

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

# MATTHEW

## THEME

### Author and Title

Since none of the four Gospels includes the names of their authors in the original manuscripts, they are all technically anonymous. This is not surprising, since the authors likely compiled their Gospel accounts for members of their own churches, to whom they were already well known. However, historical documents from early church history provide significant insight into the Gospels' authorship. The earliest traditions of the church are unanimous in attributing the first Gospel to Matthew, the former tax collector who followed Jesus and became one of his 12 disciples. The earliest and most important of these traditions comes from the second century in the writings of Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor (c. A.D. 135), and Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in Gaul (c. 175). Because these early church leaders had either direct or indirect contact with the apostolic community, they would have been very familiar with the Gospels' origins. Moreover, no competing traditions now exist (if they ever did) attributing Matthew's Gospel to any other author. If Matthew did not write the book, it is hard to see why the false ascription would bear the name of a relatively obscure apostle when more well-known and popular figures could have been chosen (e.g., Philip, Thomas, or James).

Matthean authorship is denied by some modern scholars, especially on the view that the author of Matthew borrowed much of his material from Mark's Gospel. Given that Matthew was an apostle while Mark was not, it is assumed that Matthew would not have needed (or chosen) to depend on Mark's material. But even if Matthew did borrow from Mark's Gospel, it would only have added to Matthew's apostolic credibility since the evidence suggests that Mark himself relied extensively on the testimony of the apostle Peter.

When Jesus called him, Matthew was sitting in the tax collector's booth ([9:9](#)), collecting taxes for Herod Antipas, and this may have been along a commercial trading route about 4 miles (6.4 km) from Capernaum. However, since the narrative surrounding Matthew's call is set in Capernaum ([9:1, 7, 10; cf. 4:13](#)), the tax booth may have been on the Sea of Galilee at Capernaum, since Herod also taxed fishermen. At his calling in the first Gospel he is referred to as "Matthew" ([9:9](#)), while Mark's and Luke's

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Gospels describe him as “Levi the son of Alphaeus” ([Mark 2:14](#)) and “Levi” ([Luke 5:27](#)). The reason for the variation in names has elicited much discussion, but most scholars believe that the tax collector had two names, Matthew Levi, which he either possessed from birth or took on following his conversion. His occupation as a tax collector implies that he had training in scribal techniques and was thus able to write, while his identity as a Galilean Jewish Christian suggests his ability to interpret the words and actions of Jesus in light of OT messianic expectations.

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## Date

The precise date of the writing of Matthew’s Gospel is not known. Some scholars argue for a date later than the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, since Jesus alludes to this event in [24:1–28](#). Of course, such a conclusion is warranted only if one denies Jesus’ ability to predict the future. In light of Irenaeus’s assertion (c. A.D. 175) that Matthew composed his Gospel while Peter and Paul were still living (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.1.1), it is traditionally dated to the late 50s or early 60s.

## Theme

This is the story of Jesus of Nazareth, recorded by the apostle Matthew as a compelling witness that Jesus is the long-anticipated Messiah, who brought the kingdom of God to earth and is the prophesied fulfillment of God’s promise of true peace and deliverance for both Jew and Gentile.

## Purpose, Occasion, and Background

Matthew crafted his account to demonstrate Jesus’ messianic identity, his inheritance of the Davidic kingship over Israel, and his fulfillment of the promise made to his ancestor Abraham ([Matt. 1:1](#)) to be a blessing to all the nations ([Gen. 12:1–3](#)). Thus in large part Matthew’s Gospel is an evangelistic tool aimed at his fellow Jews, persuading them to recognize Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah. At the same time, the Gospel reveals clearly to Gentiles that salvation through Jesus the Messiah is available to all nations. For Jewish Christians, Matthew’s Gospel provides encouragement to stand steadfast amid opposition from their own countrymen, as well as Gentile pagans, secure in the knowledge of their citizenship in God’s kingdom.

