

Matthew

The Old Testament prophets predicted and longed for the coming of the Anointed One who would enter history to bring redemption and deliverance. The first verse of Matthew announces that long awaited event. The book of Matthew provides the essential bridge between the Old and New Testaments. Matthew carefully and clearly documents Jesus Christ's claim to be the Messiah. Jesus possesses the credentials of Messiah, ministers in the predicted pattern of Messiah, preaches messages only Messiah could preach, and finally dies the death only Messiah could die.

INTRODUCTION

The book of Matthew has always occupied a position of high esteem in the faith and life of the church. The writings of the early church fathers reveal that it was the most frequently quoted and perhaps the most widely read gospel during the first two centuries of the church's history.

AUTHOR

Matthew, surnamed Levi, was the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27). He had been a tax-collector in Capernaum for the Roman government and was one of Jesus' earliest disciples (Matthew 9:9). As a publican (Jews who collaborated with the Roman Empire) he was no doubt disliked by his Jewish countrymen. He was chosen as one of the 12 apostles, and the last appearance of his name in the Bible is in Acts 1:13. A close associate of Jesus during His ministry, Matthew's gospel is a first-hand account, unlike Luke who depended upon other eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-4).

The early church attributed this gospel to Matthew, and no tradition to the contrary ever emerged. The book of Matthew was known early and accepted quickly. At an early date this gospel was given the title *Kata Matthaion*, "According to Matthew." The word *gospel* was added later.

DATE & SETTING

Like all the Gospels, Matthew is not easy to date. Suggestions have ranged from A.D. 40 to 140. Matthew indicates that a substantial period of time has passed since the events described in the book (27:8 & 28:15), but they also point to a date prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (The Olivet Discourse, chapters 24-25, also anticipate this event. If Matthew depended on Mark's gospel as a source, the date of Mark would determine the earliest date for Matthew. The likely time frame for this book is A. D. 58 - 68. It may have been written in Palestine or Syrian Antioch.