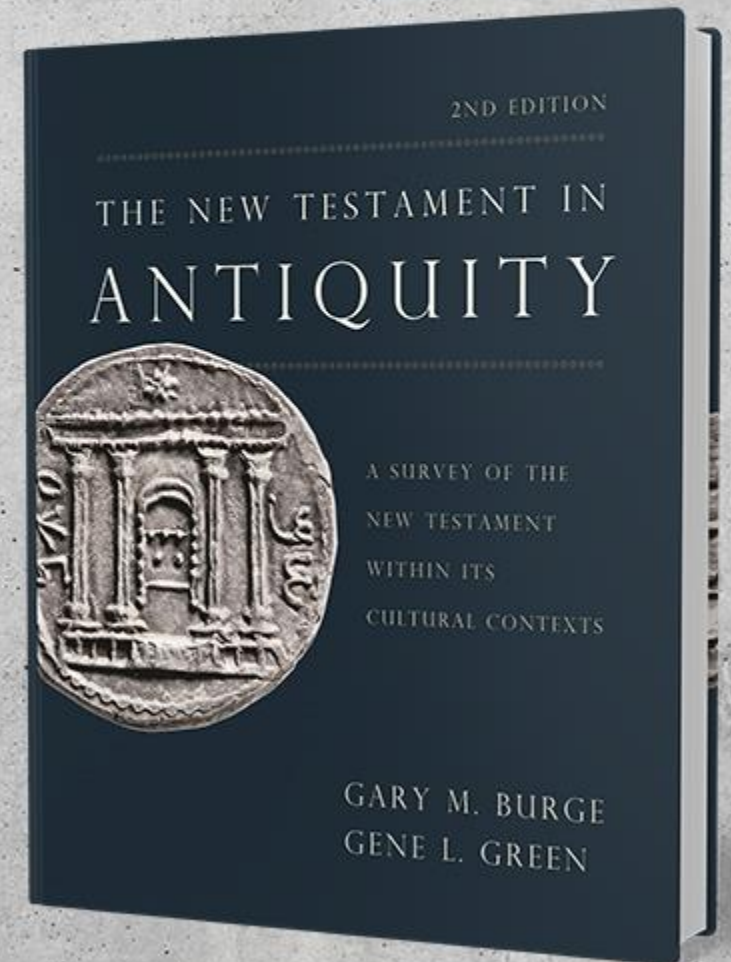


Chapter 8
The Gospel According to
Matthew



THE SETTING OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

- Matthew's audience was primarily Jewish.
 - Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis, said Matthew wrote in a Hebrew *dialecto* or style of writing.
 - He exhibits a keen understanding of Jewish law and custom.
 - This gospel's thoroughly Semitic character in subject matter and style suggests it originated in Palestine or Syrian Antioch.



MATTHEW'S RELATIONSHIP TO JUDAISM

- Likely written around the time of the First Jewish Revolt
 - Devastation and renewal of Jewish culture are major themes in this gospel.
- Some suggest Matthew rejects Judaism for the church.
 - However, Matthew focuses on Jesus's criticism of Jerusalem's leadership, while emphasizing Jesus' own authority as a Jew.
- Matthew redefines God's people as Jews *and* Gentiles.
 - Criticism of leadership promotes an inclusive understanding of who the people of God really are.

THE LITERARY FORM OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

- Matthew is noted for his symmetry.
 - He alternates between narrative and discourse.
- There are five major teaching sections concluding with the phrase “When Jesus had finished saying these things...”
 - The Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7)
 - The Missionary Discourse (Mt 10)
 - The Parables of the Kingdom (Mt 13)
 - The Church and the Kingdom (Mt 18)
 - The Judgment Discourse (Mt 24–25)
- This fivefold division may reflect the five books of Moses.

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS IN MATTHEW AND LUKE

- In Judaism, genealogies served as proof of priestly or royal lineage and a heritage of privilege and power.
 - Jews speculated about the genealogy of the Messiah as being either priestly or from David.
- Matthew and Luke send a spiritual message.
 - Jesus bears the line of David.
 - Jesus is genuinely linked to the human race.
 - Jesus is likewise the Son of God.
- Matthew and Luke have complimentary genealogies.
 - Some say both are from Joseph (one biological, one legal), while others say Luke's is the genealogy of Mary while Matthew's is that of Joseph.

MATTHEW'S STORY OF JESUS

- Prologue and introduction (1:1–2:23)
- Jesus's baptism (3:1–4:11)
- Jesus's Galilean ministry (4:12–18:35)
- Jesus moves toward Jerusalem (19:1–28:20)



Prologue and Introduction (1:1–2:23)

- Matthew often refers to five prophecies fulfilled.
 - The virgin will conceive Immanuel (1:23, Isa 7:14).
 - Jesus's birth in Bethlehem (2:6–7, Mic 5:2)
 - King Herod's murdering infants in Bethlehem (2:17–18, Jer 31:15)
 - The family's flight to Egypt (2:15, Hos 11:1)
 - Jesus's childhood in Nazareth (2:23, Judg. 13:5, Isa 11:1)
- Matthew finds the life of Moses to be a template for Jesus's own life.
 - Both were born under rulers who abused God's people and endangered children.
Both were called to deliver God's people.