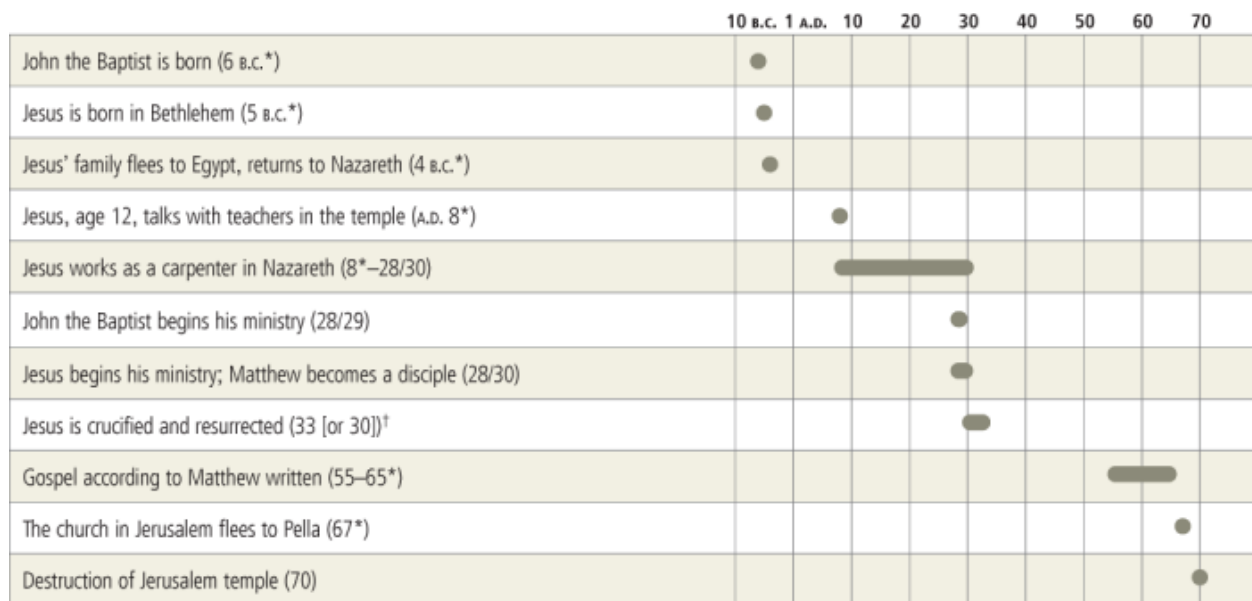
Against the backdrop of such opposition to Jesus’ message, Matthew establishes the identity of Christ’s church as the true people of God, who now find their unity in service to Jesus despite previous racial, class, and religious barriers. His Gospel provides necessary instruction for all future disciples, Jew and Gentile, who form a

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new community centered upon devotion and obedience to Jesus the Messiah amid significant opposition.

Many scholars have suggested that the prominent church in Antioch of Syria, whose members included both Jewish and Gentile Christians (cf. [Acts 11:19–26; 13:1–3](#)), was the intended audience of Matthew’s Gospel. They point to the Gospel’s influence on Ignatius, an early bishop of Antioch. At the same time, Matthew’s message spoke to all of the fledgling churches of his day, and the Gospel appears to have circulated rapidly and widely.

## Timeline



\* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or; † see *The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion*, pp. 1809–1810

## History of Salvation Summary

Jesus comes as the messianic King in the line of David to fulfill the OT, especially its promises of everlasting salvation. The ultimate fulfillment comes with his crucifixion and resurrection. (For an explanation of the “History of Salvation,” see the [Overview of the Bible](#).)

## Literary Features

The primary genre of Matthew is the Gospel, and the organizing framework of all four Gospels is narrative or story. However, with the narrative framework of Matthew’s Gospel, a major amount of space is devoted to Jesus’ discourses. Beyond that, the usual array of subtypes are found: birth stories, calling or vocation stories, miracle

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stories, parables, pronouncement stories, encounter stories, passion stories, and resurrection stories.

The most notable literary feature of the book's format is the alternating pattern around which the book is organized. The material in Matthew's Gospel is based on a rhythmic, back-and-forth movement between blocks of narrative material and blocks of discourse material. There are five passages of discourse, which can be viewed as corresponding to the five digits on the human hand and can be easily remembered if one lists the questions that Jesus in effect answers in each unit: (1) How are citizens of the kingdom to live ([chs. 5-7](#))? (2) How are traveling disciples to conduct themselves on their evangelistic journeys ([ch. 10](#))? (3) What parables did Jesus tell ([ch. 13](#))? (4) What warning did Jesus give about not hindering entrance into the kingdom and on forgiveness ([chs. 18-20](#))? (5) How will human history end ([chs. 24-25](#))? Matthew even used a set formula to signal these units, ending them with the statement "when Jesus had finished [these sayings]" ([7:28](#); [11:1](#); [13:53](#); [19:1](#); [26:1](#)).

Matthew's distinguishing stylistic features include recurrent quotation and citation from the OT and an emphasis on Jesus as being kingly or royal (even the opening genealogy places Jesus' father Joseph in the Davidic line). Additionally, Matthew is fond of the term "Son of David" as a title for Christ, statements to the effect that "this was done that it might be fulfilled as the prophets had said," and the formula "the kingdom of heaven is like ..."

