

Topics

- What is a Gospel?
- Why Four?
- Who wrote Matthew? Sources?
- Audience? Date?
- Matthew's Themes
- Groups

A. What is a Gospel? A portrait, not a photograph

- ❖ 21<sup>st</sup> Century > desires facts, history, what actually happened; science; literalness = Biography
  - Greco-Roman Society > desired portrait of *character* of a person; exemplary words/actions; lessons to take from the life of the person
- ❖ Gospels a distinct literary genre > NOT fiction, NOT history, NOT journalism, and NOT biography
  - Distinct genre to account for a unique person, events, and truths
  - Early Church > This + “testimonies of faith” – addressed to community of faithful, not proof; symbolic and theological
  - God reveals those things necessary for salvation. The rest is remembered by communities of faith in various ways.” (Sr. St. John Begnaud, SSMN)
- ❖ E.g., Mark 1:1: “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”
  - NOT: “The beginning of the story/biography of Jesus”
  - Good News is identical with Jesus Christ; hence, Gospel is not an account of His life, but a proclamation of salvation through the Risen Christ; a proclamation in which He is *made present*.
    - Gospel = a proclamation of the Christian message in the form of a life of Jesus
    - “Good News” = Old English “god-spel,” translating Greek *euaggelion* (=Latin *Evangelium*). “Word used in NT to mean, not a book, but the Good News of salvation, Jesus himself being both its messenger and its message.” (JB)
- ❖ NOT “proof” of Jesus, but the meaning of Jesus for humanity

B. Why Four Gospels?

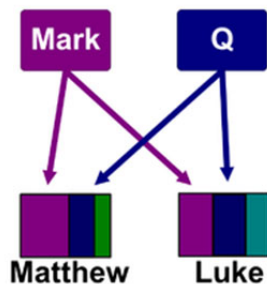
- ❖ 3 “Synoptics” (= “with one eye”) + John
- ❖ Memory and Remembering – different for different people
- ❖ Different audiences remember and respond to different stories
- ❖ Different local ecclesial challenges in particular times and places
- ❖ Don't try to *harmonize* the four

- ❖ Layers/Sources/Chronology
  - Jesus's words and deeds c. 27-30 CE
  - Apostolic preaching c. 33 > Stephen
  - Oral traditions (Q source) c. 37 > Paul's conversion
  - Adaptation & interpretation c. 40 > Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> journey
    - c. 49 > Council of Jerusalem; Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> journey (c. 50)
  - Stories told during Eucharist & in preaching
  
- ❖ New Testament Writings c. 51-63 > some Epistles
  - Death of the Early Leaders
    - Gospel writers select material needed for their purposes
    - Put the stories and sayings in an order/structure that serves purposes
  - Destruction of the Temple
    - c. 70 > Mark
    - c. 80s > Matthew & Luke
    - c. 90s > John's Gospel
    - Post-90s > other Epistles; Revelation
  
- ❖ Canon established > Council of Hippo 393 CE
  - Fixed canon at 27 books
  - Confirmed at Council of Carthage 397

### C. Who wrote Matthew? Sources? Audience? Date?

- ❖ Matthew most widely known & *listed* first, but Mark most likely earlier
  - Matthew & Luke draw on Mark (see diagram below)
  - Quote R. Brown, p. 171, on Matthew as “church's Gospel par excellence”
- ❖ Probably NOT the Apostle Matthew
  - Why would an eyewitness need to copy Mark?
  - Apostle Matthew *may be* the source of an early collection of “sayings” of Jesus in Aramaic (Q source?)
    - Papias (c. 125 CE): “Matthew compiled the sayings in the Aramaic language, and everyone translated them as well as he could.”
- ❖ Matthew = mature synthesis of Mark and Q
  - Q sources (**Q source** (also called **Q document**, **Q Gospel**, or **Q** from German: *Quelle*, meaning "source") is a hypothetical written collection of primarily Jesus' sayings (*logia*). Q is part of the common material found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke but not in the Gospel of Mark. According to this hypothesis, this material was drawn from the early Church's oral & written traditions. (More on this, if you want, by Peter Judge 9/29)

