

New Testament Survey - Lesson #2 The Gospels

Matthew

Matthew was a Galilean Jew

- referred to as “Matthew the tax collector” (Matt. 10:2).
- It is the unanimous consent of the “church fathers” such as Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius and Jerome that Matthew wrote his gospel in Hebrew and it was later translated into Greek.

It is apparent that he wrote to prove that in Jesus of Nazareth is to be found the fulfillment of all Messianic prophecy.

- written by a Jew, about a Jew, to other Jews.

Imagine a Greek opening the gospel of Matthew for the first time.

- you have experienced this yourself
- Within the first few verses he would read of the genealogy of Christ.
 - long and boring
 - how many of us skip this part?
 - Among the Jews this would have seemed both logical and appropriate,
 - but to us it boring and seemingly meaningless. We don't need it.
 - He would also read of Jesus being the *Messiah*—a term which no Greek would have been able to fully comprehend.
 - The point is that the gospel of Matthew was never intended for a Greek audience.

more than 40 Old Testament passages quoted in Matthew in connection with even the minor events of the life of Christ.

- Matthew explains that Christ was born of a virgin “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet” (Matt. 1:22; Isa. 7:14).

- The chief priests told Herod that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, “for thus it is written by the prophet” (Matt. 2:5; Micah 5:2).
- When Herod ordered the slaughter of the innocent children, it was seen as a fulfillment of “what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet” (Matt. 2:17; Hos. 11:1).
- John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus, “for this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah” (Matt. 3:3; Isa. 40:3).
- Christ began His ministry in “Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet” (Matt. 4:13–14; Isa. 9:1–2).
- Even the teaching method of Jesus was a matter of prophecy. Matthew explains that “Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ‘I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.’” (Matt. 13:34–35; Psa. 78:2).

The death of Christ on Calvary’s cross was also a matter of prophecy, and Matthew goes into detail to explain this fact.

- Christ was betrayed into the hands of the enemy for thirty pieces of silver, as prophesied by Jeremiah (Matt. 27:9–10; Jer. 32:6–9).
- When He was crucified, the soldiers “divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: ‘They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.’” (Matt. 27:35; Psa. 22:18).
- Even His words on the cross were a matter of prophecy, for there in agony He quoted the words of the Psalms 22, the Psalm of the cross, “‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” (Matt. 27:46; Psa. 22:1).

Mark

The author of the book of Mark is never named or hinted at.

Tradition identifies him as Mary’s son John Mark (Acts 12:12).

- this would have made him an apprentice and helper to Paul, Barnabas (his cousin) and later, Peter.
- The Book of Mark was accepted as early as AD 115 as Peter's account of the teachings of Jesus as quoted and scribed by John Mark.
- Mark is not meant to be a biographical account of Jesus but rather an account of the teachings and message of Jesus.

The gospel of Mark was written to a Roman audience.

If one verse could reflect the message of the book, it would be this: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

- In the book of Mark Christ is presented as the ideal servant.
- Unlike Matthew, Mark does not give us the genealogy of Christ, for the genealogy of a servant is not important.
- Mark used several Latin terms within the book indicating a Roman audience of the common man.

Since Mark was not writing to a Jewish audience, he had to explain Jewish customs and settings to his readers.

- Matthew tells us of the question the scribes and Pharisees had about the disciples of Jesus, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!" (Matt. 15:1,2).
- When Mark tells the same story he has to explain the washing of hands was a ceremonial cleansing, not the washing of dirt off the body.³ (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.) (Mark 7:3-4)

- When Jesus predicted the destruction of the Temple, Mark tells us “As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple,” (Mark 13:3). Every Jew knew the Mount of Olives was “opposite the temple,” but Roman readers would have had no idea as to its location.
- Mark also has to explain the day of Unleavened Bread was “when they killed the Passover lamb,” something every Jew would have known since birth, but about which a Roman would have been unfamiliar.

Luke

Luke has the distinction of being the only Gentile writer in the Bible.

As a Gentile and a disciple of the “Apostle to the Gentiles” it is no surprise that Luke stressed stories that Gentiles could relate to.

- He traces the genealogy through the Father all the way back to Adam emphasizing the Son of God more than the Messiah of the Jews
- He highlights Jesus’ being rejected by his own people and lifts up non-Jews
 - Lk 4:28,29 28 “All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff.”
 - the healing of a Syrian over Israelites Lk. 4:27 “And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.”
- Shares the parable about new wine in old wineskins - Luke 5
- Stresses the faith of the centurion, the only time Jesus praises someone for their faith. - Luke 7:9

- The Good Samaritan Luke 10
- “In Simeon’s song, when the infant Jesus was presented in the Temple, he is called ‘a light for revelation to the Gentiles’ (2:32).
- Luke 14:15-24 Jesus tells the parable of the Great Banquet. Men (Gentiles) will come from east, west, north, and south to share in the kingdom of God (13:29). When those originally invited (Jews) refuse the invitation to the great banquet, the invitation is extended to others (Gentiles) who accept
- A cleansed Samaritan leper returns to give thanks to Jesus while nine cleansed Jewish lepers do not (17:11–17).
- Luke 24:45-48 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things.

