

### #3. THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

- 1. Matthew is the record of a publican or tax collector (Matthew 10:13), who became an important follower of Jesus.** He was also known as Levi (Matthew 9:9). His gospel is generally centered on five great teaching discourses of Jesus, and are not presented in a strictly chronological order.
  - The Sermon on The Mount - Matthew 5-7
  - The Appointing of the Apostles - Matthew 10
  - Parables Describing The Kingdom of Heaven - Matthew 13
  - Kingdom Behavior - Matthew 18
  - The Discussion Concerning His Second Coming - Matthew 24,25
- 2. The author of Matthew emphasizes Messianic terms** such as *Son of David*, and uses over 125 quotes and references from the earlier testament. His Gospel, written to the Jews, forms a connecting link between the Old and New Testaments because of Matthew's emphasis upon fulfilled prophecy and his special usage of Jewish terms. He begins with the genealogy of Jesus, tracing the line of Jesus all the way back to Abraham.
- 3. Matthew's name** is a Greek form of Mattithyahu, which means *gift of Yahweh*. He was one of the Twelve Disciples, who were also known as Apostles (*sent ones*) - (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13).
- 4. Matthew's emphasis** is upon the Kingship of Jesus, which is the essence of His role as Messiah. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, church historian and leader Eusebius (260-339AD) quoted Origen (185-254AD) who said, "*Among the four gospels, which are the only indisputable ones in the church of God under heaven, I have learned by tradition that the first one was written by Matthew, who was a publican, but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, and it was prepared for the converts from Judaism.*" (from section 6:25). This quote gives understanding for the heavy Jewish emphasis of Matthew's Gospel. We see Matthew quoting Jewish customs and traditions without explanation, implying that the readers themselves were Jewish. He uses the phrase *Kingdom of Heaven* over 30 times (the other

Gospels use the phrase *Kingdom of God*), which may have exemplified a Jewish tradition that attempted to honor the name of God by not speaking it unnecessarily. There are several events mentioned in Matthew that are not found in the other Gospel accounts:

- Joseph's dream concerning the nature of Jesus (1:20-24)
- The visit of the Magi (2:1-12)
- The escape to Egypt by Jesus, Mary and Joseph (2:13-15)
- The slaughter of the babies in Bethlehem by Herod (2:16-18)
- The remorse of Judas (27:3-10; see also Acts 1:18,19)
- The dream of Pilate's wife (27:19)
- Other resurrections when Christ died (27:52)
- The bribery of the soldiers (28:11-15)
- The Great Commission (28:19,20)

**5. The Date of writing** was between 50 and 60AD.

## **6. Key Chapters**

- Chapters 1:1-4:11 discuss the birth and early days of Jesus.
- Chapters 4:12-25:46 are distillations of the message and ministry of Jesus.
- Chapters 26:1-28:20 deals with the suffering, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

## 7. Key Verse

- **Matthew 5:17 NASB** - *Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.*
- Note: There are two great turning points in Matthew. The first is found in chapter 16, when the disciples at last understand the true nature of Jesus and His mission. The second occurs in chapters 22-26 when the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish leaders is seen as irreversible. The first glimpse of that rejection is seen in chapter 12.

## 8. Key People

- **Jesus the Messiah** - The Messiah (the same term as Christ - *the anointed one*); the true King of Israel; the God-Man. The 'Beginner and Completer of our faith'.
- **Mary and Joseph** - the mother and earthly father of Jesus.
- **John the Baptist** - the cousin of Jesus who came in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for the presentation of the Lord to Israel first, and also to the world.
- **Herod The Great** - leader in Jerusalem who was secretly called *Herod The Great Pervert* because of his ruthless barbarism. Even family members were not spared his wrath. He killed wives and several offspring. It was said that it was 'safer to be Herod's sow than Herod's son'. Upon his death, Herod had left instructions to kill many prominent family leaders in Jerusalem in order to ensure the day of his death would be a day of mourning, and not a day of celebration. Thankfully, his order was not carried out.
- **The Twelve Disciples (the original Apostles)** -

- **Andrew** - was the brother of Peter, and a son of Jonas. He lived in Bethsaida and Capernaum and was a fisherman before Jesus called him. Originally he was a disciple of John the Baptist (Mark 1:16-18). Andrew brought his brother, Peter, to Jesus (John 1:40). He is claimed by three countries as their Patron Saint-Russia, Scotland and Greece. Church tradition says he preached in Scythia, Greece and Asia Minor.

