

Introductory Materials**Why four Gospels?**

It would seem to be more efficient to write just one Gospel with the activities of Jesus in a logical, linear format. Instead, we have four Gospels with the first three (Matthew, Mark and Luke) all very similar in nature with the book of John markedly different. Actually, the term Gospels is misleading because there are not four “good news” accounts given, rather there is one good news with four different accounts of the work of Jesus while on earth and His dealings with Israel. The good news of the Gospels concerns the arrival of the King, Jesus, and the soon to be established Kingdom.

When the Gospels were written, the Holy Spirit didn’t waste resources in having four versions. There is a very specific and logical division between each Gospel. Each book views Jesus from four different perspectives and presents Him in four different functions. David shows Jesus as King, Mark presents Him as servant, Luke as a man and John as God. The Second Person of the Trinity is revealed to Israel in these four aspects in the Old Testament. He is also referred to as Branch and seen in these same four facets.

Book	Jesus presented as:	Living beings around throne (Ez. 1)	2nd Person of Trinity presented four ways	Christ as Branch
Matthew	King	Lion	Zech. 9:9 Behold thy King	Jer. 23:5
Mark	Servant	Ox	Is. 42:1 Behold My Servant	Zech 3:8
Luke	Man	Man	Zech. 6:12 Behold a man	Zech 6:12
John	God	Eagle	Is. 40:9 Here is your God	Is 4:2

Even in the genealogy we see these four viewpoints of Christ come to light. Mathew connects Jesus to King David, Mark lists no lineage (slaves have no family), Luke connects Jesus to Adam and John shows no ancestry because He is God.

Writer

The writer of Matthew is Matthew or Levi son of Alphaeus. His name means “gift of the Lord.” Before being chosen as one of the 12 Disciples he was a tax collector (publican) and therefore hated by his Jewish kinsmen. A tax collector at that time would collect taxes for Rome and collect extra for his own salary. They were viewed as traitors who turned their backs on their own nation to support the hated Romans. Jesus called Matthew into service as he was sitting in his tax collector’s booth (Matthew 9:9).

Date written

It is not known positively when any of the Gospels were written. Matthew’s date of writing is placed anywhere from the early 50s to as late as the early 80s. If the early date is correct then Matthew was written during Paul’s second missionary journey around the same time he wrote 1 & 2 Thessalonians, approximately 15 years after his conversion. If the later date is correct then it would have been written after Paul had died.

This causes a bit of consternation for some dispensationalists and gives ammunition for anti-dispensationalists because this would place Matthew’s writings after the Mystery was revealed to Paul and the Body of Christ was formed. They reason that Matthew would have known about the revelation given to Paul and would have incorporated this information into his writings. Matthew’s writings then would seem to be just as relevant to us today as Paul’s writings.

The obvious answer to this is that it doesn't matter when a book was written but to whom and why. A book written about the events of WWII would not have information about our war on terrorism. The WWII book would focus solely on what happened in the 1940s even though the book was written 60 years later. The same can be said about the book of Matthew. Matthew wrote only about events that concerned God's program for Israel, specifically the setting up of the promised Kingdom. It doesn't matter at all that when Matthew was written that Israel had already been set aside and that God's plan, hid from ages past, was now revealed to Paul.

Recurring phrases

1. Son of David (reference to Christ being in the kingly line)
2. Kingdom of Heaven (A reference to a time when the earthly government will conform to heavenly standards)
3. Wailing and gnashing (for those who do not enter the Kingdom).
4. Fulfilled (Old Testament prophecy fulfilled concerning Jesus).

The five discourses

Matthew can be divided into five discourses of Jesus. These discourses show a progression in the Kingdom program.

Discourse 1: The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5). Jesus lays out the constitution of the soon-to-be-set-up Kingdom.

Discourse 2: Instructions to the Disciples (Matthew 10). The Disciples were given the power to heal the sick, raise the dead and cast out demons. This was all in preparation of the Kingdom where there would be no sickness and Satan's influence would be put on hold.

Discourse 3: Teaching on the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 13). What will this heavenly kingdom on earth be like and what about those who oppose the Kingdom?

Discourse 4: Teaching on judgment in the Kingdom church (Matthew 18). The Kingdom church (believing Israel) is to have a ruling function on earth with the power to judge right from wrong.

Discourse 5: Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24). Jesus describes what they must endure before entrance into the Kingdom.

Matthew is a book of progression in God's prophetic program. It is moving Israel from the Law and prophets into the Kingdom program. As we work our way through the book of Matthew we will keep firmly in mind that every word was written to Israel to introduce their King to them and prepare them for the coming Millennial Kingdom.

Luke 16:16 "The Law and the Prophets *were proclaimed* until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.

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