

The Gospel of Matthew

The Search for the Matthean Community: An Introduction
to Social-Scientific Criticism

Authorship - Origin - Date

Traditionally linked to Matthew, the apostle and tax collector.

Papias: Matthew compiled a series of sayings in a 'Hebrew dialect'

Matthew was probably a Jewish Christian who wrote for a community of Greek-speaking Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Difficult to determine its date (certainly post 70 CE, probably 80-100 CE)

Content of Matthew's Gospel

INFANCY STORIES (Matt. 1-2)

- Genealogy (son of Abraham, son of David)
- Emphasis on the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures
 - Gentiles come to worship Jesus (Isaiah)
 - Herod's persecution (Jer. 31:15)
 - Flight to Egypt (Hos. 11:1)
 - Return to Nazareth

Content of Matthew's Gospel

FIVE DISCOURSES

Matt. 5-7: Sermon on the Mount

Matt. 10: Discourse on mission

Matt. 13: Discourse on the kingdom; parables

Matt. 18: Discourse on the Church

Matt. 24-25: Discourse on the End Times

Themes and Motifs

Links with Markan themes

Distinctively Matthean motifs: Jesus is the Messiah predicted in Scripture and his definition of messiahship .

Jewishness is not uncritical.

The Church (*ekklêsia*) is central to salvation (cf. 18:20; 28:16-20).

Reconstructing the Matthean Community

Social-Scientific Criticism: insights from sociology (social-scientific theories) are applied in order to determine the nature of the social world of the early Christians.

What is the social construction of reality and what form of religious legitimization is used (Berger and Luckman)?

Jewish or Jewish- Christian Community?

Does Matthew's Gospel stem from a community that identified itself as Jewish (Overman) or as Jewish Christian (Stanton)?

- Reverence to the Torah (5:17-19), but woes addressed to scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23)
- Jesus avoids Gentile towns (10:5-6), but the great commission embraces Gentiles (28:19)
- Jewish Christian christology (Son of David), but rejection of Israel (13:11-15)

Contours of the Community

Jewish Christian group (probably based in Antioch)

No longer associated with Jewish synagogues (due to eviction?)

The community lived in conformity to the Law

Recent breach with the synagogue

Engagement in a Gentile mission