## Key Themes

1. <i>Portrait of Jesus.</i> Jesus is the true Messiah, Immanuel (God incarnate with his people), Son of God, King of Israel, and Lord of the church.	<a href="#">1:1, 23</a> ; <a href="#">2:2</a> ; <a href="#">14:33</a> ; <a href="#">16:16</a> ; <a href="#">18:20</a> ; <a href="#">21:5-9</a>
2. <i>The bridge between Old and New Testaments.</i> Jesus fulfills the hopes and promises of the OT through his messianic genealogy, fulfillment of OT prophecies, and fulfillment of the OT law. These bridging qualities may have been one reason Matthew was chosen to begin the NT canon. Another possible reason is that many in the early church thought that Matthew was the first Gospel written, and another is that it was personally written by an apostle, in contrast to Mark and Luke.	<a href="#">1:1-17, 22-23</a> ; <a href="#">2:4-5</a> , <a href="#">15, 17, 23</a> ; <a href="#">5:17-20</a>
3. <i>Salvation-historical "particularism" and "universalism."</i> Matthew's Gospel traces God's continuing work of salvation within Israel ("particularism") and extends this	<a href="#">10:5-6</a> ; <a href="#">28:19</a>

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<p>saving work to all the peoples of the earth (“universalism”), through the person and work of Christ.</p>	
<p>4. <i>The new community of faith.</i> The early church included both Jewish and Gentile Christians. Matthew’s Gospel would have encouraged them to transcend ethnic and cultural barriers to find unity in service to Jesus the Messiah as members of his universal church.</p>	<p><a href="#">11:28; 16:18–19; 28:19</a></p>
<p>5. <i>The church is built and maintained by Jesus’ continuing presence.</i> God’s saving work in the present age is carried out chiefly by and through the church, which Jesus continues to build and inhabit. Anyone who responds to Jesus’ call—whether Jew or Gentile, male or female, rich or poor, slave or free—is brought into the fellowship of his church to enjoy him and participate in the community of his kingdom.</p>	<p><a href="#">16:18; 18:15–20; 22:10; 28:20</a></p>
<p>6. A “<i>great commission</i>” for evangelism and mission. Jesus’ command to “make disciples of all nations” is found only in Matthew and has motivated countless believers to reach out to the lost with the good news of the gospel. As Jesus made disciples in his earthly ministry, he commissions his church to follow his example.</p>	<p><a href="#">28:19</a></p>
<p>7. <i>Jesus’ five discourses recorded in Matthew can be viewed as a manual on discipleship.</i> The presentation of five of Jesus’ major discourses, addressed at least in part to his disciples, forms the most comprehensive collection of Jesus’ instructional ministry found anywhere in Scripture. They paint a holistic picture of life lived in obedience to Christ, and the church has used them to instruct disciples through the ages.</p>	<p><a href="#">chs. 5–7; 10; 13; 18–20; 24–25</a></p>

## The Setting of Matthew

The events in the book of Matthew take place almost entirely within the vicinity of Palestine, an area extending roughly from Caesarea Philippi in the north to Beersheba in the south. During this time it was ruled by the Roman Empire. The opening chapters describe events surrounding Jesus’ birth in Judea, where Herod had been appointed king by the Romans. The closing chapters end with Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension during the rule of Pontius Pilate and the tetrarchs Antipas and Philip.

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## Outline

- I. The Arrival in History of Jesus the Messiah ([1:1-2:23](#))
  - A. The genealogy of Jesus the Messiah ([1:1-17](#))
  - B. The angelic announcement of the conception of Jesus the Messiah ([1:18-25](#))