According to tradition, it was in Achaia, Greece, in the town of Patra that Andrew died a martyr. When the governor's wife was healed and converted to the Christian faith, her husband became enraged. He arrested Andrew and condemned him to be crucified. Andrew, feeling unworthy to be crucified on the same-shaped cross as his Master, begged that his be different. So, he was crucified on an X-shaped cross, which is still called Saint Andrew's cross and which is one of his apostolic symbols. A symbol of two crossed fish has also

been applied to Andrew, because he was formerly a fisherman, and became a true *fisher of men*.

- **Nathaniel/Bartholomew** - lived in Cana of Galilee. Tradition says he was a missionary in Armenia. Jesus called him "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile" (John 1:47). He is said to have preached with Philip in Phrygia and Hierapolis; also in Armenia. The Armenian Church claims him as its founder and martyr. However, tradition says that he preached in India, and his death seems to have taken place there. He died as a martyr for his Lord. He was flayed alive with knives. His apostolic symbol is three parallel knives.
- **James, the Elder** - son of Zebedee and Salome, brother of John the Apostle; fisherman who lived in Bethsaida, Capernaum and Jerusalem. He preached in Jerusalem and Judea and was beheaded by Herod, 44AD (Acts 12:1,2). He was a member of the Inner Circle. His symbol is three shells, the sign of his pilgrimage by the sea.
- **James, the Lesser or Younger** - son of Alpheus, (perhaps the same as Cleophas) and Mary. He lived in Galilee. He was the brother of the Apostle Jude. According to tradition preached in Palestine and Egypt. It is believed he died as a martyr and his body was sawed in pieces. The saw became his apostolic symbol.
- **John The Beloved** - son of Zebedee and Salome, brother of James, the Apostle. A fisherman who lived in Bethsaida, Capernaum and Jerusalem, he was a member of the Inner Circle. He wrote the Gospel of John, three Epistles of John and Revelation. He preached among the churches of Asia Minor. He was banished to the isle of Patmos, he was later freed and died a natural death. It is said that an attempt was made on his life by giving him a chalice of poison from which God spared him. It is said he survived other attempts on his life, and was the only one of the Twelve who died of natural causes. The church still honors him as martyr because he was spared only by supernatural intervention. A chalice with a snake in it is his symbol.
- **Judas Iscariot** - the traitor, was the son of Simon who lived in Kerieth of Judah. He betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver and afterwards hanged himself (Matthew 26:14, 16). He was the treasurer of the apostolic band. Judas used his position as treasurer to steal from the common purse. His apostolic symbol is a hangman's noose, or a money purse with pieces of silver falling from it.
- **Jude / Thaddeus** - son of Alpheus and Mary. He was a brother of James the Younger. Tradition says he preached in Assyria and Persia and died a martyr in Persia. Jerome called Jude "*Trinomious* which means "a man with three names." In Mark 3:18 he is called Thaddeus. In Matthew 10; 3 he is called Lebbeus. His surname was Thaddeus. In Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13 he is called Judas the brother of James. Judas Thaddeus also was called Judas the Zealot. It is said that Jude went to preach the gospel in Edessa near the Euphrates River. He was killed with arrows

at Ararat. The chosen symbol for him is the ship because he was a missionary thought to be a fisherman.

- **Matthew / Levi** - son of Alpheus, lived in Capernaum. He was a publican or tax collector. He wrote the Gospel that bears his name. He died a martyr in Ethiopia. The call of Matthew is mentioned in Mark 2:14, Matthew 9:9; and Luke 5:27-28. From these passages, we learn that Matthew also was called Levi. The Jews were among the most intense haters of tax gatherers. To the devout Jew, God was the only one to whom it was right to pay tribute in taxes. To pay it to anyone else was to infringe on the rights and demands of God. These Publicans were hated not on religious grounds only but because many of them were notoriously unjust. In the minds of many honest, Jewish men, these tax collectors were regarded as criminals. In New Testament times they were classified with harlots, Gentiles and sinners (Matthew 18:17; Matthew 21:31, 33; Matthew 9; 10; Mark 2:15, 16; Luke 5:30). Yet, Jesus chose a man all men hated and made him one of His men. It took Jesus Christ to see the potential in the tax collector of Capernaum. Like the others, heeded a martyr's death. The apostolic symbol of Matthew is three money bags which reminds us that he was a tax collector before Jesus called him.
  
