

Episode #646 Matthew Introduction-The Book and the Man

I. We believe that John was the first gospel written. The second would have been Matthew. We begin with John because of its basic, foundational, and fundamental nature, then move on to the gospel of Matthew.

II. Matthew is particularly the gospel of being “in Israel.”

- A. Being “in Israel” contrasts greatly with being “in Christ” as in the book of Ephesians.
- B. Matthew is written about the King of Israel and His servants, the people of Israel.
- C. One was born into Israel, born as a servant. Yet one could be an unprofitable servant, Matthew 25:30, and be cast out. One is not born into Christ, however, but gets there by believing. From this position one can never be cast out, as is clear in Ephesians and elsewhere.
- D. “Israel” appears 12 times in Matthew (equaled only by Luke), Abraham 6 (Luke 13), David 15 (Luke 11), Christ 17 (John 20), king 19 (John 13), kingdom 54 (Luke 43), Lord 70 (Luke 95, John 44), son 71 (John 58). This shows us much about the character of this gospel.

III. Lenski points out that this gospel is full of the Lord’s discourses (teaching) much like John, to which he compares it. He suggests that like John (a treatise to prove that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God) this gospel is to prove to Jews that Jesus is the Messiah. Although he does not reserve this for only unbelieving Jews, but also confirming to believing Jews and even Gentiles.

IV. The Structure of the Four Gospels.

- A. Matthew: Jesus as King. (Exaltation)
- B. Mark: Jesus as Servant. (Humiliation)
- B. *Luke: Jesus as Man. (Humiliation)*
- A. *John: Jesus as God. (Exaltation)*

Another way:

- A. Matthew: Jesus as King of Israel (human perspective).
- B. Mark: Jesus as Servant (God’s perspective).
- A. *Luke: Jesus as perfect Man (human perspective).*
- B. *John: Jesus as God (God’s perspective).*

The audience may be characterized thus.

- A. Matthew: to Jews.
- B. Mark: to Romans.
- A. *Luke: to Greeks.*
- B. *John: to all.*

Custance relates it to the sons of Noah.

- A. Matthew: to Shemites.
- B. Mark: to Hamites.
- A. *Luke: to Japhethites.*
- B. *John: to all.*

V. Was Matthew originally written in Hebrew?

- A. Papias (125 AD) mentions that Matthew wrote “logia” in Hebrew which everyone translated to Greek as he saw fit.
- B. About a half century later Irenaeus speaks of a “Hebrew gospel” by Matthew, as do others in the centuries following. Yet our Greek Matthew was recognized and used

widely among believers much earlier, quoted as Scripture as early as 110 AD, and these writers view these Hebrew logia of Matthew as something completely different.

- C. It is clear that none of these writers had ever actually seen this Hebrew Matthew. Could this have been a rumor? Or an early writing later lost?
- D. This Hebrew writing by Matthew was never confused with Matthew's Greek gospel until the 4th century.
- E. The Greek Matthew shows no signs of being a translation, in spite of some claims.
- F. Matthew is written to a grand structure and design, and shows no signs of a later Greek writer expanding it from fragmentary "logia" written by Matthew. Most early fathers agreed Mark wrote using Peter as his primary source, yet they still called his gospel "Mark." If a later writer wrote from loose sayings of Matthew, why would these same fathers have called that writing "Matthew"?
- G. Matthew is an original production of Matthew as he was moved by the Holy Spirit. Many who argue for a Hebrew Matthew set the idea of inspiration aside altogether, and so they show themselves and their arguments to be in error.

VI. The man Matthew.

- A. He was a tax collector for the Romans, Matthew 9:9, Mark 2:14, Luke 5:27, and the Lord called him right from the tax booth. Matthew gave a dinner for the Lord that night at which many tax collectors and sinners attended, causing controversy.
- B. Matthew was one of the twelve. Matthew 10:3 (listed 8th), Mark 3:18 (listed 7th), Luke 6:15 (listed 7th), and Acts 1:13 (listed 8th).
- C. No words of Matthew are ever quoted in Scripture, so all we have is his gospel.
- D. As a tax collector he had to interact with Gentiles and so would have become proficient at Greek.
- E. Tax collectors were outcasts, and there was supposed to be no way back in. Yet no one questioned the Lord bringing him back in!
- F. We note that the Lord's twelve included Matthew, a liberal compromiser, and Simon the zealot, a patriotic conservative, in the same group with apparently little conflict.

VII. John, when he had to talk about himself, acted like he was talking about someone else.

Matthew tells us nothing about himself, like John keeping all the focus on Jesus Christ.

VIII. Matthew writes in a straightforward style without colorful writing, since his focus is all on presenting Jesus as the Messiah. As a grand treatise his gospel is second only to John. He must have been quite a man!

IX. Conclusion: The gospel of Matthew is a grand treatise, presenting the Lord Jesus as their Messiah to Israel. He is viewed as the King of Israel and the representative Israelite. It is written largely with Israelites in mind and is the book of being "in Israel." Yet we too as non-Jews can learn and benefit from what Matthew has to say here about our Lord the Savior of the world.