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- C. Magi report the star-sign of the birth of “the King of the Jews” ([2:1–12](#))
- D. OT prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah ([2:13–23](#))
- II. John the Baptist Prepares for the Appearance of the Messianic Kingdom ([3:1–17](#))
- III. Jesus the Messiah Begins to Advance the Messianic Kingdom ([4:1–25](#))
  - A. Temptations of the Messiah ([4:1–11](#))
  - B. Jesus the Messiah begins his Galilean ministry ([4:12–25](#))
- IV. The Authoritative Message of the Messiah: Kingdom Life for His Disciples ([5:1–7:29](#)) (First Discourse)
  - A. Setting, Beatitudes, and witness of the kingdom of heaven ([5:1–16](#))
  - B. The messianic kingdom in relation to the law ([5:17–48](#))
  - C. The development of kingdom life in the real world ([6:1–7:12](#))
  - D. Warning! With Jesus or against him? ([7:13–29](#))
- V. The Authoritative Power of the Messiah: Kingdom Power Demonstrated ([8:1–9:38](#))
  - A. Healings, discipleship, and overpowering Satan’s strongholds ([8:1–9:8](#))
  - B. Unexpected discipleship, miracles, and workers ([9:9–38](#))
- VI. The Authoritative Mission of the Messiah’s Messengers ([10:1–42](#)) (Second Discourse)
  - A. Commissioning and instructions for the short-term mission to Israel ([10:1–15](#))
  - B. Instructions for the long-term mission to the world ([10:16–23](#))
  - C. Characteristics of missionary disciples ([10:24–42](#))
- VII. Opposition to the Messiah Emerges ([11:1–12:50](#))
  - A. Jesus, John the Baptist, and ministry in Galilee ([11:1–30](#))
  - B. Confrontations with the Pharisees ([12:1–45](#))
  - C. Jesus’ disciples are his true family ([12:46–50](#))
- VIII. Mysteries of the Messianic Kingdom Revealed in Parables ([13:1–53](#)) (Third Discourse)
  - A. The opening of the Parabolic Discourse ([13:1–23](#))
  - B. Further parables told to the crowds ([13:24–35](#))

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- C. Explanations and parables told to the disciples ([13:36–53](#))
- IX. The Identity of the Messiah Revealed ([13:54–16:20](#))
  - A. Prophet(s) without honor ([13:54–14:12](#))
  - B. Compassionate healer and supplier for Israel ([14:13–21](#))
  - C. The Son of God worshiped ([14:22–36](#))
  - D. Teacher of the Word of God and compassionate healer ([15:1–39](#))
  - E. Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God ([16:1–20](#))
- X. The Suffering of the Messiah Revealed ([16:21–17:27](#))
  - A. The suffering sacrifice ([16:21–28](#))
  - B. The beloved, transfigured Son ([17:1–13](#))
  - C. Sons of the kingdom ([17:14–27](#))
- XI. The Community of the Messiah Revealed ([18:1–20:34](#)) (Fourth Discourse)
  - A. Characteristics of life in the kingdom community ([18:1–35](#))
  - B. Valuing the kingdom community ([19:1–20:34](#))
- XII. The Messiah Asserts His Authority over Jerusalem ([21:1–23:39](#))
  - A. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem: Jesus' authority as Messiah ([21:1–11](#))
  - B. The temple actions: Jesus' pronouncement on the temple establishment ([21:12–17](#))
  - C. Cursing the fig tree: Jesus' judgment of the nation ([21:18–22](#))
  - D. Controversies in the temple court over Jesus' authority ([21:23–22:46](#))
  - E. Warnings against the teachers of the law and the Pharisees ([23:1–12](#))
  - F. Woes of judgment against the teachers of the law and the Pharisees ([23:13–36](#))
  - G. Lament over Jerusalem ([23:37–39](#))
- XIII. The Delay, Return, and Judgment of Messiah ([24:1–25:46](#)) (Fifth [Olivet] Discourse)
  - A. The beginning of birth pains ([24:1–14](#))
  - B. "Great tribulation" and the coming of the Son of Man ([24:15–31](#))
  - C. The nearness and time of Jesus' coming ([24:32–41](#))



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- D. Parabolic exhortations to watch and be prepared for the coming of the Son of Man ([24:42–25:30](#))
- E. Judgment at the end ([25:31–46](#))
- XIV. The Crucified Messiah ([26:1–27:66](#))
  - A. Plot, anointing, and betrayal to the religious leaders ([26:1–16](#))
  - B. The Passover and the Lord's Supper ([26:17–35](#))
  - C. Gethsemane: Jesus' agonizing prayers ([26:36–46](#))
  - D. Jesus arrested ([26:47–56](#))
  - E. The Jewish trial of Jesus ([26:57–27:10](#))
  - F. The Roman trial of Jesus ([27:11–26](#))
  - G. Jesus the Messiah crucified ([27:27–44](#))
  - H. The death of Jesus the Messiah ([27:45–50](#))
  - I. Testimonies, women followers, and burial ([27:51–66](#))
- XV. The Resurrection and Commission of the Messiah ([28:1–20](#))
  - A. An empty tomb and the risen Jesus ([28:1–10](#))
  - B. The conspiracy to deny the truth of Jesus' resurrection ([28:11–15](#))
  - C. The risen Jesus' Great Commission ([28:16–20](#))<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (pp. 1815-1819). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.