He is referred to by Paul as “Luke the beloved physician” (Col. 4:14).

As a physician, he is more exacting in his use of language.

- When he refers to a leper he uses the exact medical term to describe the condition, i.e., “covered with leprosy” (Luke 5:12).
- In Mark 3:1 we read of the man with the withered hand whom Jesus healed on the Sabbath—Luke adds it was his right hand which was withered, something a physician would note (Luke 6:6).
- It is also the physician who notes that in the Garden our Lord’s “sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44).

An example of Luke’s care is the way in which he dates the emergence of John the Baptist. He does so by no fewer than six contemporary datings. Luke 3:1,2

1. ‘In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar
2. Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea
3. , Herod being tetrarch of Galilee,
4. and his brother Philip being tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis,

5. and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene

6. in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas , the word of God came to John' (Luke 3:1, 2).

Here is a man who is writing with care and who will be as accurate as it is possible for him to be.”

John

Unlike the other gospel writers, John clearly states the purpose of his book. After describing the appearance of Christ to Thomas and the rest of the apostles, John writes: “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” Jn 20:30,31

The purpose of the gospel of John is to prove the Deity of Jesus Christ. Instead of giving the genealogy of Christ, John goes back into eternity to tell us that, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” Jn 1:1-5

The not-so-subtle message is — If we wish to know God, look at Jesus who, in personal bodily form, in human personality is the actual combination or union of God with man.

Notes on Herod the Great

- Herod was granted the title of "King of Judea" or “King of the Jews” by the Roman Senate, as such he was a vassal of the Roman Empire, expected to support the interests of his Roman patrons.
- Not long after he assumed control of Judea, Herod needed to show his worthiness to be king of Judea to the new emperor Augustus (who was still known as Octavian),

- He had previously showed support for Augustus' opponent Mark Antony, but quickly shifted his alliances when he saw the Mark Antony & Cleopatra were losing their war with Rome.
- Herod's despotic rule has been demonstrated by many of his security measures aimed at suppressing the contempt his people, especially Jews, had towards him.
 - For instance, it has been suggested that Herod used secret police to monitor and report the feelings of the general populace towards him.
 - He sought to prohibit protests, and had opponents removed by force.
 - He had a bodyguard of 2,000 soldiers

Herod appears in the Gospel according to Matthew (2:1-23), which describes an event known as the Massacre of the Innocents.

- When Herod realized he had been outwitted by the Magi, he gave orders to kill all boys of the age of two and under in Bethlehem and its vicinity. Joseph and his family stayed in Egypt until Herod's death, then moved to Nazareth in Galilee to avoid living under Herod's son Archelaus.
- Regarding the Massacre of the Innocents, although Herod was guilty of many brutal acts including
 - the killing of his wife and
 - two of his sons.
 - Josephus stated that Herod was so concerned that no one would mourn his death, that he commanded a large group of distinguished men to come to Jericho, and he gave an order that they should be killed at the time of his death so that the displays of grief that he craved would take place.

Notes on Herod Antipas

Herod Antipater (born before 20 BC – died after 39 AD), known by the nickname Antipas, was a 1st-century ruler of Galilee and Perea.

- who bore the title of tetrarch ("ruler of a quarter") and is referred to as both "Herod the Tetrarch"[1] and "King Herod"[2] in the Bible

- Known in the New Testament for his role in events that led to the executions of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth.
- After being named to the throne by Augustus upon the death of his father, Herod the Great, Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea as a client state of the Roman Empire.
- Antipas divorced his first wife Phasaelis, the daughter of King Aretas IV of Nabatea, in favour of Herodias, who had formerly been married to his half-brother Herod II.
- John the Baptist's condemnation of this arrangement that led Antipas to have him arrested; John was subsequently put to death.
- Besides provoking his conflict with the Baptist, the tetrarch's divorce added a personal grievance to previous disputes with Aretas (former father-in-law) over territory on the border of Perea and Nabatea.
 - The result was a war that proved disastrous for Antipas; a Roman counter-offensive was ordered by Tiberius, but abandoned upon that emperor's death in 37 AD.
 - In 39 AD Antipas was accused by his nephew Agrippa I of conspiracy against the new Roman emperor Caligula, who sent him into exile in Gaul. Accompanied there by Herodias, he died at an unknown date.
- The Gospel of Luke states that Jesus was first brought before Pontius Pilate for trial, since Pilate was the governor of Roman Judea, which encompassed Jerusalem where Jesus was arrested.
- Pilate initially handed him over to Antipas, in whose territory Jesus had been most active, but Antipas sent him back to Pilate's court.