

The New Testament Gospel according to Matthew

The Gospel according to Matthew is the first of what is known as the Synoptic (meaning with the same eye) because the narrative is built on the same events in the life of Jesus, and indeed all three Synoptic Gospels, those of Matthew, Mark and Luke, can be placed side by side and are evidently very similar. A commentary I have says that the gospels are not just stories of the incarnate Jesus, but also relate the significance of his teaching and actions. From earliest times the gospels have been named according to their the writers. Mathew's gospel, although not the first to be written, appears as the first in the New Testament since, more than the others, it makes the link between the Old and New Testaments, portraying Jesus as the Messiah, the anointed one, the Christ. Traditionally Matthew was the first to write a gospel in Hebrew and it is in 5 parts.

- 1 A new way of living Ch 2-7
- 2 Being disciples Ch 8-10
- 3 The kingdom of heaven 11-13:52
- 4 The church as the people of Jesus 13:53-18:35
- 5 Moving towards the crisis 19-25

Each part consists of a discourse broadly following the outline in Mark's gospel, but these are preceded by the genealogy of Jesus Christ in the opening chapter and by the story of the infancy of Christ in chapter 2 and are followed by the passion in chapter 26. Matthew stresses Christ's teaching especially the theme of the kingdom of God, and it is evident that the gospel is mainly written for Jewish Christians, with the frequent use of Old Testament quotations, e.g. *The land of Zebulum! The land of Way of the sea on the far side of the Jordan. Galilee of the nations! The people living in darkness have seen a great light. On those who dwell in the shadow of death a light has dawned* ' 4 :vs 12-16 JB

Matthew of the tribe of Levi, was one of the 12 disciples called by Jesus (Matt. 9 : 9, Mark 2: 34 and Luke 5:27). The conclusion of his gospel is called the Great Commission given to the then 11 disciples just before the Ascension: *'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you ...'* 26:16-20 NRSV

A commission followed ever since, resulting today in Christianity being the largest world religion with in excess of 2.3 billion adherents.

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