- **Simon Peter/ Cephas** - son of Jonas, was a fisherman who lived in Bethsaida and Capernaum. He did evangelistic and missionary work among the Jews, apparently going as far as Babylon. He was a member of the Inner Circle and authored the two New Testament epistles which bear his name. It is almost certain that the Gospel of Mark was a collection of sermons by Peter. Tradition says he was crucified, head downward, in Rome. In every apostolic list, the name Peter is mentioned first. His Greek name was Simon (Mark 1:16; John 1:40, 41). His Hebrew name was Cephas (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:22; 9:5 and Galatians 2:9). The Greek meaning of Simon is rock. By trade, Peter was a fisherman. He was a married man and his home was Capernaum. Jesus probably made His headquarters there when He visited Capernaum. Peter requested that he might be crucified head downward for he was not worthy to die as his Lord had died. His apostolic symbol is a cross upside down with crossed keys.
  
- **Philip** - Tradition says that Philip preached in Phrygia and died a martyr at Hierapolis. Philip came from Bethsaida, the town from which Peter and Andrew came (John 1:44). The likelihood is that he, too, was a fisherman. The Gospel of John shows Philip as one of the first of many to whom Jesus addressed the words, "Follow Me." When Philip met Christ, he immediately found Nathanael and told him that "we have found him, of whom Moses ... and the prophets, did write." It is said that he died by hanging. While he was dying, he requested that his body be wrapped not in linen but in papyrus for he was not worthy that even his dead body should be treated as the body of Jesus had been treated. The symbol of Philip is a basket, because of his part in feeding of the five thousand.
  
- **Simon the Zealot** - lived in Galilee. Tradition says he died as a martyr by crucifixion. His apostolic symbol is a fish lying on a Bible, which indicates he was a former fisherman who became a fisher of men through preaching.

- **Thomas/Didymus** - lived in Galilee. Tradition says he labored in Parthia, Persia, and India, suffering martyrdom near Madras, at Mt. St. Thomas, India. Thomas was his Hebrew name and Didymus was his Greek name. Thomas appeared in the raising of Lazarus (John 11:2-16), in the Upper Room (John 14:1-6) where he wanted to know how to know the way where Jesus was going. In John 20:25, we see him saying unless he could see the nail-prints in Jesus' hand and the gash of the spear in His side he will not believe. He was killed with a spear as a martyr for his Lord. His symbol is a group of spears, stones and arrows.
  - **The Religious Leaders** - The Scribes were students of Old Testament, particularly The Law of Moses. Rabbis were their followers and teachers. The Pharisees were a small group (perhaps numbering as few as five or six thousand). They were revered as pious ones in Israel, but their encounters with Jesus were usually adversarial. The Sadducees were primarily the political and Temple rulers in Israel. Like their counterparts, the Pharisees, they generally opposed Jesus. For a fuller discussion of these groups, see chapter one.
  - **Caiaphas** - The High Priest of Israel appointed by Rome in 18AD. He organized the plot to arrest Jesus, and supervised the trial of Jesus by the Sanhedrin. He is seen in The Acts of the Apostles as a great persecutor of the early Christians.
  - **Pilate** - The governor of Judea who gave permission for Christ to be crucified.

## 7. Key Places

- **Bethlehem** - the place of Jesus' birth.
- **Jerusalem** - the scene of intense confrontation between Jesus and the civil and religious leaders of Israel.
- **Capernaum** - a fishing village on the north shore of Galilee; hometown to Peter, Andrew, James and John. A scene of considerable ministry during Jesus' life.
- **Galilee** - a large lake region in northern Israel; several locations were the scene of many miracles and teaching events by Jesus.
- **Judea** - a mountainous region in southern Israel, known today as the West Bank.

## 8. Key Themes

- **Jesus is King and Messiah** - the rescuing, redeeming life of Jesus is testimony to His identity as Messiah (*The Anointed One*). The Jews limited their expectations to deliverance from Roman oppression, but Messiah's deliverance was from sin and depravity. The restoration of Israel will be accomplished (Romans 9-11), but Jesus was rejected by most of Israel because they misunderstood His mission.
  
- **The Kingdom of God** - Jesus said *My kingdom is not of this world* (John 18:36), but the beginnings of it were initiated by His mission (Matthew 13:33). The Kingdom will increase through the ministry of His church (Matthew 16:18-20), and will reach its full extent when Christ returns (Revelation 19-22).
  
