

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

INTRODUCTION:

Of the four “Gospels” (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), the first three are called the Synoptics, and present the details of Jesus’ birth, ministry and message (repentance and baptism for the remission of sins), being thus called because these three take the **same**, or common, **view** of the subject at hand. On the other hand, the gospel according to John is not so much a biography of Jesus’ life as it is a selection of his signs, work and teaching, together with the testimony of many persons that confirms that he is the Son of God (God the Son). The earliest manuscripts bore the titles of “According To Matthew”, “According to Mark”, “According to Luke”, “According to John”. Of course, there is only *one* gospel (Lk. 2:10; Gal. 1:6-10), but there are *four* accounts of it.

The evidence from the earliest of times attributes to Matthew the apostle the authorship of this gospel account, the first one in the present order of New Testament books. He was the son of Alphaeus, a Jewish tax collector (publican) in the employ of the Romans, and also was called Levi (Mark 2:14). His secular work trained him to be a good record-keeper. Except for his call to the apostleship of Jesus, and his name in the several lists of the apostles, no other mention is made of him in the Scriptures.

The publicans were generally hated, because as a rule they abused their power and extorted from the people. But Matthew was different. Luke tells us that when Jesus called him to follow him, that “he forsook all, and rose up and followed him” (5:28). (Note the modesty of Matthew in the matter, Matt. 9:9). This is the last thing the average tax collector would have done.

Note: We don’t have to be like those who might characterize our profession. Con-

sider Zaccheaus, Lk. 19:1-10.

The contents point to the conclusion that he wrote principally for Jewish readers. He knows that his readers do not need explanations of Jewish terms and Old Testament references, so he gives none. The theme: Jesus, the royal Messiah, the Savior and King. He is set forth from beginning to end as the King of the Jews. Throughout the book the phrase “kingdom of heaven” is frequently used.

The kingdom of Christ was prophesied in the Old Testament, so Matthew appeals to the prophets and points to the fulfillment of their prophecies, as he sets forth this King and his spiritual kingdom. The keyword in the book: “fulfilled”.

The genealogy here is through Joseph, the legal father of Jesus (but who did not beget him—see ver. 16!). (Luke gives the genealogy through Mary, the daughter of Heli).

All the evidence points to Matthew’s being the first of the other three to write a “gospel”. He was one of the twelve apostles of Christ, and wrote by inspiration. Although he was an eyewitness, he did not have to depend upon memory to recall the facts in the life of Christ which he narrated. The Holy Spirit brought to his remembrance the things that were to be recorded, and kept him from any error (Jn. 14:26; 16:13).

Matthew does not follow strict chronological order, but only general. He groups his material by subjects. Three matters which are dealt with in detail are the Sermon On The Mount, the Destruction Of Jerusalem, and the Final Judgment. The book cannot be dated with certainty, but about 50 A.D. is a safe assumption. The Gospel According To Matthew is one of the most widely read books in the world.