**Hourglass Bible Study**

**Fall 2021**

**Background Information**

**Matthew**

**Dates, Authorship, and Sources**

Matthew was most likely written around 80 A.D. That was about 20 years after the gospel of Mark and perhaps 10 years after the gospel of Luke, although Luke’s date is uncertain. It was about 15 years after the Jewish revolt against Roma,10 years after the temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed, and one year after Mount Vesuvius had destroyed Pompeii. The emperor was Titus, who had been in charge of putting down the Jewish rebellion and had destroyed the Temple. It was 15 years after the great fire in Rome and the period of persecution of Christians there. Around this time, the Roman Colosseum was completed and opened with 100 days of gladiator battles.

Palestine was divided into Samaria, Judaea, and Idumaea and was ruled by sons of Herod the Great. (from James Evans’ notes).

The identity of the author is unknown, but “was probably a male Jew, standing on the margin between traditional and non-traditional Jewish values, and familiar with technical legal aspects of scripture being debated in his time.[[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Matthew#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDuling2010302-13)” (Wikipedia, Gospel of Matthew, 8/24/2021, citing *Duling, Dennis C. (2010).*[*"The Gospel of Matthew"*](https://books.google.com/books?id=ygcgn8h-jo4C&pg=PA295)*, p. 310.*). James Evans found sources that said it might have been a Jewish Christian from Syrian Antioch.

Scholars believe that the writer of Matthew had access to the gospel of Mark because much of the language (about 90%) in Mark appears in Matthew. There is debate about whether the writer had access to the gospel of Luke. Some scholars think that Matthew’s writer had access to another source that is now lost, called Q.(See sources listed in Wikipedia, Gospel of Matthew, 8/24/2021).

**Issues addressed**

Here’s a useful summary from Wikipedia, Gospel of Matthew, 8/24/2021)

Matthew seems to emphasize that the [Jewish tradition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism) should not be lost in a church that was increasingly becoming gentile. The gospel reflects the struggles and conflicts between the evangelist's community and the other Jews, particularly with its sharp criticism of the scribes and [Pharisees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharisees) with the position that through their rejection of Christ, the [Kingdom of God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_God_(Christianity)) has been taken away from them and given instead to the church. The divine nature of Jesus was a major issue for the Matthaean community, the crucial element separating the [early Christians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Christianity) from their Jewish neighbors; while Mark begins with Jesus' [baptism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism_of_Jesus) and [temptations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temptations_of_Christ), Matthew goes back to Jesus' origins, showing him as the [Son of God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Son_of_God_(Christianity)) from his birth, the fulfillment of [messianic prophecies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_messianic_prophecies) of the [Old Testament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Testament). The title [Son of David](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_and_titles_of_Jesus_in_the_New_Testament#Son_of_David) identifies Jesus as the healing and miracle-working Messiah of Israel (it is used exclusively in relation to miracles), sent to Israel alone. As [Son of Man](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Son_of_Man) he will return to judge the world, an expectation which his disciples recognize but of which his enemies are unaware. As [Son of God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Son_of_God), God is revealing himself through his son, and Jesus proving his sonship through his obedience and example.

**Views of its structure**

One view is that the book is organized like the 5 sections in the Pentateuch

3:1 – 7:29 Concerning discipleship

8:1 – 11:1 Concerning apostleship

11:2 – 13:53 Concerning the hiding of the revelation

13:54 – 19:1a Concerning church administration

19:1b – 26:2 Concerning the judgment

Another view is that Matthew is a follow-up to Mark (this seems more commonly used)

3:1 – 4:11 John the Baptist, Jesus’s baptism and temptation

4:13 – 13:58 Galilean ministry

14:1 – 16:28 Retirement from Galilee, Peters confession, first prediction of the passion.

17:1 – 17:27 Transfiguration

18:1 – 18:25 Teaching humility, discipline, and forgiveness

19:1 – 20:34 Journey to Jerusalem

21:1 – 25:46 Ministry in Jerusalem

26:1 – 28:20 Passion and resurrection

(Taken from James Evans’ original notes)

**Interesting historical timeline**

https://tinyurl.com/matthewhourglass