- **The Gospel of the Kingdom** - the gospel is the good news that Jesus:
  - Was born of a virgin, arriving on earth as fully God and fully man. This miracle reveals that He was just as much 'man' as if He were not God at all, and just as much 'God' as if He were not man at all. He was not a hybrid, nor was He half man and half God. He was fully, inseparably both. Jesus is God.
    - He lived a sinless life.
    - He died a substitutionary death on the cross.
    - After being officially declared dead, He was buried. He was physically raised from the dead on the third day following His death.
    - He ascended to Heaven where He lives forever to make intercession for us.

## 9. The Contents of Matthew

- *The Early Years of Christ - 1:1-4:25*
  
- *The Sermon on The Mountain - 5:1-7:29*
  
- *Some Miracles of Christ - 8:1-9:38*
  
- *The Ordination of The Twelve - 10:1-11:1*
  
- *The Ministry and Mission of Christ - 11:2-12:50*

- *The Kingdom Parables - 13:1-52*
- *Jesus Meets Heavy Opposition - 13:53-17:27*
- *Life in The Kingdom - 18:1-35*
- *Ministry in Jerusalem - 19:1-23:39*
- *The Discourse on the Mount of Olives - 24:1-25:46*
- *The Passion and Resurrection of The Christ - 26:1-28:15*
- *The Great Commission - Matthew 28:16-20*

*(For a more detailed outline, see Chapter 2 concerning The Gospels.)*

**Worth noting:**

1. Matthew takes note of the significance of dreams and visions.
  - Joseph experienced four spiritual dreams
    - He was assured of Mary's moral purity (1:20)
    - He was warned to escape to Egypt with Mary and Jesus (2:13)
    - He was told to return to Israel from Egypt (2:19,20)
    - He was led by God to settle in Nazareth (2:22)
  - The Wise Men were warned in a dream to avoid returning to Herod (2:12)
2. There are at least 7 sermons of Jesus summarized in Matthew
  - The Sermon on The Mount - Matthew 5-7

- The Sermon Ordaining the Twelve - Matthew 10
- The Sermon About Demons - Matthew 12
- The Kingdom Parables - Matthew 13 (cp. Mark 4 & Luke 8)
- The Sermon About Tradition - Matthew 15
- The Sermon About Christian Behavior - Matthew 18
- The Sermon Denouncing The Scribes and Pharisees -Matthew 23
- The Sermon About the End-Times. Scholars are divided when dealing with Matthew 24 and 25. Some of the material is intended for a closed audience of disciples, while other portions seem to have been preached to the masses.

**When reading the Gospel of Matthew:**

1. Remember the sequence and importance of the political rulers in Israel.

- Roman Emperors
  - **Caesar Augustus – 31BC – 4AD**
  - **Caesar Tiberius - 14-37AD**
  - Emperor Caligula - 37-41AD
  - Emperor Claudius - 41-54AD
  - Emperor Nero - 54-68AD
  - Glabo, Otho and Vitellius - 68-69AD
  - Emperor Vespasian - 69-79AD
  - Emperor Titus - 79-81AD
  - Emperor Domitian - 81-96AD
- Rulers of Palestine:
  - In Judea
    - **Herod The Great - 37-4BC**

- **Archelaus – 4BC -6AD**
- Corponius - 6-8AD
- Ambivius - 9-12AD
- Annius Rufus - 12-15AD
- Valerius Gratus - 15-26AD
- **Pontius Pilate 26-36AD**
- Marcellus – 37AD
- Herod Agrippa I - 37-44AD
- Cuspius Fadus - 44-46AD
- Tiberius Alexander - 46-48AD
- Vintidius Cumanus - 48-52AD
- **Antonius Felix - 52-60AD**
- **Porcius Festus - 60-62AD**
- Clodius Albinus - 62-64AD
- Gessius Florus - 64-66

○ In Galilee and other provinces

- **Herod Antipas - 4-39AD**
- **Herod Phillip - 4-34AD**
- **Herod Agrippa II - 34-39ffAD**

2. Remember Matthew is not only proclaiming the arrival of Messiah, he is also documenting the rejection of Christ by the civil and religious leaders of Israel. This paves the way for Paul's teaching about Israel in Romans 9 through 11.