Jesus's Baptism (3:1–4:11)

- Jesus does not need baptism for repentance but to begin his public ministry.
 - John hesitates to baptize Jesus, but does so “to fulfill all righteousness” (3:15).
 - Ritual purity was important to Jews who would wash in *mikvehs*.
 - The Holy Spirit alights on him and consecrates him to teach and to heal.
 - The Father's voice declares: “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (3:17).



Jesus's Galilean Ministry (4:12–18:35)

- Matthew's parallel of Jesus with Moses is striking.
 - The Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5–7) recalls Moses ascending a mountain and receiving the Ten Commandments from God.
 - The Beatitudes (5:3–12) reflect the Ten Commandments.
 - Jesus reinterprets the law with his “You have heard it said...but I tell you” formula, which focuses not only on the action but intention.
- Jesus addresses the Pharisees' concern for righteousness and purity.
 - Jesus teaches that righteousness includes mercy towards others and the pursuit of social justice (25:31–46), because God desires in the law “mercy, not sacrifice” (12:7; cf 9:13).

- Jesus practiced what he preached.
 - He not only taught, but calmed storms (8:23–27), healed demoniacs (8:28–42), and brought a synagogue leader’s daughter back to life (9:18–26).
 - He then tells his disciples to do the same.
- The kingdom of heaven is a central theme in his teachings.
 - Chapter 13 has many parables saying “the kingdom of heaven is like ...” and each example is something socially, politically, or numerically insignificant or easily overlooked.
 - Although each example has great potential, such as a mustard seed (13:31–32), which is barely visible but grows into a great bush



- Jesus's identity is the central message of his ministry.
 - In Caesarea Philippi Jesus asks his disciples the question, "Who do you say that I am?" and Peter responded, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (16:15–16).
 - Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up onto a mountain and reveals his glory to them. Again the Father's voice declares, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him" (17:5).
- Matthew refers to the church (*ekklesia*) in his gospel.
 - No other gospel uses this term.
 - It heightens the sense of community around Jesus and his presence in the midst of the church: "Wherever two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (18:20).
 - This community has imperfections within it, which will be sorted out "at harvest" when weeds and wheat are separated (13:24–30).

Jesus Moves Toward Jerusalem (19:1–28:20)

- Jesus moves south to Jerusalem while teaching and healing.
 - Pharisees challenge him on divorce, and he replies that marriage is a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman and divorce should be avoided at all costs, which was revolutionary when there were always grounds for divorce in Judaism (19:11).
 - He heals two blind men in Jericho (20:29–34).
- Matthew says that all of Jerusalem was shaken by his arrival.
 - He immediately disrupts the selling of animals and exchanging of money in the temple.
 - The temple is for prayer and worship, not commercialism.

- Response to Jesus's actions in the temple is swift and negative.
 - The chief priests and scribes challenge his authority to teach and to heal.
 - He remains in the temple for days debating with its leadership about such things as paying taxes to Rome and the resurrection.
 - His response keeps things balanced and separate: "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's" (22:21).
- Jesus gives his final discourse and warnings of judgment.
 - He repeatedly charges, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites" (23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29).
 - He warns his disciples of dangers they may face (24:6).
 - He prophesies the temple's destruction and the last days of the prophets and terrible sufferings.



- Unique details in Matthew's Passion highlight his interests.
 - Fulfillment of prophecy at Jesus' betrayal (26:54) and Judas's suicide fulfills Jeremiah and Zechariah's prophecy about the field and thirty pieces of silver (27:3–10; Jer 32:6–8; Zech 11:12–13).
- Only Matthew tells that the chief priests and Pharisees request Pilate to put guards by Jesus's tomb.
 - This was to keep his disciples from "fraudulently" claiming that Jesus rose from the dead as he promised (27:62–66).
 - These guards are frightened by an earthquake and become "like dead men" (28:4) when an angel opens the tomb.
 - There is another earthquake earlier when Jesus died on the cross and the tombs of the faithful were opened (27:51–53).

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

- Through its history, the gospel has been credited to Matthew, one of Jesus's disciples, though no author is mentioned.
- Some scholars prefer to see the gospel as anonymous.
 - An eyewitness would not need to use Mark as a source.
 - The Trinitarian formula is too theologically sophisticated (28:19).
 - Matthew's name must have been attached in the second century.

- But each of these claims can be refuted.
 - Markan priority is not final, and this claim ignores how much the disciples faithfully shared with one another.
 - The church's theological sophistication grew very quickly, as in Paul's early letters where Trinitarian categories are present.
 - Christians did not hold as authoritative those works whose authorship could not be verified, as Tertullian explained in the second century (*Against Marcion* 4:2).
- The date of Matthew's gospel is likely between AD 60 and 80.
 - This agrees with Matthew's authorship and being an eyewitness.
 - It accounts for the circulation of Mark.
 - It recognizes the separation between Judaism and the church, as Matthew refers to "their synagogue" (4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54).