Two-source Hypothesis



- Careful ordering of teachings and sayings and actions
  - Addressed to a community traumatized by separation from synagogue & by influx of Gentiles
  - Need new way of looking at Christ & Church; at OT & salvation history
  - New synthesis of prophets and Law, up to JBAP
  - Public ministry of Jesus restricted to land & people of Israel
  - Post-resurrection > mission to all nations
  - Church = true people of God, founded by God's Son, who fulfilled Law & Prophets
- "Jewish Christian" who is open to Gentile mission
  - Use of Old Testament
  - Jesus as Isaiah's "suffering servant" (3:17; 8:16-17; 12:18ff; 20:28)
  - Respect for Torah
  - Piety, works
- Written post 80 CE and break with Judaism
  - Probably in Antioch in Syria (had sizable Jewish population)

#### E. Matthew's Themes

- ❖ Jesus as "fulfillment" of OT – a distinctive Matthean formula
  - NOT in the sense that OT *predicted* Jesus' life, but that OT passages *validate* the divine origin of this mission
  - Jesus' teaching *completes* the Mosaic Law but does not annul or replace it.
    - Rather, it *perfects the spirit* of Torah
    - Jesus as new Moses – e.g., Sermon on Mount > greater than Moses ("You have heard it said, but I say to you.....") {See JNT, p. 2}
      - 11:11-15 (role of JBAP)
      - 20:1ff (workers)
      - 21:28-43 (parables of 2 sons; wicked husbandmen)
      - 26:26-29 (Eucharist)
      - 27:51 (veil of Temple)
    - Church as New Israel -- (Mt 10 & mission of 12 to towns & villages of *Israel*)
- ❖ Kingdom of Heaven: Controlling theme in Matthew ("From that moment Jesus began his preaching with the message, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'" (4:17)
  - Beatitudes
  - Kingdom parables (chap. 13)
  - Wedding Feast (22:1-14)
- ❖ Jesus as teacher (importance of Q source) – parables and sayings sections
- ❖ Law of Love
  - Matthew is against legalism, but doesn't share Paul's *anti-nomianism* (5:17-48; 6:1-18; 23:3-40) > Jesus as authoritative interpreter of Law
  - Stresses *action & behavior* as keys to righteousness (unlike Paul) (6:27 & 7:21-24 & CSB notes)

- ❖ Miracles
  - Mark – miracles a sign of power of Jesus over cosmic forces; hence, sign of a new age
    - Disciples fear in spite of miracles
  - Matthew – miracles also signify coming a new age, but in aspect of compassion, humility, & mercy
    - Closely linked to faith (8:1ff, and CSB note)
- ❖ Solitude and Prayer – see article by Donald Senior, CP
- ❖ Authority and Service (20:24-28)
- ❖ Judgment and Forgiveness (6:14; 7:1; 18:35; 25:31ff)

F. Outline of Matthew – Introduction; 5 Sections of Narrative & Discourse (compare Torah: 5 Books of Moses); Coda (Death and Resurrection)

Intro -- Infancy Narrative (1:1 – 2:23)

1. Proclamation of Kingdom (3:1 – 7:29)
  2. Ministry & Mission in Galilee (8:1 – 11:1)
  3. Opposition from Israel (11:2 – 13:53)
  4. Jesus, Kingdom, & Church (13:54 – 18:35)
  5. Ministry in Judea & Jerusalem (19:1 – 25:46)
- Passion, Death, & Resurrection (26:1 – 28:20)

G. Groups we meet in Matthew – all in context of an occupied land; how live faithfully

*Sadducees* – aristocratic, supporters of Hasmoneans

Stress Law, traditional & without interpretation (e.g, no resurrection); Temple

*Pharisees* – populist; avoid Gentiles & sinners

Written and oral Law (interpret Law according to circumstances); Synagogue

*Essenes* – withdrawal; “teacher of righteousness” to interpret Law; purity; messianic age

*Herodians* – partisans of Herod the Great and his sons installed after Roman conquest (63 BCE)

*Zealots* – “guerilla” resistance to Roman rule

Abbreviations:

- CSB Catholic Study Bible  
 DB Dictionary of the Bible (McKenzie)  
 ff & following verses  
 JB Jerusalem Bible  
 JBC Jerome Biblical Commentary  
 JBAP John the Baptist  
 JNT *Jewish New Testament*  
 Q Q source (see above)